

Excerpts from *Young Homeless Professional*

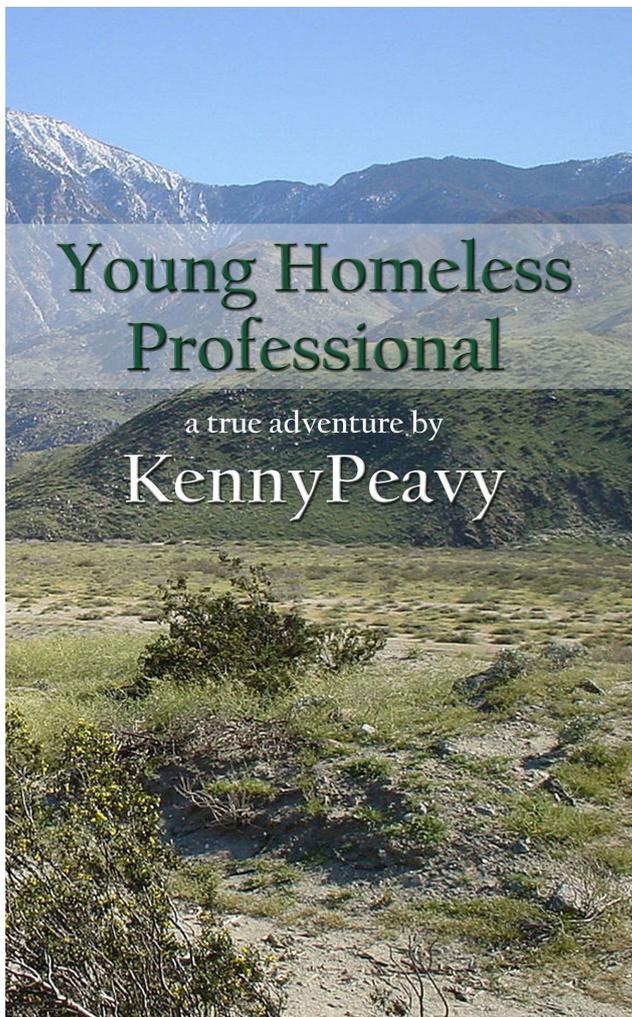
FREE SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Book II of the Ersatz Trilogy
Kenny Peavy

<http://www.amazon.com/Young-Homeless-Professional-Kenny-Peavy-ebook/dp/B00MW9IB6M>

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Life is bigger.

The people in this book are real folks I have been privileged to know. Similarly, the events and tales contained herein are true, embellished only as much as time and memory warrant.

But of course, we know all writing is fiction and these tales are not exempt from that steadfast rule.

The words we use as symbolic meaning to convey our thoughts, feelings and experiences often fall hopelessly short of capturing the immensity of life.

Not to mention, everyone on Earth has a uniquely different slice of reality and their own skewed personal perspective about life and how things work.

It seems that the less actual experience one has the more likely they are to hold tight to the notions of what they think to be true and famously cling to those skinny truths firmly and with resolute conviction.

However, once in a great while we are sent reminders that we don't see the whole picture. Much like when we stand too close to a painting and see the swirvy and curvy brushstrokes but fail to see the image they collectively create.

These cues remind us to get out into the wider world, stand back and gaze for a while slowly and intentionally. Only then can we begin to have a modicum of understanding of how things are pieced together and work as a whole.

If we manage to escape the tight embrace of our finite perceptions then occasionally we catch a glimpse of something profound that helps us understand the world, our place in it as well as that of our companions on this spinning globe.

When we find ourselves wanting and struggling to understand life's mysteries and events and the actions of those around us it is wise to remember;

Life is bigger than you. And you are not me.

Post-It Poet

I recently attended a funeral and a wedding. On both occasions poetry was recited to invoke the human spirit albeit for different purposes. I asked myself if those should be the only two times in life when people spout poetry. The answer was a resounding NO!

Conversations with AJ and Callan about poetry, reading Rumi and writing my journals in coffee shops surrounded by poets had encouraged me to write my own poems. I had even attended a few Poetry Slams. In the basement of Blue Sky Coffee shop I'd read my work to small but eager crowds.

As a result, I've decided that the world needs more poetry. But what to do?

Give people poetry! Disposable poetry with no strings attached.

Poems that could be found randomly in any location, at any time, completely unexpected written by an anonymous author.

No gratification. No criticism. A pure art form.

I was sure it would change the world, for somebody at least.

I came up with a plan. I'm not sure when the Muses presented the idea to me. I'm not sure how it evolved. But to me, it was ingenious.

I would write poems on Post-It notes and leave them in random locations scattered throughout the city.

The Muses were smiling. I set to work.

I procured a bunch of Post-Its from work. I sauntered to Jittery Joe's 5- points, filled up my mug, got my coffee card stamped and commenced to writing. I wrote tons of poems.

Some were placed in haphazard locations around town immediately. Others were kept for use at a later time, whenever I might be in a new locale and in need of a fitting Post-It poem.

On those small sheets of semi-sticky yellow paper I wrote things like:

A Post-It from Buddha

*Crush my bones and
filter me into a pot.
Make me into a cup of
spiritual coffee
Drink me to awaken your
body and mind.*

-Post-It Poet

(posted on the bottom of a coffee mug at Blue Sky)

You are a Poem

*Look,
here you are.
You are a poem.*

-Post-It Poet

(posted on the mirror of Jittery Joe's bathroom)

Waiting for Time

*Breathlessness
awaits time.*

*A Poem
walks
downtown.*

*This life
follows.*

-Post-It Poet

(posted on a phone booth downtown)

Poem Speaks

You might think.

I am a woman.

I have.

so.

many periods.

-Post-It Poet

(left inside the Mellow Mushroom menu)

AND...

*The mystic dances in the sun,
hearing music other's don't.*

*"Insanity," they say, those others.
If so, it's a very gentle,
nourishing sort.*

Rumi

-Post-It Poet

from *Birdsong* translated by Coleman Barks
(posted under a plate at DePalmas)

Then I went around posting hundreds of Post-It Poems in arbitrary locations around Athens. I left poems on the bottom of coffee mugs, inside menus, rolled up inside the toilet paper in the bathroom of various establishments, bathroom mirrors in public toilets, pay phones and just about any other place I could think of.

I peppered the city with poetry. Jittery Joe's, Earth Fare, DePalma's, Blue Sky, The Globe, The Grit, Waffle House all my usual hangouts received my free works.

I imagined dish washers in the back of a busy kitchen finding a poem on the bottom of the mugs they were about to clean.

I envisioned businessmen wearing red ties and smug expressions opening up the menu at a restaurant and finding my poem.

I dreamed of someone going into a toilet and finding a poem on the mirror, or better yet, sitting down, unrolling the toilet paper and finding a little poem coiled up inside!

I figured they would be surprised, happy or at least moved to think. Who knows? I would never know. And that was the beauty of it!

An enterprise with no measurable outcome, no final product, no bottom line. A work of pure nonsense. Beauty in action, alive and organic. Art. Perfect!

I got carried away with it and dreamed of people writing to the papers about random poems they had found in the oddest, most unexpected places. Inside the coin slot of a pay phone, or underneath their lunch plate. I dreamed it would change lives. Maybe it did. Maybe it made someone crack a smile. I would never know.

Callan and AJ were the only ones I told of this Post-It Poet side project. Whenever we'd talk we'd geek out about Post-It poetry, Hobopoets and Young Homeless Professionals. It was a time full of boundless creative energy no doubt induced by the freedom I was feeling by redefining my place in the world through homelessness.

No one else knew but a lot of people witnessed the poems. Because of the freedom I now felt from being homeless and completely at home in the world I was open, awake and poetry was part of my daily life.

No one ever wrote to the papers. It never escalated to that point. But I was confident I had succeeded. Out of all the poems I posted, I was sure at least one had been discovered and as the discoverer read the poem they had been opened and moved in some small way.

I was certain someone had stopped for a moment and thought 'What an odd thing. I just found a poem here under my plate. Interesting. I wonder who did that?' and in some small way The Post-It Poet had impacted them or changed their direction.

I was sure of it.

Finding your path

A few days later I pulled into the pine forest and parked for the night. The events from the YWCO whirlpool were still on my mind. The Post-It Poet scheme was in full swing and I was feeling more alive than ever before!

The interesting encounters had put me into a state of thoughtfulness as I pondered my life, the lives of others and how they are entangled in a web of experience I can only begin to recognize and fathom.

I skidded into my usual parking spot near the patch of ground I was beginning to know as home. I had been sleeping on that spot for a few weeks now and the contours of the land, the dead logs, pine needles, bushes and trees were becoming as familiar to me as any house I had ever lived in.

You know the feeling you get when you move into a new place and you bump into the walls when you're trying to find the toilet, half asleep in the middle of the night?

It takes a few weeks until you know the lay of the house. Eventually, you can stumble around to the kitchen, the bathroom or any other place with the lights off. You can find the light switches in pitch black. You can maneuver around couches and chairs without seeing them. That's how this spot of Earth was beginning to feel to me, familiar and comfortable.

When I pulled up I noticed a guy in a van next to my spot. I could see he was preparing a dinner of salad, sardines, bread, and cheap wine. He looked over and smiled. I was intent on recording my thoughts so I wouldn't forget them. As soon as I had finished my writing I opened up the truck door to get my sleeping stuff.

He looked over and said "Hi."

"How ya doin'?"

"Great!" was his response. He exclaimed with exuberance I rarely see.

I could tell he wasn't an average camper and I would even go as far as to say that something inside told me I *should* talk to this guy.

He offered me some wine and I accepted. It was a cheap Boones Farm kind of wine, blackberry flavored. It was cold. I hadn't had that type of wine in years. It immediately brought back nostalgic memories.

Somehow we got into a pretty good conversation about life. It turns out that he was a brick mason doing some work in town. He was also living in his van (sounds familiar) for a couple of weeks until he went up to Pennsylvania to meet a woman he had connected with at a Rainbow gathering earlier in the year.

"I can't stand to pay for hotels," he said "unless it's those really nice ones like a \$100 a night or somethin'."

"Yeah, I know whatcha mean," I answered.

He argued that he was just as comfortable in his van. On top of that he could save 50 bucks a night rather than waste his money on a hotel. I couldn't have agreed more.

He began telling me his story of how he used to use drugs but had found a different way. He claimed to have ties with Native American shamans that had shown him a better way. His stories reminded me a little of the books by Carlos Castaneda.

I thought to myself of the “many paths to the same truth” quote that I’ve heard many spiritual leaders refer to. Which to me means that regardless of the religion, spiritual path or vehicle of experience we choose, if we are seeking truth and remain true to our course we all arrive at the same destination.

I’ve met a few people that have lost themselves with drugs. A lot of them convert to Christianity or some other religion to help them find salvation, truth, or stable grounding. It seems that if that is the path that brings them to happiness and grounds them in the world then so be it.

Is there really a right way to find oneself or one’s place in life? I really don’t know if he was truthful or not but I listened to him with all sincerity.

He lit a few candles in his van. They hung from the clothes hanger slots on the inside of his van. He had some mellow Enya-like music going which complimented his story and enhanced the mood.

We continued to talk about our similar philosophies for life. He told me how he had danced in another part of the forest the night before because he was the only one around. He talked about his experiences with deer and watching the leaves shimmer in the wind. He was about 15 years my senior but had just now begun to find his path.

At the onset of my experiment and at times even still I consider my age and my career and a few self-doubts creep in about the practicality of being a Young Homeless Professional. He unknowingly inspired me to keep doing what I was doing.

I never conveyed to him the scope of my situation. He never asked. But he had encouraged me to keep going. He was essentially doing what I was doing. He would work in town during the day and then come to the forest at night to sleep. I thought to myself that if he could do it then so could I!

As we continued to drink wine he spouted out some poem that I’ll never remember the words to. I asked him if he’d ever heard of Rumi. He replied that he hadn’t. It just so happens that I carry a copy of *Birdsong* everywhere I go.

How many other people in this world walk around with poetry in their pockets? I have instant access to poems. What a great thing! I wonder how different the world might be if people went around greeting each other with poems instead of blank stares or avoiding greetings at all with down turned eyes.

I was tempted to give it to him as a gift but he related that he doesn’t read much. He did ask if I could loan it to him for the night for some bedtime reading. He promised to leave it on my truck in a plastic bag to protect it from the morning dew before he left for work the next day.

As we parted ways for the night we had one last exchange.

“Once you figure out that heaven and hell are here man, that this world is what you decide it is, or what you make of it. Then all you gotta do is have relationship with it.” He proclaimed.

He gave me this sagely advice with a large Cheshire cat grin. We bade each other good night and exchanged big unexpected hugs.

I slept on my familiar spot. The pine needles were broken and soft from regular use. When I awoke next to newly sprouted mushrooms in the morning I found the book under the windshield wiper on my truck in a plastic bag.

Stuck inside the book was the following note:

Kenny,

It was so good to share with you. Thank you for being in this life. You are a beautiful soul. Have a happy. Have a bunch of happies.

Bright Blessings,

Randolph

Of course, I felt good about the exchange. I think I would not have met him had I not been open to the endless possibilities this world offers through the Young Homeless Professional experiement. I probably would not have met him had I not jolted myself from my routine of living an everyday normal lifestyle.

My life is richer for this experience. I wonder how many other people walk around opened up? I wonder how many people wander around closed off?

I am a lucky soul, but it has been my intention to be so for quite a while.

What readers are saying:

The Young Homeless Professional should be required reading for every High School graduate embarking on the next chapter of their life.

This book challenges you, entertains you, and leaves you asking yourself some pretty soul-searching questions in the process. Author Kenny clearly has lived his ideals as he discovers the merits of the outdoors, self-discovery, poetry, crappy wine, numerous characters, and the many establishments of his native Athens, Georgia.

I have never been to Athens, but now not only do I want to go there, but I want to soak in the atmosphere and meet some of the characters inhabiting the town (or woods). I want to go camping again. I am particularly motivated to, in Kenny's words: "walk between the worlds". In explaining this, Kenny refuses to pigeon-hole himself, but rather chooses to thrive in the company of many different people from various backgrounds and positions.

I want to do more of that. This is a real page-turner which makes you laugh like Bryson, but in the process delivers a personal challenge to the reader to ask themselves what is truly important in life. It makes you reevaluate what you are doing now but not in a pompous way so prevalent of many self-help books.

Kenny is not afraid to ask the big questions and he endorses getting out there and finding the answers through experiences and humour. Experience junky he is. Preacher he is not.

It is clear that the author is passionate about nature and the many creatures who inhabit it, and that includes the humans along the way.

What is inspirational about the many stories within is that Kenny actually did (and I suspect still does) what many people only talk about doing. This book is not about environmental evangelists asking you to save the planet while clocking up air-miles spreading their message.

This is a thought provoking personal account which asks you the question: "what would I do in that situation?". Or "What do I think about that?".

Read it and you will find many questions popping up between the lines for yourself to answer, and you will laugh as you ponder the answers.

I was wrong about the necessity for every High School graduate to read this book- everyone should

Geoff Upston
Singapore