
Hearing Voices

Volume 5: Collected Stories
& Drawings of Brian Andreas



ISBN 0-9642660-5-9

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The people in this book, if at one time real, are now entirely fictitious, having been subjected to a combination of a selective memory and a fertile imagination. Any resemblance to real people you might know, even if they are the author's relatives, is entirely coincidental, and is a reminder that you are imagining the incidents in this book as much as the author is.

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First Edition: July, 1998
Second Edition: March, 2004
Third Edition: April, 2008



*To my sons, David Quinn & Matthew Shea, for all their
exuberance & questions & completely original way of
simplifying complicated things*

*& always, to Ellen, my partner & love, for her life & passion &
song & for reminding me of the dreams you must never leave
behind...*

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Hearing Voices

Introduction

I've been hearing voices for a long time now. Not great choirs of angelic voices that come down in a blaze of glory. Not the voices of the prophets, or the news at eleven, or the jumble of psychic static that comes with too many people in one place. The voices I hear are soft voices, filled with sunlight & the warmth of the earth, letting me know that everything I touch & see & feel is alive. They want me to know that they're doing well, in case I'm interested.

For a long while, I thought I was special, that I had been chosen to make sense of everything they told me. If I could put the voices together, perhaps find their hidden pattern, the quick connections between them, I'd have the secret of life. I'd be like the alchemists of old, armed with the Philosopher's Stone, able to make the dead dance & the living soar, turn water into wine, rocks into gold. I'd have power beyond my wildest dreams.

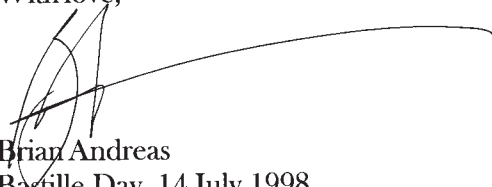
Fortunately, the voices had other ideas. They reminded me that I didn't know as much as I pretended to. They told me to act now, but they didn't leave an operator standing by. They made me laugh out loud when everybody else was being serious. They argued in public & made me wait until they finished. They didn't stop to ask for directions. They never believed that sometimes I needed sleep, so they stayed up late & talked back to the tv. They spoke through anybody who happened to be nearby, not really caring whether I wanted to listen or not. They were good at saying, I told you so, but they tried not to. They liked the smell of wet dirt after a rain & weeding the garden & the way a baby's head wobbles when it first sits up & they weren't afraid to admit it. They yelled at me when I did stupid things, but they usually sat down & helped me figure out a way to fix it. They liked to pretend that they were scared of the dark, but I wasn't fooled. They whispered in my ear constantly, telling me to notice this, watch that, don't forget.

Finally, I learned to just listen, & unexpectedly, they taught me the secret of life. Be a lover. That was it: be a lover. When you love, whether a child, or your work, or the feel of the wind licking your skin, you are in a state of grace. You aren't asking your love to be anything more than what it is. The paradox is that what it is, is beyond imagining. It is real & true & very rarely what you expect.

In my work as an artist, most of the time I don't have the faintest idea what's going to happen. I sit down & feel the world around me & in me. I become enchanted, in the best sense of the word - I am filled with delight. I listen to the voices of my heart. I draw a line. I draw another line. I remember the time I won a whole bag of marbles from my next-door neighbor. I remember going to the beach with all my cousins. I draw more lines. I remember more things. I keep putting down lines. Every line is a whisper of memory, of my life at that moment. People ask me how I come up with the stuff I do. I tell them it's all right there when I listen. It is a powerful act of love to simply listen well & fully.

At some point while I was playing with the pieces of this fifth book, it struck me that perhaps these stories were the Philosopher's Stones. Our stories make the dead dance & the living soar. They turn water into wine & rocks into gold. They give us power beyond our wildest dreams. Perhaps our stories do something even greater than that, something we haven't even considered in our small vision. Something like helping us all to listen. Reminding us to pay attention to the soft voices. Perhaps. There may be answers hidden in the quick connections of this book. Or maybe they're just beyond the edges, waiting for us to hear. Until then, I've enjoyed putting these stories together. I hope you will, too...

With love,

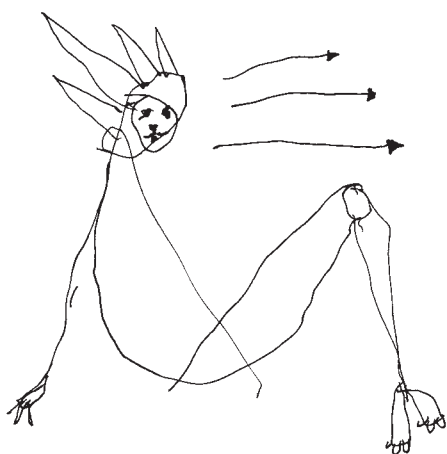


Brian Andreas
Bastille Day, 14 July 1998

I used to hear
voices a lot,
but then I read
up on it &
found out
they don't exist

so now I don't
listen to a word
they say.

One morning she decided to throw away the paper & not say a word & listen to the real news & by the end of the day, she knew that while people were sometimes confused, the rest of the world was not & she slept soundly that night for the first time since she was a young girl.



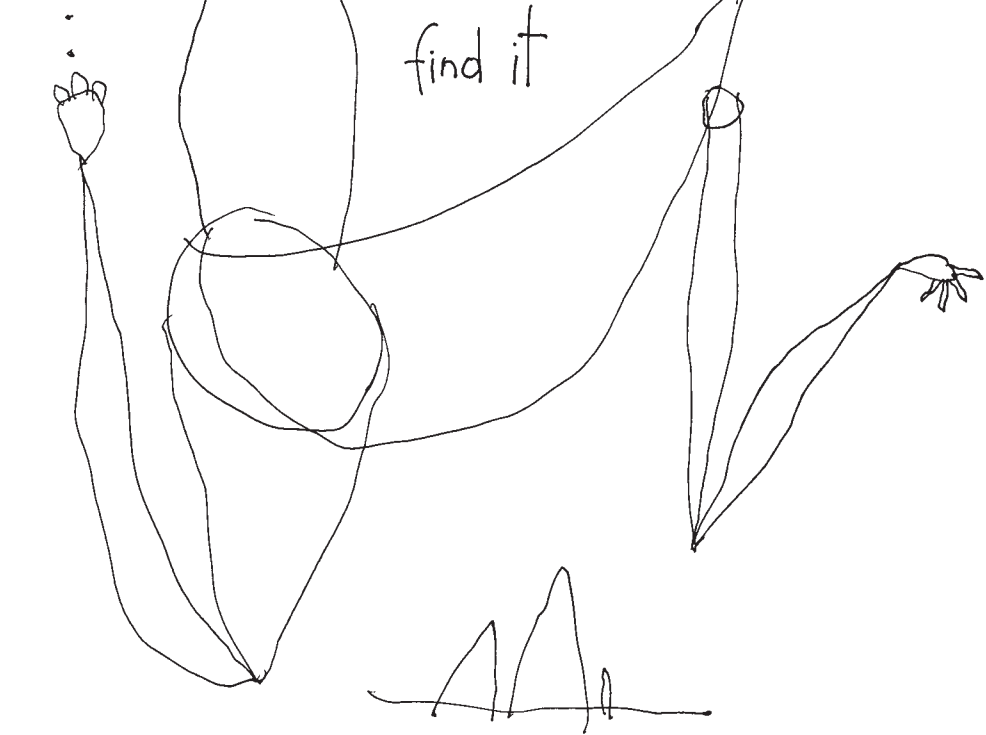
Just because I keep my eyes open doesn't mean I'm paying attention. Sometimes I'm just trying to get my contacts to slide back in place.

The most important
thing

stuff that'll
be worth
something
someday
when
people's
priorities
change

you leave behind
is the stuff that
turns into
treasures
when children
find it

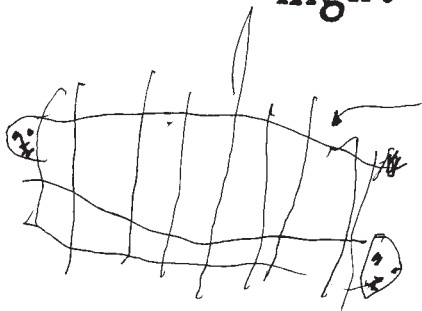
...



Treasures

It's hard to say
the right words
without practice,
I said & she
whispered in my
ear, Say them
as many times
as you like

& we practiced
late into the
night



← tied together by stuff
too difficult
to explain to
someone new

How'd it go at soccer?
I said & he said we worked
on fundamentals & I said
like why you were even
chasing around after a
ball in the first place?

& from the way he
looked at me I
figured out that
was probably
too fundamental.