
Trusting Soul

Volume 6: Collected Stories
& Drawings of Brian Andreas

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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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StoryPeople

P.O. Box 7

Decorah, IA 52101

USA

563.382.8060

563.382.0263 FAX

800.476.7178

storypeople@storypeople.com

www.storypeople.com

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*To my sons, David Quinn & Matthew Shea, for the
immense gifts of spirit & strength & creativity they bring
to this world we call home*

*& always, to Ellen, for the bright light of her love & her
exquisite way of calling forth extraordinary lives from
everyone she touches*

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Trusting Soul

Introduction

My working title for this book was 'The Roaring Dance', from a story that went like this: feeling every cell of her body, roaring & dancing & laughing. As I sorted the stories, I kept that in mind, how each one of these stories burst with the pleasure of simply being alive. But somehow, the stories had their own idea. They asked me to take another look at what these past two years had been & how they had transformed me. They showed me how often I had looked uncertainly into the future & how often that future had unfolded perfectly, though not always without a bit of uncomfortable stretching. They kept whispering of trust & intention & choice. Along the way, I never saw it. But after spending weeks with all these stories, it came clear to me: while I love being alive a whole lot, I also like to keep one eye peeled for danger. Even if I have to make it up, so I won't have wasted all that time peeling.

I had my reasons. We all do. Mine was my family. I had myself convinced that if I could prevent enough of the possible crises that come with having two children, that we'd all be safe & dry & warm & our lives would be perfect. It was easy when they were younger. We covered the electric sockets & had them wear bike helmets three times the size of their heads & made them chew every bite fifty times. But as they grew up & went out into the world on their own, it became much more subtle & difficult & constant. Does an R-rated movie lead to lasting psychic damage? What about too much Disney? What do you do about groundwater contamination? How do you get kids to eat more roughage? It felt like I was playing some weird game with an opponent who never slept & kept switching sides without warning.

Then suddenly, or maybe not so suddenly, but inevitably, I understood that there is one thing you cannot prevent & it's the same for all of us, whether we have children or not. It's called life

& no matter how we plan & barricade & outline with bright yellow safety paint, life itself remains inherently dangerous & unpredictable. Somewhere along the way, I had forgotten that simple fact.

But the stories didn't. They reminded me that the future arrives whether I like it or not. It comes of its own accord & pays little attention to my wishes. They pointed out, ever so gently, that the future is what you bring with you & it's very easy in this wildly heaving & panting world of ours to bring along things you really have no need of: fear & hatred & greed & doubt & on & on.

I think that's it, after all. The future is what you bring with you & you get to choose. I think of the stories & drawings in this book as the things I have chosen, the suitcase I've packed for the future. It's only the essentials, because I know you'll bring stuff, too. I packed the lilt of a voice, the curve of a neck in laughter, the glance between people who have wrapped up in each other in the soft night. I've put in memories of my grandparents & other made-up people because it seemed like they'd be fun to have around. I've thrown in more than enough packages of love & play & chocolate because the future can always use extra of those & I sneaked in a few unexpected gifts, simply because there is no greater joy than an unexpected gift to a trusting soul.

In fact, you could consider this book packed full of gifts for the future. Gifts of laughter & silliness. Of questions that quite possibly have no answer. Of moments that tie together in a net that will always catch you, whether you believe it or not. The future is what you bring with you & this is what I've brought. I know it's enough to at least get us started.

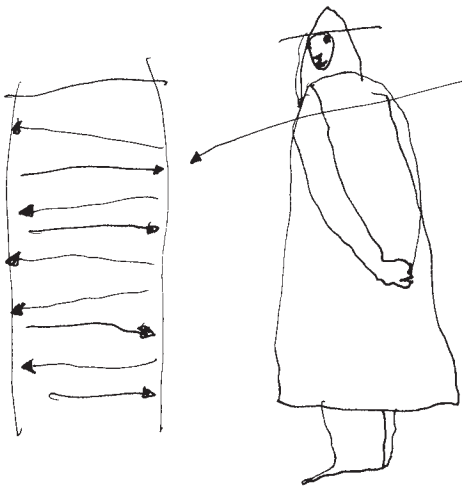
With love,



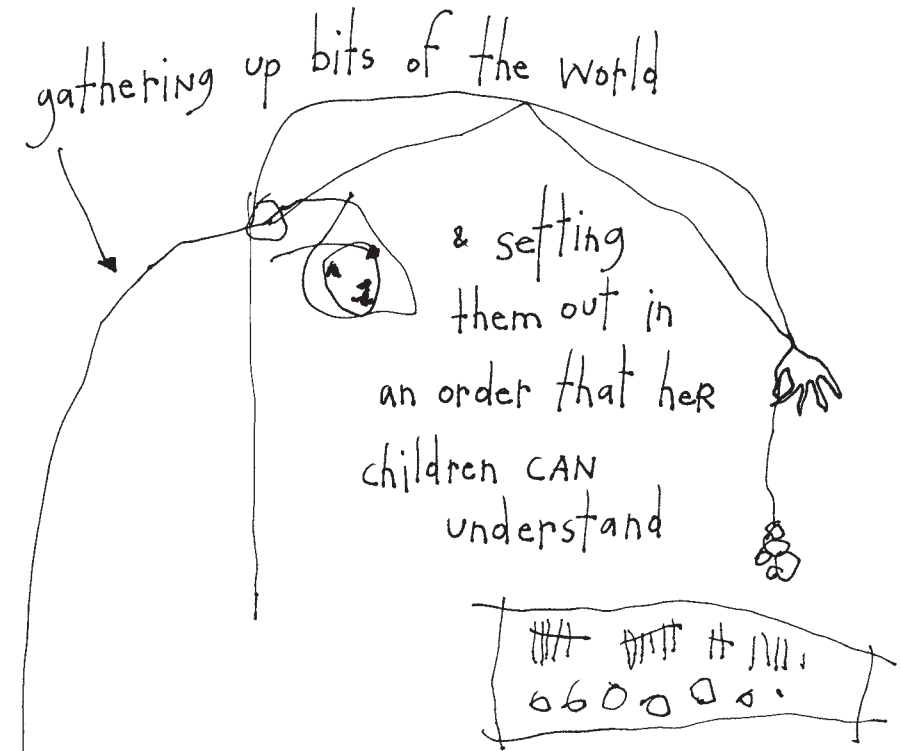
Brian Andreas
On Matthew's birthday
16 October 2000

the hardest thing
is listening well
enough to quit
worrying about
dying

Is there a lot of stuff
you don't understand?
she said & I said pretty
much the whole thing
& she nodded & said
that's what she thought,
but it was nice to hear
it anyway & we sat there
in the porch swing,
listening to the wind
& growing up together



doorway that only
lets some stuff
through but you never
know what it's going
to choose, so it's
hard to plan for the
future



I tell stories for very good reasons, she said, but I'm not going to tell you what they are

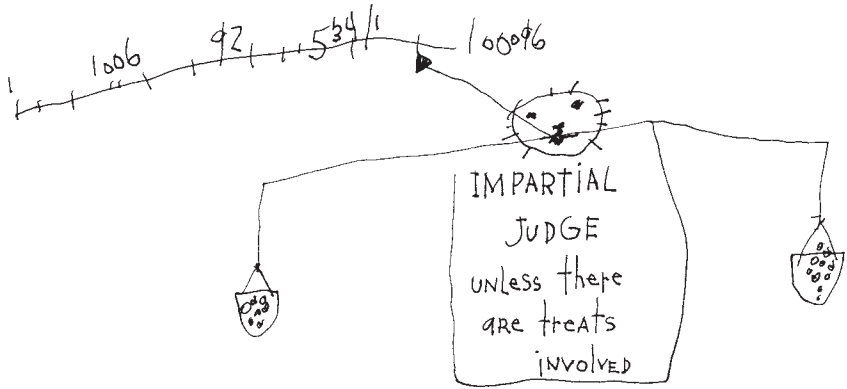
or, you'd start reading too much in to them

I can remember walking down the street, saying my name over & over, until all of a sudden, it didn't sound like my name anymore. It didn't even sound like a word at



all & then I stopped & the silence rushed in & whispered words that sounded more like my real name & I smiled

& thought to myself how surprised my parents would be when they found out what a mistake they had made.



The problem with knowing everything's going exactly as it needs to is that when you're not having that much fun it doesn't even do any good to complain.

