



Promises I Made My Mother

Sam Haskell, David Rensin

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What would my mother say? How would she want me to handle this situation? How can I make this tough decision and stay true to myself?

What would my mother say?

Sam Haskell still asks himself these questions every day.

When Haskell was young, his devoted mother, Mary, instilled in her son the values of character, faith, and honor by setting an example and asking him to promise to live his life according to her lessons. He did, and those promises have served Haskell consistently from his Mississippi boyhood to his long career at the venerable William Morris Agency in Beverly Hills.

In this inspiring memoir full of touching stories and amusing anecdotes, Haskell reveals how he kept his pledge to his mother to live a decent life—even in the shark-infested waters of Hollywood, where he handled the hottest stars and packaged the highest-rated shows—by refusing to become the cliché of an amoral agent. Here is Haskell as a child in Amory, Mississippi (pop. 7,000), discovering the power of hope as he waits for an unlikely visit from the “Cheer Man” (a representative of the detergent company who gave ten dollars to anyone using the brand), learning humility after pursuing an eighth-grade “Good Citizenship” award he cockily assumed he’d win, confronting the complications of human character when a near-fatal car crash exposed his judgmental father’s true nature.

Years later, in Hollywood, Haskell would rely on his mother’s teachings—honesty, self-reliance, and belief in God—as he swiftly rose from the William Morris mailroom to eventually become the company’s Worldwide Head of Television. His capacity for friendship and his insistence on living his version of the Golden Rule (being “thoughtfully political”) allowed him to handle various client crises and the tense negotiations that nearly scuttled the last years of *Everybody Loves Raymond* and the entire existence of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*.

Haskell has achieved success through self-respect, and from his story we learn how we, too, can maintain our dignity when faced with life’s challenges. This stirring memoir is a testament to mothers everywhere who instill in their sons the lasting values they need to become good men and devoted fathers.

From the Hardcover edition.

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