

HIDE AND SEEK

A POET'S MEMOIR

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BY GARRET POTTER

Hide And Seek: A Poet's Memoir, Second Edition
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Preface

This is a book, written by a poet. It is an independent book debut. Independent means that I have worked twelve to fourteen hours per day, six days a week, by myself, in order to share this. While I have had the proof-reading help of several friends and family members, it is almost certain that we at least missed something (typos, misspellings, etc.). I welcome you to help out in the future.

Though formally trained and accomplished in “proper” structure and formatting, I am intentional in my choice not to use them here. I write spoken word poetry (poetry written to be spoken). In order to best communicate visibly how I do audibly, even in the essays, letters, and memoirs, much of the structure is that of poetry, prose, and/or script lines. Should you like to understand my tone, you may first want to either meet me or listen to one of my recordings. I welcome both.

There are no tabs at the beginnings of paragraphs, and though there is compassion in the content, I have given no concern to “orphans” and “widows” in the format. In the poems there are parentheses around words that are optional when speaking them, depending on the flow. Every live performance is a little different, and I allow myself this flexibility. Brackets are around words that I do not speak when performing, but I like on the page. And, there will be commas—lots of them! These denote pacing and where to pause.

If there were not
I would instead
start a new line
for each pause
and this book
would be
eight-hundred
wasted paper pages
long.

The outline of the book finds structural support from the poetic and scholarly genius of Abraham Maslow, specifically from his “Theory of Human Motivation.” It goes out from there to the broader needs of the planet and also narrows in on the cultural anomalies of people in cities and suburbs.

In the process of compiling this work, I reviewed the past ten years of my writing: poems, memoirs, journals, letters, and notes. This has served to remind me that clearly I have lost my mind, many times, throughout the past ten years.

I watched *Legends Of The Fall* again recently. This time, the introductory line struck me: “Some people hear their own inner voices with great clearness. And they live by what they hear. Such people become crazy...or they become legends.” I accept my craziness. And I hope to write a good legend with my life.

After going out on a date once, I walked a young woman to her door. (This stereotypically is the window of opportunity to risk accelerating affection in the form of a kiss.) And though I wanted to kiss her and was almost certain that she wanted to kiss me, instead I told her, “I’m asking myself how I want this poem to go. We write about what we experience. It can go however we want it to. I want to be able to write a good poem.”

This collection includes some of that poem. All that is printed here echoes of episodes from the past ten years of my life. Many build off of the intricacies of my story up until then, while others are new and build off of things I had never been exposed to before. Some I am learning by way of first-hand experience. The rest is admittedly second-hand, learned from documentary films, books, movies, articles, songs, interviews, and stories. Many of the lessons therein were not afforded to me as a youth in the suburbs. I am creating one more avenue to change that for people today.

I have “done my homework.” All of the resources I refer to are cited in the Signatures section. Many of these link to free downloads and worthwhile resources. I encourage you to stop reading, if you so

desire, at each and any point to look deeper. Every song, film, quote, and book opens another library to explore.

And, I understand that despite my work, at a later date, I will realize that I have been either under-informed or blatantly misinformed on some matters published here. I do not doubt that. So if you find that my syllabi was lacking, I invite you to assign me something good. I have no intention to cease learning or living the questions that make legends.

I am sharing these memoirs, essays, and poems, because out of their substance and content I have made significant life changes—changes for which I am grateful. I have written this to myself at seventeen, knowing what it would mean to me then. But without a time machine, I have no way of getting this to my younger self.

Instead, I am inviting you to come with me, on the last ten years of my experience. This is an invitation. I have not written and printed it so that it may sit on shelves, nor to make me rich. I said goodbye to a wonderful workplace, home, and community, knowing that I might face hunger, discomfort, and poverty. I have done this in order to share—to act on my value for contribution. While I enjoy comfort, more recently I have felt the pains of labor.

I have been pregnant. This poem was conceived in me. Now it is born—delivered. Here...

hold it close. Very carefully. You may see your resemblance in its eyes. You may find it has your lips, your hands, your needs. And as you listen, it will ask you, in different words, the questions you've been living. And it just might ask the one that you will begin to live next.

Introduction

These pages bear no answers, only questions.

For any ensuing answer-like phrasing, I apologize and blame sudden onset dyslexia. For instance, should the words “You can” appear, know that what is meant is, “Can you?” Especially in the case of the words, “You should,” know that what is meant is “Should you?”

Furthermore, not all question marks were printed properly, many lacking the entire upper portion, thus looking exactly like periods; my apologies for these. For all facts enclosed were planted as questions, sprouted into hypothesis, budded into theories, and bloom as new and better questions?

“I tell you that I have a long way to go before I am—where one begins...You are so young, so...I want to beg you, as much as I can, to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. Resolve to be always beginning—to be a beginner” (Rainer Maria Rilke)!

Reconciling my apartment complex

I remember the words of Mr. Rogers.

As children we listened to this
sweater swapping, shoe changing, old friend,
extend his unconditional invitation
via the television:

"Won't you be my neighbor?"

And this recent memory
sank into an open wound
as I laughed at the irony
of The Golden Rule in my life.

It is written,
"Love your neighbor as yourself."
(But) I forget it.
I fear my neighbors
as I fear to share myself.

My ideas to initiate "friendly" communication
with these familiar strangers
are paralyzed by pessimism,
as I think through countless things
that they might be thinking.
But I cannot know what they are thinking
unless I meet them, and they tell me.
And thus far, I know little more
than what I've seen
between their front doors and our street.

Like Mr. Across-The-Way,
he constantly calls for taxis
when all he'd have to do is ask me
for a lift, but I have been there,
wondering how to ask for help
from those to whom

I have offered so little of myself.

And better yet,
why doesn't Mr. Across-The-Way
call Mr. Downstairs
to take him places?
Since he drives a taxi for a living,
to keep his family living
here, so near I hear their conversations
through the ventilation,
though we don't exchange much face to face.
We are so closely
disconnected.

And ironically, on Friday nights
my roommates order pizza delivery from strangers,
when that's how (our neighbor),
Mr. Next-Door, earns his wages
to rent the space just inside the next door,
with his wife, new born boy, and little girl.
We are so closely
disconnected.

And all these close missed connections
fail to set the broken bones
in our closeted relational skeletons,
whose divides require stitches [of thread]
that don't have to come from family ties,
but may be laced into my neighbors' shoes—
those I rarely imagine standing in,
though I daily retrace their steps.

We walk on top of the same concrete block sidewalks,
park our bikes and cars in the same lots
and navigate around the same puddles,
bus routes, traffic signals, ugly carpet, and plumbing;
we just don't consider each other "close."

Though we reside only meters away

from the places our neighbors
lay (down at night) to sleep,
and awake to take their first breath
in the morning.

I'm sure if I thought more about it,
I'd realize how vulnerable I am
behind my walls,
inside my boxed in shelter place,
when I'm lounging and napping,
showering and eye-brow tweezing,
grunting, and farting,
praying, and dancing—
actions I do naturally alone
just not so well in front of others.

I am not always publicizing my private life,
just wishing I weren't the only one in it.

Sometimes I need help,
community—
to be mutually woven
into another's consideration.

Why not Mr. and Mrs. Next-Door?
Why not rely on them?
Why do I commute all across this city
to talk honestly with a friend
when inside I long to share with someone near,
who knows and understands
what I go through
first hand.

I hate residing in hiding,
in fear of exposure,
presuming to know what everyone (around me) is thinking.

But my apartment space is (too often) vacant,
(though) surrounded by (too many) acquaintances.

I hate knowing them as strangers!
But, I'd love to become friends.

And, my personal space is vacant,
(though) surrounded by acquaintances.

I am through with knowing strangers!

"Won't you be
my neighbor?"