



## THE GHOST OF DAN SMOOT

A noise awakened me one night and I got out of bed to investigate. I saw a bluish glow coming through my study's open door. I knew the light was from my computer's monitor, but I distinctly remembered turning the computer off.

When I reached the study I stopped and peered around the doorjamb. A man was sitting at my desk. Or rather, it was the outline of a man. I could see through him to the bookcase on the wall beyond. It was like looking through a bag of water.

I figured I was dreaming and waited to jump somewhere else, as I often do in dreams, but after a full minute I was still standing in the same place. And I'd come to recognize the man at the computer. It was Dan Smoot, a conservative political commentator from the middle of the twentieth century. I knew what he looked like from the thumbnail portrait on the mailers he used to send out. He issued a report each week, then in January the fifty-two issues from the previous year were bound into a book. I'd come across a batch of those books and that's what I was reading at the time.

In the portraits he had black hair and a strong jaw. At my desk his jaw was hard to see, and his hair had no color beyond the blue reflected from the computer monitor.

He turned his face to me and said, "I hope you'll forgive the intrusion. My name's Dan Smoot."

"I know who you are. I've been reading your work."

He gestured to the monitor. "And I've been reading yours."

"I'm . . . I'm dreaming, right? This must be a

dream.”

“No. It’s a supernatural event.”

“A what?”

“A supernatural event. I’m a ghost.”

I wasn’t really surprised. As I get older my knowledge of how much I don’t know continues to expand. And it’s not some slow, creeping expansion; it’s a Big Bang kind of growth. A ghost? Why not?

“Okay, so you’re the ghost of Dan Smoot.”

I stepped into the room and reached for the wall switch, but he asked me not to turn on the light. He said he would fade if I did. So we remained lit by the computer monitor only, and he said, “I didn’t mean to wake you, but I was passing by and got drawn in by your writing.”

He turned back to the monitor and I went around behind him. I looked over his shoulder and saw that he was reading “The Game,” a story I’d written not long before. I waited until he’d scrolled down to the end and finished, then I asked what he thought.

“Of the story? I liked it. It’s packed full of history and political misdeeds.” He swiveled in the chair and faced me. “I hope you keep writing about politics, Ed. It’s more important now than ever.”

“How would you know? I mean, you died twenty years ago.”

“Yes, but I’ve kept informed. I’ve even jumped ahead a bit.”

“You can see the future?” He didn’t respond. “You can, can’t you? Tell me what happens.”

“More of the same unless people change their ways. That’s why it’s important for you to continue to study the past and write about it.”

“Yeah, well, lately whenever I write about the past I wonder if I’m doing it so I can get away from the present. Things are pretty grim nowadays.”

He nodded. I could see through his head to

the story that was still on the screen behind him.

“Would you like to talk about it?” he asked. “About how grim things are?”

“Sure. But you already know, since you’ve kept informed. I mean, for starters the federal government’s been overthrown. At least the executive branch has. Corporate fascists stole the last presidential election and put Joe Biden in the White House.”

“Yes, that was brazen.”

“Disastrous is more like it. Biden’s doing everything he can to destroy America. He’s opened the southern border and let more than five million illegals into the country in just over a year. And he’s given billions of our tax dollars to his mafia buddies in Ukraine. Plus he’s trying to normalize a whole range of sexual perversions.”

Smoot’s bag-of-water head darkened, which reduced the amount of light coming through to his face.

“The sexual perversion is especially disturbing,” he said. “And the scope of it is hard to grasp. Homosexuality and pride are sins, but now America celebrates ‘gay pride’ for a whole month. And monkeypox, the new sexually transmitted disease, is showing up in children and pets.” He shuddered. “Homosexuality, pedophilia, bestiality. Surely God will punish us, like He did Sodom and Gomorrah.”

“I’d say we’re doing a pretty good job of punishing ourselves. Look at the economy. Inflation is skyrocketing, and congress just passed a so-called ‘inflation reduction act’ that will make it worse. The act gives the IRS eighty billion dollars. That’s eight times its annual budget. They said they’ll use the money to hire nearly ninety thousand new agents. And a couple months ago, after they bought a half-billion additional rounds of ammunition, they added ‘willing to use lethal force’ to their job postings. It’s pretty clear that they plan to kill off

the middle class, either by audit or murder.”

“The destruction of the middle class has always been a communist priority,” Smoot said. “You’re right about corporate fascists being behind Biden, but he’s promoting communism. As I explained in volume seven, number seventeen of my report, both communists and fascists want centralized government. And in America they’re working together to achieve it.” He gestured over his shoulder, to my computer. “I saw that you plan to address their cooperation in a story.”

“I do? Which one?”

“You haven’t given it a title yet, but some notes for it are in one of your ‘Jeremiad’ folders. You describe how the Republicans and the Democrats play off of each other in order to advance an anti-American agenda.” Smoot turned to the computer, clicked around and then read aloud. “George W. Bush gave his big bank donors a seven hundred billion dollar bailout as he left office (fascism), then Obama followed up with eight hundred billion for unnecessary social programs (communism). One and a half trillion stolen from the Treasury would have led to electoral problems for whichever party took it, so the theft was split between a Republican and a Democratic president. Trump and Biden did the same with spending on Covid, but the amount was much higher. Several trillion. In two years under Trump/Biden the U.S. increased the number of dollars in circulation by twenty percent. It’s obvious to even the most simple-minded that this kind of spending will diminish the buying power of the dollar and eventually destroy it, resulting in the breakdown of American society.’”

Smoot swiveled to face me again. He said, “You’re right about the dollar collapsing under the weight of so much spending. And it’s a planned collapse. Democrats and quite a few Republicans want to destroy our economy so they can rebuild

us as a communist nation.”

“We call that kind of Republican a RINO now. Republican In Name Only.”

“I know. And they’re doing as much or more than Democrats to advance the communist cause in America. Conservative voters watch for loss of liberties when leftist politicians are in power, but they let their guard down after Republicans are elected.”

“You talked about that pretty often in your reports. I’m only on my second book of them, but they’ve taught me a lot. I guess the biggest surprise so far has been Eisenhower. He was a Republican, so I always assumed he was a conservative. But according to you he wasn’t.”

“Eisenhower,” Smoot muttered. His face darkened again. “He was elected president to fight communism, but he did just the opposite. After he took office in nineteen fifty-three he gave half of Korea to the communists. And then when Stalin died he passed up a chance to destroy the Soviet Union. All he had to do was fund the anti-communist rebellions that broke out in the Soviet member states, but he didn’t, so the Soviets were able to reestablish control and continue on as a dictatorship. Eisenhower aided the growth of international communism the whole time he was president. Near the end of his second term he gave a speech where he said, quote, ‘We envisage a single world community, as yet unrealized but advancing steadily toward fulfillment through our plans, our efforts, and our collective acts.’ End quote. That’s communism, a one-world collective. That’s what Eisenhower worked for.”

“So, why didn’t conservatives hold him accountable?”

“Because they got distracted. Technology flourished in America after World War Two, and like everyone else conservatives were transfixed by

flashy new gadgetry. They forgot about the communists in their midst. And now you're paying the price. Like with that IRS situation. The military isn't allowed to forcibly enter private homes in America, but the IRS is, so communists are militarizing the agency."

"To steal people's money."

"That's what communists do. They steal money and put it into a big federal pot, then they redistribute through subsidization."

"And whatever the government subsidizes, it controls. I read that in one of your reports. You wrote a lot about communist methods and philosophy."

"Yes, well, it's not much of a philosophy. Its fundamental flaw lies in the fact that each communist is an individual. And according to communist doctrine, individuals are incapable of managing their private affairs. So how can a group of individuals be expected to manage the affairs of a nation?"

Smoot chuckled at the absurdity of what he'd just described, and while his mind was elsewhere I tried again to find out about the future. I did it in a roundabout way though, by asking if conservatives would do well in the midterm elections that were coming up.

"Now now," he said, serious again. "I told you I can't talk about things like that. But why don't you tell me how you think the elections will turn out?"

"Okay. Worst-case scenario, the bad guys will once again steal every race they can and continue to drive us into poverty. Over time they'll force most of us off the land and into compact cities, where they'll release plagues and starve us to death."

"And the best-case scenario?"

"Conservatives will win. Our efforts to affect

political change by spreading information will pay off.”

“We tried to do that with my reports, to spread information to voters.”

“I know, and no disrespect to the work you did, but your snail mailers were awfully slow in getting the word out.”

“That’s why we expanded into radio and TV, to reach people more quickly. But we could never get beyond the local markets. The national networks were controlled by leftists who wouldn’t carry our programs.”

“Yeah, well, things are different now, with the internet. A story or an opinion can reach millions in a day. And that makes it easier to hold the bad guys accountable. We can expose their scams almost as soon as they run them. But the downside to that is that now, because they have to jump from one scam to the next so quickly, they’ve pretty much emptied their bag of tricks. So lately they’ve begun pushing for civil war in America. They don’t care if it’s race war, class war, or a war between political groups; they just want us killing one another. Which I guess would be worst-case scenario number two. Instead of depopulating in a slow and orderly manner, they blow things up so they can declare martial law and butcher us as they rebuild.”

“Write about both scenarios. People need to know what’s in store for them.”

“So that’s what’s going to happen to the country, one of my worst-case scenarios?”

“All I can say about the future is that totalitarians plan to destroy America. They have to, because of our constitution. It’s the single biggest impediment to world government. As I stated in report number twenty-six, volume six, the basic principle of American society is that government has no power except that which the people give it,

the people having received their rights from God. America is the only nation, ever, whose institutions and organic law were founded on this principle. And the communists can't allow such a nation to exist. They must destroy America and eradicate all memory of its constitution. If they can do that, then the world will become a collection of regional tyrannies that can be controlled by a central authority. And it will be a thousand years before men are able to rise once again to the level of freedom they let slip away."

We passed a long moment in silence, then my bedside alarm went off. I get up early to write and it was still dark outside the windows. I didn't know if I'd be writing that morning, with Smoot at my desk, but when I came back from turning off the alarm he was gone. My computer was still on so I sat down and went to work.