

White Gate
Heath Lane
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Wednesday, May 22nd

Dear Karen,

Namaste.

Do you believe in fate? I think we have to. After all, how else is it that I come to visit the UK just days after you interview my uncle for your magazine? And yet here we are – and I'm grateful, of course, because we have something very important to discuss.

Let me explain. My name is Lisa Gardner – née Paris. My father was the explorer and writer John Paris. Andrew Paris is my uncle. I've lived in the USA, on and off, for the past eighteen years, ever since my mom took me out here in the spring of 1973. But last week my husband Jared and I flew to the UK to catch up with some wonderful old friends of ours, and we're now staying with Andrew at White Gate for the next week or two. The house sits right on top of two intersecting ley lines – as I'm sure you felt – and the energies here really are something else. You can spend days and days simply walking through the garden and the surrounding woods, just soaking it up.

And it's while I've been staying at White Gate that I came across your article – I think my uncle must have bought a copy of the magazine out of curiosity. And I'm writing to correct a mistake in it. You mention that my dad committed suicide in October 1973. I'm sure that's what my uncle told you, and I'm sure that's what the reports from the time will tell you, but it's quite simply wrong. My dad did not kill himself. I know he didn't – better still, I *feel* it. You may too.

I'm familiar, of course, with the details of my dad's passing. I'm aware that he was seen walking into his study at White Gate that evening. And I'm aware that when Uncle Andrew and his friend discovered his body the door was locked from the inside and the two windows were latched from the inside as well. And so he and the police and every other level-headed, straight-talking man jumped instantly to the same level-headed, straight-talking conclusion – that it was suicide. It's an obvious enough deduction, sure. Except for one, equally obvious objection: why? Why would my dad choose to end his life? He loved life more than anyone else I knew or know. When most of us are content to merely let it wash over us, he dived right in. Every day there was something to conquer. So why would this man suddenly change his mind after 38 years?

The usual answer to this question is that he couldn't handle mom leaving and taking me with her. That pained him greatly, of course. I know. But it wasn't in my dad's nature to accept finalities. The divorce was simply another obstacle he would overcome. He still loved my mom and planned on winning her back one way or another. He even told me so on the phone just days before it all happened.

And he was still a devoted father too despite the sudden distance between us. That didn't change. Don't you think his letters and calls would have contained at least a hint of spiritual anguish he must have been feeling had he been in that state of mind? Of course, you would expect him to shield his thirteen-year-old daughter from such things. But children have an innate receptiveness to emotions and spirit. They instinctively know when someone is hurt or sad or happy or lonely, and often before that person knows it themselves. And me and my dad were always close – and still are, in a very real way. So I would have been able to tell if something was troubling him, especially deeply enough for him to do what people say he did.

They tell me he was lonely, or depressed, but I can't believe that. You think of a big old house like White Gate and you assume its owner must be rattling around in there, talking to shadows – but dad wasn't like that at all. He loved friends and company. Besides, Andrew was living with him, so there was always someone he could talk to.

I know what you're thinking. Of course I'd say he didn't take his own life. That's what everyone says. I mean, you'd have to have really given up on someone to actually *expect* them to kill themselves. And then there's the matter of the locked door and windows – if he didn't commit suicide, how do we explain the matter of a killer who can slip in and out of a locked room? This is what seals the issue for my uncle and the police and everyone else. But we're not dealing with a killer that bothers with doors and locks.

Here in the West we've become so used to dealing in cold hard certainties that we panic and look the other way whenever something doesn't seem to make sense. We spend our lives rushing around with our heads down, hoping never to encounter anything that might force us to question our so-called certainties about the universe. So many minds are shut tight, like fortresses into which not even a glimmer of sunlight can penetrate. And so when people come across an inexplicable situation – a vivacious man who turns a gun on himself, for instance – they quickly accept the easiest solution they can think of out of sheer relief of not having to question anything any further.

However, if we want to uncover the truth about what happened to my dad that night we need to look beyond the mere physical evidence. We need mind, body, *and* spirit, working together holistically. If you only look at the world using the mind, with its self-assured logic and reason, then you're missing most of the picture. Allow yourself to be open to the subtleties of the universe – the knowledge that can't be deduced and calculated, but *sensed* and *felt*.

Now look again at that October night in 1973. Straight away we notice something that everyone else has overlooked: my dad wasn't alone in that room that night. No, there wasn't someone else there – but there was *something*. A presence, a malign force. A very cruel, evil energy. The Hungry Corpse.

You see, my dad owned a tribal mask he'd acquired on one of his adventures. Known as the Hungry Corpse, it is a mask of such powerful darkness that even its creators feared it. That mask was hanging over the fireplace in his study that night, and it was there looking down at him when his body was found. It is, I am convinced, the root of all the horror and evil that happened there.

I've always hated that mask. I remember when my dad first showed it to me after he returned from Australia in 1965. As a girl I always thought it looked like a witch or a hag, with that hooked nose and those horrible black teeth. And that hair, so dry and matted. As soon as I laid my eyes on it I felt a profound malice emanating from it. I still feel it every time I have to walk past dad's old study here at White Gate - can you believe my uncle still keeps it there?

It was only when I read my dad's account of finding the mask the other day that I realised there was a very good reason for these ominous feelings I've been receiving. I've enclosed a photocopy of that account from my dad's 1968 book, *Adventures in the Southern Hemisphere*, which explains it better than I can. Essentially, when this mask was created it was imbued with a dark energy. This in itself was a common practice among the ancients, who did it as part of their spiritual cleansing activities. But something must have gone wrong with this mask, for it was bestowed with too much negative power - a darkness which festered inside it, growing stronger all the time, until it could no longer be properly contained by the mask.

Sadly, for all his knowledge of the mask and its spiritual dangers, I don't think my dad ever believed in it. He was - shall I say? - spiritually careless. For there's a great difference between knowing and believing, and it's a distinction I think we've forgotten here in the West. To claim you know something is to arrogantly assert your mastery over it - to insist that physics and chemistry and computers can explain everything away as atoms and molecules. To believe, on the other hand, is quite distinct - there's an act of faith at work there. And in that faith is the humility to acknowledge and accept that we don't have all the answers - that some things simply can't be explained rationally. And that's OK. It's healthy, in fact.

And this is where I think my poor dad made his mistake. He knew about the mask better than most - he knew the stories, the legends, the warnings - but he refused to believe them. And just look what happened as a result. He spends a night alone in his study with that horrible thing, and is found dead. Driven mad with fear? Or something even more sinister? Whatever happened, it was not suicide. You must believe me.

I tried to explain this to Uncle Andrew just now but he would have none of it. Of course not. Why do you think he's so obsessed with 'debunking' things? Because he can't accept what happened to his brother. He knows just as well as me that my dad would never have killed himself, and he's been running away from that thought ever since. He travels around the world telling people that spirits and magic and supernatural forces aren't real, because he's trying to tell himself that they aren't real. In all honesty I feel sorry for him, to have shut himself off from higher thoughts like that. But truth has a way of revealing itself, no matter how many attempts we make to hide it.

I hope you'll read the enclosed chapter. And please make sure to read it with an open mind - drop any journalistic scepticism you might have picked up and simply allow yourself to imagine what's possible in this universe. And do keep in touch - together we might be able to spread this knowledge further.

With peace, love, and understanding,

Lisa