



I AM A BROKEN HOUSE

a collection of poetry

Digital Sampler

J. PATRICK LEMARR

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The author wishes to thank: Jan Loy, Shelly Dewitt, and Dr. Paul Lynch for title suggestions, Heidi Lemarr for editing assistance, and Tom and Patty Lemarr for their encouragement and support.

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DIGITAL SAMPLER

Visit www.iamabrokenhouse.com/store/ to purchase a trade paperback (ISBN 978-0-9838337-2-7) or Digital Edition (ISBN 978-0-9838337-7-2) of *I Am A Broken House*.

For my wife, as lovely as she is wise.

For my daughters, my angels of mercy.

For my son, a most welcome addition.

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FOREWORD

This book earned its title in every conceivable way. When I first began planning its publication, I had no way of knowing it would turn out to be such an uphill climb during one of the most hellishly trying seasons of my life. It seemed, after all, like an easy enough task: collect the poetry I had written over the course of the last few years, present it to the world and hope that it would eventually recoup its cost. That's really all I envisioned for it. Easy peasy.

John Lennon wrote “life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans,” and as I assembled my team—the incredible Chip Smitson to design my book cover, artist Jason Webb to craft a simple, elegant interior image, and photographer Holly Thrasher, who had the unenviable task of trying to make me look good on the back cover—life just rattled past me like a train of thought with no engineer at its controls. In hindsight that was no truer then than it is ever true. The Great Engineer was and remains always at the helm. But several years later, I stagger at the realization of just how many obstacles nearly kept this book simmering away into nothingness on the back burner of my life.

The details of my struggles are not worth delving into at this point, although some of them certainly worked their way into the poetry you are about to read. To share details now would only anchor you deep within *my* journey...and what interests me is *our* journey.

We all have been broken. We all have suffered loss. We all have endured the dire seasons of this life and will, with the grace of God, endure many more. Such seasons and the ways we go about surviving them help refine and define us, whether for better or worse. In that refining fire, we learn how strong a foundation our friendships have been built

upon, that our true family is often born of something deeper than blood, and that our faith, if indeed we've been graced with some, grows stronger in the midst of our weakness. For that reason, brokenness is as much a cause for celebration as any victory.

I am broken. This book is broken. You, dear friend, are broken. And it is in our brokenness that we become something new...something better.

May we be broken in all the right places.

J. Patrick Lemarr

October 2011

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I AM A BROKEN HOUSE

I am a perfectly broken house
condemned to stand empty—
my nakedness covered only by the grim caress
of sumac and scrub,
fireman ladders for the ants and huntsman spiders
who do their business in my bones.

I speak in stuttered clacks.
Shutters crack against my shattered eyes—
sightless now to all but rot.
Grackles cluster in my dusty mind,
bickering back and forth
about the arid sky.

My joints protest every insolent draft.
Rusty tears stain their memories upon my walls.
Stories live there still—
echoes on the deafened ears
of ghosts
that seldom come to call.

ANTICIPATION

she ripens in the darkness
fruit of night
anxious for dew

desperate for teeth
to pierce purple flesh
and lips to drink of nectar
growing sweeter by the hour

he withers in the sunlight
clothed in mud
anxious for shade

hungry for the waste
(decadent decay)
or, better still, some nectar
'fore the fallen fruit grows sour

TENTATIVE

Tentative—
these fingers mine
that sweep the landscape of your spine,
between your shoulders as you lie,
and in the valley of your sigh.

Tentative—
these fingertips
that drink you in with treasured sips
and marvel at the grand design
that moved you from your bed to mine.

Tentative—
these fingers trace
the sleeping form of matchless grace.

Tentative—
with nightly fear
I'll break the spell that holds you here.

IN THE RAFTERS

somewhere in the rafters
in the space
where stories live
and poems hang upside down
like fruit bats
is the boy I used to be
(thought I was,
pretended to be)
disco dead
hollow as a gourd

somewhere in the crawlspace
in the dust
of former lives
where angels are hungry moths
with fierce mouths
is the boy I used to be
(hoped I was,
intended to be)
marble cold
fragile as the truth

somewhere in the cobwebs
in the waste
of yesterday
the decay of meant-to-be's
and cruel fate
is the boy I used to be
(feared I was,
despaired I would be)
haunted still
constant as regret

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WOUNDED, WORTHLESS & WEARY

wounded, I have bent to taste
the crimson liquid of Your grace
Your wind-worn flesh, the thorny brow
which marked Your kingship then and now

worthless, I have taken hold
the threads of mercy from Your robe
Your ruined hands, Your gaping side
and pledged myself Your sullied bride

weary, I have given up
the poison of my rightful cup
the curse of death, the shroud of sin
to die and, in You, live again



photo by Holly Thrasher

J. Patrick Lemarr is a poet and the author of “Fallen” (2005) and “I Am A Broken House” (2011). A minister and former educator, Lemarr resides in Grand Prairie, Texas with his wife and three children.

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J. Patrick Lemarr is a poet and author who believes our brokenness is, in part, what makes us beautiful. He resides with his wife and three children in Grand Prairie, Texas.

Written over the course of six of the most difficult years of his life, J. Patrick Lemarr takes us on a journey through struggle, failure and sorrow with frank and refreshing honesty. Then with that same clarity, reminds us of the hope and joy ever present in our families, our friends and our faith.

Broken houses we may all be, but the poet reminds us that these walls still have many stories to tell.

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