

A LETTER FROM JOE

Dear Billy:

I'm the guy who bought your grandpa's ghost from your mother on e-Bay, which package is hereby returned with the request that you share this message with your mom.

I'm a former e-Bay addict. First time I got cheated was on my purchase of a shrunken head from Brazil. That was three years ago. It was shriveled, with stringy black hair and blue bead eyes with white flecks. It had a few fake ivory teeth. Label said "Made in China."

At fifty-two, I should have learned not to be so trusting, but I couldn't resist the lure of rediscovering life as a newly single man, after my wife ran off with my best friend's son, so I paid half-price for a sunset cruise in Waikiki. I got myself in the mood by mail ordering a fake grass skirt made of green cellophane strips and some Hawaiian ukelele CDs to provide the rhythm of the hula. While waiting for the ticket to arrive, I practiced the hip rolls I planned to do on the boat's dance floor.

Finally, the envelope containing my ticket arrived. It contained an ad from the AAA magazine with a coffee-stained sticky note in bold-faced fat text caps: LOL HSS. It must have meant: LOTS OF LAUGHS, HAPPY SAILING SUCKER.

So, it was with some nervous trepidation that I made my third foray into e-Bay trading. I was screwed again. I bought an authentic Ancient Egyptian Third Dynasty mummy that was a bandage-wrapped desiccated tomcat. Probably roadkill.

And then there was the petrified dung from the ass Mary was touted as having ridden while expecting the most famous baby in all human history. Turned out to be common pebbles. No shit!

So, Billy, your cheating mom took me for a fool or sucker or chump, but she was wrong. The box she sent me containing your Gramps's Ghost was empty, except for one thing. When I removed the rubber tip from his hollow cane, ten thousand bucks fell out. A sticky note in shaky handwriting was attached: *For Billy's college fund . . . Gramps.*

Billy, please thank your mother for curing me. I am herewith returning the ghost, but keeping the cash.

Joe