

## Sherman Hall

“Mr. Arnold, you have got to be the most ignorant, irresponsible, and unmotivated young man I have ever met.”

“Thank you?”

“That was not a compliment.” said Dick Anderson, the Director of the Department of Residence at St. Malachi University. He looked like he hadn’t laugh since Nixon was in office. Which was ironic considering, with his bushy white mustache, thick eyebrows, and huge chin, he resembled Captain Crunch.

“You have been out of college for over a year now and you have no job experience, no letters of recommendation, no outstanding characteristic whatsoever, and you had the guts to fill out the entire job application in *crayon*.” Mr. Anderson tossed an application on his desk with the name Ronald Arnold printed at the top in bright red crayon.

“I can explain that.”

“I don’t want you to explain,” Mr. Anderson interrupted. “Not about the crayon-filled application, the lack of experience, your apparent laziness, or by what miracle you graduated from college. What I want you to explain to me is what in the fiery blazes of Hell convinced you to apply for this position.”

I stood silent, staring at Mr. Anderson. The truth was I didn’t want this job, I was completely content living in my mothers basement. Unfortunately, my mother was not. Her empty threats to kick me out if I didn’t find a job were becoming not so empty. Just last month she sold most of my stuff on eBay and post a sign in front of the house: “Basement for Rent. Good Condition. Human Infestation.”

“I am waiting, Mr. Arnold.”

## Sherman Hall

“I really don’t like the name, Mr. Arnold. It reminds me of my father. Just call me Ron.”

From the look on Mr. Anderson’s face, I hadn’t help the situation.

“Mr. Arnold let me make one thing clear. St. Malachi University is not like other universities. We will only accept the elite candidates. You, Mr. Arnold, with a degree in English from the Coldhog Community College, are not exactly what I call ‘elite.’” Mr. Anderson gave me a long, hard look, straight into the eyes. “ In less than two weeks, a five hundred students will be coming to live in our Residence Halls. But, due to an unfortunate incident we have no hall director for our recently remodeled and reopened Sherman Hall and we have not been able to fill the position... until now.”

I just about choked on the gum I was chewing. “ You want me to be a hall director?”

“ No, Mr. Arnold, I don’t. But, desperate times call for desperate measures. So I am willing to make a deal with you. If you will pretend to be a hall director for Sherman Hall until we can find a suitable replacement, I will guarantee you a full year’s pay.”

I jumped out of my chair and shook Mr. Anderson’s hand. “Thank you, very much.”

“ You’re welcome, Mr. Arnold,” Mr. Anderson said as pulled his hand away. “ But before you go off and drink to your new fortune or whatever it is that you do to celebrate, why don’t we make this little agreement of ours official.” Mr. Anderson pulled out a contract from the top drawer. “ Now all I need you to do is sign there, there, and there.” It seemed too easy, but then I thought it was about time the universe paid me back for cursing me with a name Ronald Arnold. So, I signed and became the new hall director of Sherman Hall.

The residence halls at St. Malachi, five in all, are positioned in northwest edge of campus. Four halls had similar construction, large square boxes made of sandy color cement that

## Sherman Hall

loomed seven stories; on the other hand, Sherman Hall was a two-story horse shoe made of deep red brick.

I arrived to Sherman Hall a little after eleven in the morning, tired, and in need of a nap. (Who ever thought nine am interviews were a good idea should be shot.) Sherman's main entrance was at the center of the building where a single hallway branched off in opposite directions. My room, unfortunately, was located at the far left end. Only the emergency lights were on, so the hallway was poorly lit, and doorways leading to vacant student's room were carved into hallway every several feet. It took almost ten minutes before I reached my destination.

"Home, sweet, home," I said as I grabbed the doorknob.

"Don't touch that!" said deep, commanding voice.

I jumped back and made quick glances in all directions. No one was there. I reached for the knob again.

"I said, 'Don't touch that!'"

This was weird and a little frightening, so I slowly backed away from the door.

"That's right you just walk away, you hairless buffoon." This was the first time I could remember being insulted by a door.

"You think you can grab of whatever you want. There are consequences to those actions, you mindless parasite. Now, if you don't want things to get ugly, I would suggest you leave, you worthless excuse for a carbon based life form."

I was a little confused, but I grasped that the door was talking trash to me.

"You better run, boy, unless you want to know how it feels to be hit by ten thousand splinters."

## Sherman Hall

I had never even been in a fight before, and was not in hurry have one now. So, I took the doors advice and ran as fast as I could.

I ran back down the hallway, while the door continued to shout its insults. I reached the entrance and darted outside. I was so busy looking over my shoulder to make sure the door hadn't sprung off its hinges and coming after me that I didn't see the light pole in front of me. THUD.

"Ronald." a voice called. "Ronald are you okay?"

I opened my eyes and found a beautiful, angelic face with strawberry red hair, deep blue eyes, and a smile of pure joy staring back at me. I was speechless. I tried to think of the something wonderful to say, but instead watch in horror as this angel was replaced by Captain Crunch. I screamed.

"See, Miss Johnson. He's fine." Mr. Anderson said and pulled me to my feet.

"Ronald, are you alright?" said Miss Johnson.

"What happened?"

"You ran into the light pole. You were running pretty fast. Were you running from something?"

I gave her a blank, stupefied stare.

"Come, Miss Johnson, we mustn't waste anymore time."

"But, Mr. Anderson, what about Ronald?"

"Mr. Arnold will be fine. He is a stout young lad. Isn't that right Mr. Arnold?" Mr. Anderson said giving me an evil eye.

"I hope you feel better, Ronald." Her voice was like the harmonic tones of a harp.

## Sherman Hall

“Yes. And try staying away from the light poles, alright Mr. Arnold?” Mr. Anderson said and hurried Miss Johnson along.

“Yes, captain.” I mumbled and watched Mr. Anderson and Miss Johnson make there way to one of four towers behind Sherman Hall.

A little dazed and still confused, I went back inside and staggered to my room. This time the door was standing wide open. Puzzled, knowing that I hadn’t opened it, pause for a moment and walked in. Still tired from my morning excitement, I thought it best to take a little nap and passed out on my bed.

When I woke up it was dark. My watch read 12:30 AM. I had slept a lot longer than I had planned, but I did feel much better. So, I decided it was best to start unpacking my car.

It was a quarter-to-two, before I removed the last box from the car. I was amazed by how much stuff I had, even after my mother sold everything of value on eBay for \$75. I slammed my car door closed and walked back inside.

I heard a noise as I reached my door. A very distinct noise. Footsteps. Someone was inside the building, a trespasser. I drop the box and froze.

“It’s okay, you handle this.” I reassured myself. But truth was I couldn’t handle it. I had no clue what to about trespassers. I have trouble getting stray animals to move away from my car. But feeling like I needed to do something, I moved in the direction of the footsteps.

About a hundred feet from my room, the foot steps stop. I stop. I peered in both directions, but because of the poor lighting I couldn’t see far in any direction. The silence of the hallway added to the tension. After what felt like an eternity, which was closer forty-five seconds, I let out a slight sign. Then the door next to me slammed shut.

## Sherman Hall

I screamed and stumbled backward. Falling to floor, I curled up into the fetal position. My heart was pounding. My knees were shaking. But, Sherman Hall once again remained silent. Time slowly inched by like two snails on a Sunday stroll.

Finally, I looked up. The hallway was empty. I struggled to get myself to my feet and stared at the door that had caused the commotion. My shaking hand reached for the door knob, waiting for it to start yelling insults. I squeezed my eyes shut just as my hand grip the knob. Nothing. I opened my eyes, taking on more strong look at the door, turned the knob.

The room appeared to be empty, but a light breeze hit me in the face from a that window had been left open. I walked over and shut the window and stare outside for a moment. I thick fog had set in, unseasonable for this time of the year. I shrugged. I backed out of the room closing the door behind me.

“This place is wee...” My words where muffled as I hit the floor. I sat up to see what I had tripped over. I froze. There sitting in front of me was my box. The very same box that I had left in front of my door at the other end of the hallway.

“How did this get here?” I stuttered. Suddenly the box shot in the air. I could not move. The box floated right over my head. Every muscle in my body tighten.

A familiar, commanding voice filled the hallway. “Get out here! Get out here, now!”

I tried to move, but my legs and arms would not respond. The box flew against the wall. My Burger King mug collection shattered inside. That was all the motivation I needed. I scrambled to my feet and ran.

Once outside in the street, I stopped to catch my breath. I looked back. Through the darkness and the fog I could just make out Sherman Hall.

## Sherman Hall

“Job or no job, I am not working in a haunted building.” My plan was just to leave immediately, deeming my stuff inside as casualties of war.

I fished for my car keys but they weren't in my pocket. I frantically started searching all my pockets. No luck, I must have left them inside.

“Shit!” I shouted.

There is no way I am going back into the building tonight. I stared back the Sherman Hall and a shiver went down my spine. I walked the rest of the way to my car. Fortunately, I had left the car door unlocked. I crawled in, curled up in the backseat and tried to get some sleep.

I woke up to light rapping on my window. I open my eyes, disbelieving that it was already morning, to a familiar redhead staring at me. I sprung up and quickly got out of the car.

“Good Morning.” I said trying to sound like I meant it.

“Is everything okay?”

“Um... Yes.”

“Why were you sleeping in your car?”

“I have trouble sleeping in new places. I find sleeping near them helps in the adjustment process.” I lied, not really wanting to tell her what had taken place the night before.

“Okay,” She said with a “I don't believe you, but I will go with it any” tone. “Well, I don't believe we have been properly introduced. My name is Jamie Johnson. I am the hall director in Bennett Hall, the hall furthest to right.” Miss Johnson said pointing at Bennett Hall.

“And I am Ronald Arnold, but you can call me Ron. And I am the new hall director for Sherman Hall.”

## Sherman Hall

“ So I have heard. We were all a little surprised that Mr. Anderson was able to find someone. It has been so difficult to fill the position. I mean not everyone is willing to work in a haunted building.”

“ What?”

“ Oh, haven’t you heard the rumors. The last hall director, Mr. Withermier, quit, because he claimed that Sherman Hall was haunted. And news like that spreads fast. Mr. Anderson has been trying to find someone for the past two months.”

“ Mr. Anderson knows that it is haunted?”

“Well, um... I guess Mr. Withermier told him that he believed that it was haunted, but mean it was a rumor and all.”

“I could not believe it that the dried-up, old, prune captain assigned me into a haunted building. What kind of fool does he take me for?” I shouted.

“Ron? Ron is everything okay?” Jamie asked, sounding generally concerned.

“Where is Mr. Anderson?”

“ He most likely in his office. Ron, what is going on?”

“No time to explain.” I yelled as I went running to Mr. Anderson’s office.

Upon reaching the Department of Residence building, I barged into Mr. Andersons office.

“ You bastard! You assigned me to a haunted building.”

“ Mr. Arnold, I didn’t expect to see up so soon.” Mr. Anderson greeted and motioned for me to sit down. “ I see that you caught up with the local gossip.”

“ But it’s not gossip. That building is actually haunted!”

## Sherman Hall

“ Mr. Arnold, I would be careful what you say.” Mr. Arnold pointed to the contract that I had signed yesterday. A part of it was circled, he nodded for me to read it.

*If the position holder removes himself from his position before his contract has ended or otherwise speaks on subjects that would be harmful to the reputation of Sherman Hall and/or St. Malachi University then the position holder could face a fine in excesses of \$100,000 and up to 10 years in jail.*

“ You can’t be serious? This would never hold up in court.”

“ Oh, but it will. You signed the contract.”

“Dang it! I knew it was too good to be true.”

“ That’s right, Mr. Arnold. I would recommend you keep our little conversation secret. I hate to see you end up like Mr. Withermier.” This man was definitely not like Captain Crunch.

“Oh, Mr. Arnold, inspection are today, be sure that your office is in acceptable status.”

I swore I almost saw the man smile when he said that. But I had not to say in reply. So, feeling discouraged and defeated, I trudged out of Mr. Anderson’s office.

Twenty minutes later, I found myself standing in front of Sherman Hall. “Ghost or no ghost, there is no way I am going to jail.” I whimpered. “I mean how hard could living with a ghost? Even if he was determined to snatch your soul and grind your bones to make his bread.” I whimpered again and marched into Sherman Hall.

I surveyed the immediate area. Everything appeared to be normal. Maybe the whole haunting thing was all in my head. Regardless if it was, I wasn’t going to go to jail for it. Trying to make the best of a bad situation, I decided that it might be best to find my office.

## Sherman Hall

My office wasn't far from the main entrance, which made me feel better knowing that I wasn't far from the exit. My office also appeared pretty ordinary. It was a fairly small room with gray walls and no window. The room was empty except for a large metal desk, a chair sitting upside down on top of the desk, and an empty bookshelf ran along the left wall.

"What is acceptable status?" I asked myself. I shrugged my shoulders and grabbed the chair, setting on the floor. I wheeled the chair behind the desk and sat down. To my surprise the chair was much more comfortable than it looked. I leaned back and put my feet up on the desk.

"It looks acceptable to me." I said out loud. I was actually enjoying this. This was the first time in my life I felt like I had some sort of authority and power. I tried to think of some phrases, I heard my hall director say when I was in college.

"You did *what* to the girls' bathroom?" I said mimicking my hall director. "You were caught drinking, gambling, and smoking pot *all* at the same time?" I laughed. Maybe this job wasn't so bad after all. I began opening the drawer to see if there would be adequate space for a Twinkies stash. Just then the door to my office slammed shut.

"Get out my office!" The same commanding voice shook the walls.

"Oh God, not again!" I whimpered and fell out of my chair and crawled to the corner.

"Get out!"

"But... I work here." I stutter.

"You don't belong here. Now get out!"

"But I will go to jail if I don't..."

"Get out, get out, get out!"

"But..." I watch in horror as my desk chair floated in the air. "Listen isn't there anyway we can work out an agreement."

## Sherman Hall

The flew across the room, missing me only by inches. Not wanting stick around to enough the ghost could throw a desk too, I scrambled to my feet and bolted out of the door and right outside.

“Ron, what are you doing?”

I spun around and found Jamie standing behind me. “ Jamie, what are you doing here?” I asked out of breath, and trying to avoid her initial question.

“ Mr. Anderson asked me to do your inspection.”

“Inspection? Now? Um... Now is not a good time.” I take a quick glance back at Sherman Hall.

“Is everything fine?”

“Ah, yeah. Everything is great. I just was about to get some breakfast.” I lied.

“Ron, it’s 12:45.”

“Lunch then. Would you like to join me?” To my surprise she agreed.

“Jamie, what do you know about Sherman Hall?” I asked after we had sat down with our food.

“ Not much. It has just been remodeled and scheduled to open for students this fall. It had been closed for over ten years.”

“Why was it closed?”

“ Don’t really know, I heard that a hall director died in that building. But I am entire sure I believe it.”

“Who would know if a hall director had died in Sherman Hall.”

“Well, I guess, Mr. Anderson would know. Why do you want to know if someone died?”

## Sherman Hall

I could tell that Jamie was turned off by this conversation, but I felt like all the information I could get the better. However, for Jamie's sake, I decided to drop the subject for now and take up the rest with Mr. Anderson.

“Why on earth would you want to know about that?” Asked Mr. Anderson.

“I just like to know all I can about a building, before I work in it.” I lied. “You know, to tell the students.”

Mr. Anderson gave me a look that said he didn't buy my lie, but continued to tell me more anyway. “His name was P. T. Sherman.”

“Sherman?” I asked in surprise.

“Yes, Mr. Arnold, Sherman. We named your building after him. See, eleven years ago, Sherman was one of the finest hall directors at St. Malachi. He set an unprecedented record, working over thirty years as a hall director. Anyway, on his very last night as a hall director before retirement, he died in his sleep. It was a quite an emotional ordeal for the school and the students. Sherman was beloved by many. So I thought it best at the time to close the hall down and mark it for remodeling. Budget cuts just slowed down the process.”

“So P. T. Sherman died in Sherman Hall.”

“Mr. Arnold, must I remind you of our little agreement?” He said pointing to the contract still sitting on his desk.

“Mr. Anderson, how long do you expect me to work in that building?” I asked. “It's hau... has very bad vibes all over it.”

## Sherman Hall

“I told you, until a suitable replacement can be found you must stay in that building. You hear me. I don’t care if the devil himself is wondering the halls you are staying. Now quit wasting my time with your ghost stories.”

For six months I tried to find a job and the first one I get won’t let me leave. Realizing that I wouldn’t get any more out of Mr. Anderson today. I marched back to Sherman Hall.

I was sitting in my empty office, contemplating ways to get out of this job. When there was a knock on my door. At first I thought it Sherman, coming back to torment me some more. But, I much sweeter voice came calling through the doorway.

“ Ron, are you in there?” Jamie called from the other side of the door.

I jumped up and opened the door. “ Jamie? You really shouldn’t be here.”

“Ron, what are you talking about? Remember I am here inspect...” Jamie scanned the inside of my office. “ Ron have you not unpacked yet?”

“Um... no.”

“ Well, what are you doing in here?”

“ I am waiting.”

“ For what?”

“ For the ghost of P. T. Sherman. I need to talk to him.”

“Ronald? Don’t tell me you believe in that superstitious nonsense.”

“ Jamie, its not nonsense. I have seen him. Well, I didn’t really see anything, but I saw him move things. Like earlier today he throw that chair across the room.” I explained.

“ Ron, listen. I think you are a really nice guy. But, you so immature You’re not in school anymore, this is the real world and you have actually work. And you definitely can’t be

## Sherman Hall

making up ghost stories. Now, I am going to give you until tomorrow morning to get the office ready for inspection.”

I nodded.

“ I have to go now, call me if you need anything.”

“I will.” I said and walked Jamie out of the building.

I don't know what was worse. Living in a building with the ghost of retired hall director, or being called immature by Jamie Johnson. I decided she was right. It was time for me to be responsible for my actions and to be an adult. And the first thing I was going to do, was handle a little ghost infestation problem. All I need to do was figure out how.

“ P. T. Sherman, I need to speak to you.” I said in a commanding voice, which sounded like a little girl doing a impression of her father. I had decided the best way to handle this problem was to talk Sherman and get him to stop haunting the building or get him to at least stop throwing things at me.

“ Why have you called me!” Sherman's familiar voice filled the room.

“ Um... yes... I wanted to talk to you. You know, since we were going to be spending so much time together. With both of us being stuck here and all: you because of some afterlife, unfinished business thing and me because of some big shot with a contract written by a half a dozen lawyers. So I was thinking it might be best that we get to know each other better.”

Silence. I prayed that this was a good sign and not like a the eye before the storm.

“ So anyway, I thought we could first start with our names. My name is Ronald... Ron Arnold.”

## Sherman Hall

Silence. I almost thought that maybe I had frightened him away, which was a simultaneous relief and disappointment at the same time. This mix feeling is what cause me to be off-guard for what happened next.

“ Peter Thomas Sherman.” At the very moment Peter Thomas Sherman appeared.

I scream. Fell out of my chair and back against the wall. Sherman seemed unfazed. Sherman’s appearance wasn’t exactly what I expected. He wasn’t transparent or an odd shade of green. He didn’t have a glow or an aura around him. He appeared to be as real and any other person. He was tall man with a nice strong posture. His had a full head of white hair and a stern look on his face.

“ I’m sorry,” I said crawling back to my seat. “ I just wasn’t exactly ready for you just appear.” I made a nervous laugh. “ Anyway, um... Like I said I am Ron and I am going to be the new hall director at here. Um... and how about you?”

Sherman stood silence for moment, just staring at me. I believe he was sizing me up. He must have liked what he saw, because in another moment a he smiled and began to speak.

He explained that the last eleven years has been like solitary confinement, which I had guessed was the cause to most of the rampages on Mr. Withermier and me, and I explained how the building had been closed after he died and only recently been scheduled to be reopened.

But we tried not too dwell on the “confinement” years as Sherman called it. Instead he told me of the days when he was still alive. We talked all through the night. He told me fantastic story about when he about being a hall director. Sherman was a wonderful storyteller and his stories convinced me that maybe this job wouldn’t be so bad after all.

## Sherman Hall

“Then this young man came walking down the hallway wearing his pants as a shirt and shirt as pants...” Sherman began to imitate the kid walking down the hallway when there was a knock at the door. I jumped up and opened the door just a crack.

“Jamie! What are you doing here?” I said nervously.

“Ronald, I am here for the inspection, remember.”

“Um... inspection.”

“Ron, let me guess now is not the time.”

“Um... no not really...”

Jamie pushed open the door and stared face to face with Sherman. Her body stiffened and she went completely white.

“Ron... who... what is that?” Jamie stuttered.

“Oh, I am sorry, how rude of me.” I said calmly. “P.T. Sherman this is Jamie Johnson, Jamie Johnson this is P. T. Sherman”

“Please to meet such a beautiful lady as yourself.” Sherman said. Jamie made a small smile, looked at me, and fell to the floor.”

“Jamie!” I yelled.

“It will be alright, Ron,” Sherman reassured me. “Why don’t you take her outside and lay her on the beach. And I will get your office ready for the inspection.”

“Thanks.” I said and picked up Jamie and carried her outside. I laid Jamie down on a bench. Then without thinking, I bent down and gently kissed her on the lips. Jamie smiled and slowly opened her eyes.

“Ron?” She said in surprise. Then she quickly sat up and slapped me.

“Ouch! What was that for?”

## Sherman Hall

“Where are your manners?” Jamie stormed off.

Sherman stood in the entry way laughing. “Ron, I think I need to teach you a few things about women.”

I looked back and watched Jamie walk away, and I swore I saw her smile.

Jamie didn't remember meeting Sherman; the kiss, however, she never forgot. Two weeks later she agreed to go out with me, and we have dating ever since. I never told Mr. Anderson about Sherman and he never found replacement, which I think was a win/win situation for everyone. Sherman had chose not to reveal himself to the students, which we both thought was for the best to prevent mass hysteria and all. As for me, I have actually enjoyed being a hall director and have done a fairly good job with guidance from Sherman of course. Who would have guessed that an crayon-filled application would have gotten me this far.