

That Old House

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/44393641) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/44393641>.

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| Rating: | Teen And Up Audiences |
| Archive Warning: | Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings |
| Category: | Gen |
| Fandom: | Empires SMP , Hermitcraft SMP |
| Character: | Scott Major Smajor1995 , Grian , Xornoth (Empires SMP) , GoodTimesWithScar |
| Additional Tags: | Alternate Universe - The Magnus Archives Fusion , Memory Loss , Memory Alteration , Rivendell on Empires SMP Setting (Video Blogging RPF) , Harm to Children , Darkness |
| Language: | English |
| Series: | Part 44 of From the Archives |
| Collections: | Hermitcraft x TMA fics |
| Stats: | Published: 2023-01-19 Words: 2,767 Chapters: 1/1 |

That Old House

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[GRIAN]

(Static crackling) Scar-

[SCAR]

Alright, alright! Don't get your feathers in a twist.

(Sounds of paper being grabbed and shuffled through)

[GRIAN]

Thank you. Let's see...

(Pause, desk chair creaks)

Statement of Scott S. Major, regarding a brother he never had. Statement originally given... three years ago, December 29th, 2019.

Notes

another one that takes some context! definitely would recommend reading [werewolf games](#) and [freezing point](#) before this one. and [blight](#). :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

[Click]

[SCAR]

Grian, do I have a treat for *you*.

[GRIAN]

Treat? I love treats.

[SCAR]

(Brightly) I know you do! Maaaybe even enough to give your favorite assistant an extra day or two off to stay home and play with his sadly neglected kitty cat? She's *languishing*, Grian.

[GRIAN]

What is it?

[SCAR]

Well, remember- was it last month? Two months ago? Time flies... anyways, remember you said to keep an eye out for any other statements given by our good friend Mr. Major?

[GRIAN]

Scott? You found his other statement?

[SCAR]

That's what it says! Statement of Scott S. Major, regarding- ah-ah-ah. Day off?

[GRIAN]

I'll fire you. Give it.

[SCAR]

Nahhhh, you love me.

[GRIAN]

I actually want you to die. Why are you so *tall-*

[SCAR]

(Laughing)

[GRIAN]

(Static crackling) Scar-

[SCAR]

Alright, alright! Don't get your feathers in a twist.

(Sounds of paper being grabbed and shuffled through)

[GRIAN]

Thank you. Let's see...

(Pause, desk chair creaks)

Statement of Scott S. Major, regarding a brother he never had. Statement originally given... three years ago, December 29th, 2019.

Just a few months after the camping incident... interesting. Statement begins.

[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

About a week ago, I ran into an old schoolmate.

We'd never really been good friends, but we'd worked on a few projects together back in primary school, and she'd always been nice enough, so we talked for awhile. You know how when you grow up, you end up wanting to spend more time with anyone who knew you when you were younger? I guess maybe that's just me, but it always feels a little precious to me.

It was a nice little chance to catch up, and... after everything that had happened with Joel, it was honestly a relief to just talk to someone who didn't know the first thing about any of it. I talked about my job, and she talked about her girlfriend and her professional plans, and...

Then she asked me how my brother was.

Which was weird, because I'm an only child.

I told her she must've gotten me confused with somebody else, but she shook her head and insisted- that I had a brother, looked a lot like me, but bonier and with darker hair, that he'd been three years ahead of us in school. She said the one time she came over to my house to do homework together, he was there.

She said she couldn't quite remember his name, but it was on the tip of her tongue.

She fumbled for a minute, and then she said... *something*. It was a name, I'm sure of that, but it was like... when she said it, the place in my mind that should have understood and recognized it had been painted over, or scratched out. Like I couldn't hear anything but a carved out space where a name *should've* been.

I asked her to say it again, and even recorded it on my phone, but even when I played it back later I couldn't make out anything but that thick, garbled nothingness. I even tried putting it into an audio editor, but all that did was crash my computer.

If it hadn't been for that, I would've just brushed it off at that point as a weird joke she was trying to pull on me, but the recording made it impossible to deny there was *something* wrong. Something *missing*.

And especially with what had happened with Joel... I was on edge. I guess I was scared there was something following me somehow. Or that it was connected in some other way. I just wasn't comfortable leaving it lie.

I called up as many old classmates of mine as I could find numbers for. A lot of them didn't answer or the number was out of date, but there were three, in the end, I was able to reach. They were all surprised to hear from me. I didn't ask about a brother- I just asked if they remembered me having any siblings. Two of them barely remembered me, let alone anything about my family, but the last one said *specifically* that he remembered me having an older brother. Three years older, with darker hair.

Do you know what the Mandela effect is? It's fake, first of all, but it's this idea that two different people can be sure the same event happened two different ways, and the 'explanation' is that they're experiencing different parallel timelines, or they've switched between realities- instead of, you know, one of them getting their facts confused. It's obviously nonsense, but sitting there listening to a *second person* describe a brother I *didn't have* to me, I had to wonder.

How could they both remember the same person who'd never existed?

It scared me.

When I think about my childhood, I think about being a lonely kid in a too-big house. I remember *wanting* a brother. If I had had a sibling, I would remember.

I had to believe I would *remember*.

I think that's what kept me from brushing it off and moving on. It was *bothering* me, the idea that I even *could* have forgotten something so important.

And... whenever I was home alone, and I started thinking about it, sooner or later, I'd wind up staring at the locked basement door.

The house I live in now used to be my parents'; it was my grandfather's, before that. There's a lot of family history around there. It's always felt too big for just me, living on my own, but it's good to have all the room for when friends come over.

I was always scared of the basement, as a kid.

It was never finished like the rest of the house. My mom always wanted to redo it, put some actual nice flooring and furniture down there, but she never got around to it, so it's still all concrete and walls lined with shelves heavy with generations worth of junk and treasures. It's all one room, but it goes deep, all the way under the house.

The only light was a bare bulb set into the ceiling, so you had to blunder your way almost halfway across the floor in the pitch darkness, fumbling for the cord, in order to see anything. And even when the light's on, it never *really* reaches the corners.

I hated it. Whenever I was down there when I was younger, I would spend the whole time anxious about the moment when I'd need to turn the light off before heading up the stairs- the seconds between everything going dark and the frantic scramble up the steps.

I'd only gone down there once or twice since my parents passed. Since I only used it for storing stuff I never needed, I only ever needed to go down there when there was something wrong with the furnace or the breaker box, and I never wanted to be down there any longer than I had to.

But it was also where all the old photo albums were. And I knew if anything was going to clear this up, it would be those.

So when I couldn't stand not knowing any longer, I got a flashlight, and started down the stairs.

Two thirds of the way down, one creaked horribly under my weight, and I froze for a moment. There was no reason it should've startled me as badly as it did, but it did. Maybe it was something about the fact that the light at the top of the stairs already seemed so far away and faint. I had this spike of irrational fear- like if the step broke under my weight, I'd fall into the darkness and never hit the ground.

It passed, after a moment, and I could keep going, but all my hair was on end. I was sweating. I thought about just turning around and going back upstairs, because I wasn't honestly sure I cared *enough* about knowing the truth to keep descending those stairs right then, but I knew if I did, I'd probably lock the door behind me and never go down there again until it was time to sell the house for real.

And I wanted to know.

So I kept going.

My flashlight seemed dimmer, in the basement. It was like the darkness was something *thick*, something that fell in layers in front of me and kept me from seeing the shelves in more than greyish outlines. I fumbled around until I could find the cord for the lightbulb. It took three tries before it flickered to life.

The shadows were dark and sharp, and everything was covered in dust. I went straight to the shelf with the photo albums; I didn't want to spend any more time down there than I had to. There were six or seven of them- I had a great-aunt who was really into scrapbooking, once upon a time, and my mom picked it up from her, so if nothing else my family history is pretty well-documented.

I took the last one off the shelf, the one that had my name on the spine, and started paging through it.

It started with a photo of my mother holding me in the hospital, and my father standing by her shoulder.

And there was something by the foot of the bed. Or... that's not right. There was a space where something *should* have been, and wasn't.

It looked like a tiny human shape had been *clawed* out of the photo, like all the shadows in the room where it had been taken had warped around this one spot to hide whatever had been there from view. I tried to squint, but even with my flashlight, I couldn't make out anything more than a vague outline. It was almost like someone had scribbled over a person with a black crayon so hard the paper was almost torn. When I pulled the photo out of the sleeve and touched the blacked-out spot, it felt... cold. It made my skin *crawl*.

I couldn't deny that someone was *missing* from the photo. A small someone. Maybe someone who'd been a toddler when I was born.

I kept flipping through the pages. There were photos of me sleeping in my crib as a baby, of my first day dropped off at preschool, of my parents taking me to visit my grandparents. Those black splotches kept recurring- not in every photo, but in a lot of them, systemically wiping someone out of existence.

I know I keep saying 'someone' as though I don't know who it was. I guess I just don't want to write it down. I think it would be easier if I knew his name, but I don't.

Maybe a third of the way through the album, I found a photo that was different.

I think I was maybe eight or nine in it. It'd been taken from behind. I was standing next to my father, looking up at him, as he stood in the doorway of the house. The old house- the one I live in now. I remembered that moment. It was just before our grandfather died, when our parents took us to look after him while he was sick. My mother took it from where she was standing by the moving truck as my father unlocked the door.

And on his other side... was my brother.

I couldn't see his face, because he was turned away from the camera, but I could see his silhouette, the back of his head. He was a few inches taller than me, and his hair was a little longer. He would've been eleven, I guess, or twelve.

The doorway was pitch black. I didn't remember it looking like that, when we moved in, but in the photo, it was like shadows were spilling around the edges of the doorframe, and it was like they were reaching for him. For my brother. Like he was being swallowed before we ever even stepped inside.

I pulled that photo out and kept flipping through the book, but he didn't reappear in any of the later photos- there were only those black gashes where he should have been. And then, after a point- when I was eleven or so- those stopped appearing, too. Even his shadows were gone.

I went through the whole rest of the book, just to see, but there was no sign of him after that point. He was just gone.

I moved to put the book back, and when I did, I realized... I don't know why I never realized it before, but there was room left at the end of the shelf for another album. Like there should've been another one there, or at least like someone had left space for another one.

And then the lightbulb overhead flickered, plunging me into absolute darkness for a split second, and I didn't even think before dropping the album and sprinting for the stairs.

And that was that.

It sounds silly, looking at it on paper now. And anticlimactic. I don't even know if there was anything to be afraid of, right then. But I *was* scared.

I still haven't gone back downstairs since then.

I do have the photo. That one of my father and my brother and I, on the steps of the house just before we moved in. I want to keep it, but if you want to scan it or whatever, you can. Maybe you'll be able to get more information out of it than I can.

(Pause)

[SCAR]

Wow! You get really into voice-acting those, huh?

[GRIAN]

SCAR!

(Pause, then, accusatory)

Don't *scare* me like that! What are you still *doing* here?

[SCAR]

I didn't want to leave and mess the recording up! Besides, I've never gotten to see you record a full one. Do you get a bonus for expressiveness or-

[Click]

[Click]

[GRIAN]

Scar's gone, so I can actually *focus* now.

I think the most interesting thing about this statement is how it fills in the gaps between the other two statements we have from Scott- he came back to give it just a few months after [Statement 0190915](#), and it sounds like it takes place in the same house as the events of [Statement 0220712](#), the one he recently moved out of.

Unsurprisingly, I wasn't able to find anything on his brother. It's remarkably difficult to find information on a person who doesn't exist. I've been trying to contact Scott to ask if he was able to find anything else in the last few years since this statement was given, but he hasn't answered yet. And given his attitude last time he was here, I don't know how interested he'll be in sharing any more information even if he does have it.

As for this disappearance... I'm not sure what to think. There's not a lot to go on.

It's possible, and probable, that he just... died. Some of these descriptions remind me of the events of [Statement 0110425](#), and so far as I was able to find, no bodies were ever recovered in that case. So it's very possible he was... devoured, grim as it sounds.

Although, speaking of...

Scott's- twenty-eight, if I'm remembering right. If his brother disappeared when he was twelve, or around then, that's... sixteen years ago, give or take, so... 2006? ...Even if those numbers are off, that's still well before Shrub's statement, in 2011. Which obviously isn't *evidence* of anything, but...

Well. (*Clears throat.*)

I guess the question of what happens to people who are... *consumed* but continue to exist has been of personal interest. To me.

Etho did include a photocopy of the picture Scott mentioned in this file, but the quality is terrible. I can't tell if it's just a consequence of copying an already-old Polaroid or something else, but the photo's almost entirely blacked out, except for the very edges. There are some vague shapes, but I can't even tell if there are three people in it or two. I'm thinking about trying to borrow the library's lightbox-

(*Door opens*)

Oh, what do you want *now*?

[SCAR]

Mumbo sent me! Apparently there's someone on the phone who wants to come in to give a statement, but doesn't want to give his full name? Do we have rules about that?

[GRIAN]

Oh. Hmm. Did he say anything else?

[SCAR]

Not much. I guess he said it was 'gravely important'?

[GRIAN]

...You know what? Sure. Have Mumbo tell him he can come in tomorrow.

[Click]

End Notes

at long last, we get a piece filled in here. this isn't the last we'll hear of scott, but it should answer a lot of questions.

i swear to god i was going to call this one 'this old house' at first and then someone reminded me that is, in fact, Literally a tma episode, and i was SO irritated because its such a good title.

who could be coming in next? it's someone we've heard of before, but not seen. would love to see your guesses!

and as always, go listen to the podfic!! it's [posted through stargazer and its supplemental now](#). anniversary will be coming up in just a few days!

also! a little bonus backstory fic to this one can now be found in the marginalia series [here](#)!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!