



Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories

By Etgar Keret

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Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories By Etgar Keret

Bringing up a child, lying to the boss, placing an order in a fast-food restaurant: in Etgar Keret's new collection, daily life is complicated, dangerous, and full of yearning. In his most playful and most mature work yet, the living and the dead, silent children and talking animals, dreams and waking life coexist in an uneasy world. Overflowing with absurdity, humor, sadness, and compassion, the tales in *Suddenly, a Knock on the Door* establish Etgar Keret as a "genius" by *The New York Times* as one of the most original writers of his generation.

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Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories By Etgar Keret Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

“Keret's greatest book yet--the most funny, dark, and poignant. It's tempting to say these stories are his most Kafkaesque, but in fact they are his most Keretesque.” ?*Jonathan Safran Foer*

“Etgar Keret's stories are funny, with tons of feeling, driving towards destinations you never see coming. They're written in the most unpretentious, chatty voice possible, but they're also weirdly poetic. They stick in your gut. You think about them for days.” ?*Ira Glass, host and producer of This American Life*

“Strangeness abounds. Keret fits so much psychological and social complexity and metaphysical mystery into these quick, wry, jolting, funny, off-handedly fabulist miniatures, they're like literary magic tricks: no matter how closely you read, you can't figure out how he does it.” ?*Donna Seaman, Booklist (March 15)*

“His pieces elicit comparison to sources as diverse as Franz Kafka, Kurt Vonnegut and Woody Allen . . . [Keret is] a writer who is often very funny and inventive, and occasionally profound.” ?*Kirkus Reviews (March 15)*

“Israeli author Keret writes sometimes appealingly wacky, sometimes darkly absurdist stories that translate well to America . . . Sophisticated readers should check this out.” ?*Library Journal, pre-pub alert*

“In this slim volume of flash fiction and short stories, Israeli author/filmmaker Keret (*The Nimrod Flipout*; the film *Jellyfish*) writes with alternating Singeresque magical realism and Kafkaesque absurdity.” ?*Publishers Weekly*

“This collection of short stories brims with invention . . . Etgar Keret is a great short story writer whose work is all the greater because it's funny . . . [He] most becomes himself in comedy shorts, telling tales of the absurd and the surreal . . . As one of the 20th century's great comic writers--and one of Keret's true precursors--might have said, so it goes . . . To complain about Keret being Keret is like complaining about Chekhov being Chekhov.” ?*Ian Sansom, The Guardian*

“[Keret] deserves full marks for chutzpah . . . His work zings with imaginative conceits, clever asides and self-conscious twists. Yet there is also an easygoing quality to his writing that makes the 37 stories collected here instantly likeable . . . his stories assume an anecdotal style that gives them an air of spontaneity, as if he were relating them over a cup of coffee in one of the Tel Aviv cafes frequented by his characters . . . Keret's willingness to develop quirky concepts (one story features a magic, talking goldfish) would seem to grant him a place alongside such idiosyncratic writers as Robert Walser, Franz Kafka, Kurt Vonnegut and Italo Calvino. But if his work is sometimes reminiscent of these writers, it also carves out its own territory.” ?*James Ley, The Sydney Morning Herald*

“A brilliant writer . . . completely unlike any writer I know. The voice of the next generation.” ?*Salman Rushdie*

“Keret can do more with six . . . paragraphs than most writers can with 600 pages.” ?*Kyle Smith, People*

About the Author

Born in Tel Aviv in 1967, **Etgar Keret** is the author of six bestselling story collections. His writing has been published in *Harper's Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, and *Zoetrope*. *Jellyfish*, his first movie as a director along with his wife, Shira Geffen, won the Camera d'Or prize for best first feature at Cannes in 2007. In 2010 he was named a Chevalier of France's Order of Arts and Letters.

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Suddenly, a Knock at the Door

SUDDENLY, A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

"Tell me a story," the bearded man sitting on my living-room sofa commands. The situation, I must say, is anything but pleasant. I'm someone who *writes* stories, not someone who tells them. And even *that* isn't something I do on demand. The last time anyone asked me to tell him a story, it was my son. That was a year ago. I told him something about a fairy and a ferret--I don't even remember what exactly--and within two minutes he was fast asleep. But the situation is fundamentally different. Because my son doesn't have a beard, or a pistol. Because my son asked for the story nicely, and this man is simply trying to rob me of it. I try to explain to the bearded man that if he puts his pistol away it will only work in his favor, in our favor. It's hard to think up a story with the barrel of a loaded pistol pointed at your head. But the guy insists. "In this country," he explains, "if you want something, you have to use force." He just got here from Sweden, and in Sweden it's completely different. Over there, if you want something, you ask politely, and most of the time you get it. But not in the stifling, muggy Middle East. All it takes is one week in this place to figure out how things work--or rather, how things don't work. The Palestinians asked for a state, nicely. Did they get one? The hell they did. So they switched to blowing up kids on buses, and people started listening. The settlers wanted a dialogue. Did anyone pick up on it? No way. So they started getting physical, pouring hot oil on the border patrolmen, and suddenly they had an audience. In this country, might makes right, and it doesn't matter if it's about politics, or economics or a parking space. Brute force is the only language we understand. Sweden, the place the bearded guy made aliya from, is progressive, and is way up there in quite a few areas. Sweden isn't just ABBA or IKEA or the Nobel Prize. Sweden is a world unto itself, and whatever they have, they got by peaceful means. In Sweden, if he'd gone to the Ace of Base soloist, knocked on her door, and asked her to sing for him, she'd have invited him in and made him a cup of tea. Then she'd have pulled out her acoustic guitar from under the bed and played for him. All this with a smile! But here? I mean, if he hadn't been flashing a pistol I'd have thrown him out right away. Look, I try to reason. "'Look' yourself," the bearded guy grumbles, and cocks his pistol. "It's either a story or a bullet between the eyes." I see my choices are limited. The guy means business. "Two people are sitting in a room," I begin. "Suddenly, there's a knock on the door." The bearded guy stiffens, and for a moment I think maybe the story's getting to him, but it isn't. He's listening to something else. There's a knock on the door. "Open it," he tells me, "and don't try anything. Get rid of whoever it is, and do it fast, or this is going to end badly."

The young man at the door is doing a survey. He has a few questions. Short ones. About the high humidity here in summer, and how it affects my disposition. I tell him I'm not interested but he pushes his way inside anyway.

"Who's that?" he asks me, pointing at the bearded guy. "That's my nephew from Sweden," I lie. "His father died in an avalanche and he's here for the funeral. We're just going over the will. Could you please respect our privacy and leave?" "C'mon, man," the pollster says, and pats me on the shoulder. "It's just a few questions. Give a guy a chance to earn a few bucks. They pay me per respondent." He flops down on the sofa, clutching his binder. The Swede takes a seat next to him. I'm still standing, trying to sound like I mean it. "I'm asking you to leave," I tell him. "Your timing is way off." "Way off, eh?" He opens the plastic binder and pulls out a big revolver. "Why's my timing off? 'Cause I'm darker? 'Cause I'm not good enough? When it comes to Swedes, you've got all the time in the world. But for a Moroccan, for a war veteran who left pieces of his spleen behind in Lebanon, you can't spare a fucking minute." I try to reason with him, to tell him it's not that way at all, that he'd simply caught me at a delicate point in my conversation with the Swede. But the

pollster raises his revolver to his lips and signals me to shut up. "*Vamos*," he says. "Stop making excuses. Sit down over there, and out with it." "Out with what?" I ask. The truth is, now I'm pretty uptight. The Swede has a pistol too. Things might get out of hand. East is east and west is west, and all that. Different mentalities. Or else the Swede could lose it, simply because he wants the story all to himself. Solo. "Don't get me started," the pollster warns. "I have a short fuse. Out with the story--and make it quick." "Yeah," the Swede chimes in, and pulls out his piece too. I clear my throat, and start all over again. "Three people are sitting in a room." "And no 'Suddenly, there's a knock on the door,'" the Swede announces. The pollster doesn't quite get it, but plays along with him. "Get going," hesays. "And no knocking on the door. Tell us something else. Surprise us."

I stop short, and take a deep breath. Both of them are staring at me. How do I always get myself into these situations? I bet things like this never happen to Amos Oz or David Grossman. Suddenly there's a knock on the door. Their gaze turns menacing. I shrug. It's not about me. There's nothing in my story to connect it to that knock. "Get rid of him," the pollster orders me. "Get rid of him, whoever it is." I open the door just a crack. It's a pizza delivery guy. "Are you Keret?" he asks. "Yes," I say, "but I didn't order a pizza." "It says here Fourteen Zamenhoff Street," he snaps, pointing at the printed delivery slip and pushing his way inside. "So what," I say, "I didn't order a pizza." "Family size," he insists. "Half pineapple, half anchovy. Prepaid. Credit card. Just gimme my tip and I'm outta here." "Are you here for a story too?" the Swede interrogates. "What story?" the pizza guy asks, but it's obvious he's lying. He's not very good at it. "Pull it out," the pollster prods. "C'mon, out with the pistol already." "I don't have a pistol," the pizza guy admits awkwardly, and draws a cleaver out from under his cardboard tray. "But I'll cut him into julienne strips unless he coughs up a good one, on the double."

The three of them are on the sofa--the Swede on the right, then the pizza guy, then the pollster. "I can't do it like this," I tell them. "I can't get a story going with the three of you here and your weapons and all that. Go take a walk around the block, and by the time you get back, I'll have something for you." "The asshole's gonna call the cops," the pollster tells the Swede. "What's he thinking, that we were born yesterday?" "C'mon, give us one and we'll be on our way," the pizza guy begs. "A short one. Don't be so anal. Things are tough, you know. Unemployment, suicide bombings, Iranians. People are hungry for something else. What do you think brought law-abiding guys like us this far? We're desperate, man, desperate."

I clear my throat and start again. "Four people are sitting in a room. It's hot. They're bored. The air conditioner's on the blink. One of them asks for a story. The second one joins in, then the third ..." "That's not a story," the pollster protests. "That's an eyewitness report. It's exactly what's happening here right now. Exactly what we're trying to run away from. Don't you go and dump reality on us like a garbage truck. Use your imagination, man, create, invent, take it all the way."

I nod and start again. "A man is sitting in a room, all by himself. He's lonely. He's a writer. He wants to write a story. It's been a long time since he wrote his last story, and he misses it. He misses the feeling of creating something out of something. That's right--something out of something. Because something out of nothing is when you make something up out of thin air, in which case it has no value. Anybody can do that. But something out of something means it was really there the whole time, inside you, and you discover it as part of something new, that's never happened before. The man decides to write a story about the situation. Not the political situation and not the social situation either. He decides to write a story about the human situation, the human condition. The human condition the way he's experiencing it right now. But he draws a blank. No story presents itself. Because the human condition the way he's experiencing it right now doesn't seem to be worth a story, and he's just about to give up when suddenly ..." "I warned you already," the Swede interrupts me. "No knock on the door." "I've got to," I insist. "Without a knock on the door there's no story." "Let him," the pizza guy says softly. "Give him some slack. You want a knock on the door? Okay, have your knock on the door. Just so long as it brings us a story."

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Duckett:

Nowadays reading books become more and more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading habit give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the actual information inside the book that improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of e-book you read, if you want send more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want sense happy read one using theme for entertaining like comic or novel. Often the Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories is kind of reserve which is giving the reader capricious experience.

Sheila Robinson:

Often the book Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading any book. The author style to clarify the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book to see, this book very suited to you. The book Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories is much recommended to you to study. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

Duane Vega:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information which will give you benefit in your life. Together with book everyone in this world may share their idea. Publications can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their particular reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the information about something that you need example. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors these days always try to improve their talent in writing, they also doing some study before they write with their book. One of them is this Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories.

Diane McCarthy:

The book untitled Suddenly, a Knock on the Door: Stories contain a lot of information on it. The writer explains your girlfriend idea with easy approach. The language is very simple to implement all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read this. The book was authored by famous author. The author brings you in the new era of literary works. It is easy to read this book because you can read on your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site as well as order it. Have a nice go through.

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