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FROM HERE TO THE GREAT UNKNOWN

A MEMOIR

**LISA MARIE PRESLEY
RILEY KEOUGH**

PAN BOOKS



PREFACE

In the years before she died, my mother, Lisa Marie Presley, began writing her memoir. Though she tried various approaches, and sat for many book interviews, she couldn't figure out how to write about herself. She didn't find herself interesting, even though, of course, she was. She didn't like talking about herself. She was insecure. She wasn't sure what her value to the public was other than being Elvis's daughter. She was so wracked with self-criticism that working on the book became incredibly difficult for her.

I don't think she fundamentally understood how or why her story should be told.

And yet, she felt a burning desire to tell it.

After she'd grown exceedingly frustrated, she said to me, "Pookie, I don't know how to write my book anymore. Can you write it with me?"

"Of course I can," I said.

The last ten years of her life had been so brutally hard that she was only able to look back on everything

through that lens. She felt I could have a more holistic view of her life than she could. So I agreed to help her with it, not thinking much of the commitment, assuming we would write it together over time.

A month later, she died.

Days and weeks and months of grief drifted by. Then I got the tapes of the memoir interviews she'd done.

I was in my house, sitting on the couch. My daughter was sleeping. I was so afraid to hear my mother's voice—the physical connection we have to the voices of our loved ones is profound. I decided to lie in my bed because I know how heavy grief makes my body feel.

I began listening to her speak.

It was incredibly painful but I couldn't stop. It was like she was in the room, talking to me. I instantly felt like a child again and I burst into tears.

My mommy.

The tone of her voice.

I was eight years old again, riding in our car. Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl" came on the radio, and my dad pulled over and made us all get out to dance on the side of the road.

I thought of my mom's beautiful smile.

Her laugh.

I thought of my dad trying to resuscitate her lifeless body when he found her.

Then I was back in my car seat watching my mom's face in the rearview mirror as she sang along to Aretha Franklin, our car barreling down the Pacific Coast Highway with the windows open.

Then I was in the hospital, right after my new baby brother was born.

Bombarded by memories, like a corny flashback montage in a movie. But real.

I wanted her back.

The early parts of the book are mostly her voice—in the tapes she speaks at length about her Graceland childhood, the death of her father, the dreadful aftermath, her relationship with her mother, her difficult teen years. She's frank and funny about my father, Danny Keough. She talks openly about her relationship with Michael Jackson. She's painfully candid about her later drug addiction and about the perils of fame. There are times, too, where it sounds like she wants to burn the world to the ground; other times, she displays compassion and empathy—all facets of the woman who was my mother,

each of those strands, beautiful and broken, forged together in early trauma, crashing together at the end of her life.

The tapes are raw, with all the starts and stops that people have when they speak. Wherever possible, I wrote it exactly as she said it. In other cases, I've edited my mother's words for clarity or to get at what I know was the root of what she was trying to convey. What mattered most to me was feeling like the end result sounded like her, that I could instantly recognize her in the pages, and I can.

But there are things she doesn't talk about in the tapes, things she didn't get to, especially in the later part of her life. We saw each other five times a week throughout my life, and we lived together full-time until I was twenty-five. Where there are gaps in her story, I fill them in. The greatest strength for this aspect of the book was also one of my mother's biggest flaws: She was constitutionally incapable of hiding anything from me.

I hope that in telling her story, my mother will resolve into a three-dimensional character, into the woman we knew and loved so dearly. I've come to understand that her burning desire to tell her story was born of a need to both understand herself and be understood by others in full, for the first time in her life. I aim not only to

honor my mother, but to tell a human story in what I know is an extraordinary circumstance.

Everyone who ever met her experienced a force—passion, protection, loyalty, love, and a deep engagement with a spirit that was incredibly powerful. Whatever spiritual force my grandfather possessed undoubtedly ran through my mother's veins. When you were with her, you could feel it.

I am aware that the recordings my mother left are a gift. So often, all that's left of a loved one is a saved and re-saved voicemail, a short video on a phone, some favorite photos. I take the privilege of these tapes very seriously. I wanted this book to be as intimate as all those hours I spent listening to her, like the nights she'd spend in bed with us listening to coyotes howl.

In his poem "Binsey Poplars (felled 1879)," Gerard Manley Hopkins writes of that set of chopped-down trees, "After-comers cannot guess the beauty been."

I want this book to make clear the "beauty been" that was my mother.

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ONE

UPSTAIRS AT GRACELAND



felt my father could change the weather.

He was a god to me. A chosen human being.

He had that thing where you could see his soul. If he was in a shitty mood, it was shitty outside; if it was storming, it was because he was about to go off. I believed back then that he could make it storm.

Make him happy, make him laugh—that was my whole world. If I knew something was funny to him, I would do it as much as I could to get some mileage out of it, to entertain him. When we'd leave Graceland, the fans would always shout, "Alvis! Alvis!" in their Southern accents. I mocked someone doing it once and he fell out laughing, just died. He thought that was the funniest thing he'd ever heard.

Another time I was lying in my hamburger-shaped bed—a huge black-and-white fur bed that had steps leading up to it—and he was sitting next to me in a chair, and I looked at him and said, "How much money do you have?" He fell out of the chair laughing. I couldn't figure out why that was so funny.

I was super connected to him. Our closeness was a lot tighter than I have ever let on to anyone in the past.

He loved me dearly and was totally devoted, one thousand percent there for me as much as he could be, in spite of everyone around him. He gave me as much of himself as he possibly could, more than he could give anybody else.

And yet I feared him, too. He was intense, you didn't want him to get angry with you. If I ever upset him or if he was mad at me at all, it felt like everything was ending. I couldn't deal with that.

When he got upset with me, I took it so personally, I was just shattered. I wanted his approval on everything. There was one time I popped my knee, and he said, "Dammit, why'd you go and hurt yourself?"

It devastated me.

My mom was an air force brat. She met my dad at fourteen and her parents allowed it. It was a different time.

Back then, women were admitted into the hospital while they were in labor. They'd get knocked out and wake up with a baby. She went into the hospital looking glamorous, beautiful, and when she came to, she was just handed a child.

She didn't want to gain pregnancy weight. She thought that wouldn't be a good look for her as Elvis's wife. There were so many women after him, all of them beautiful. She wanted his undivided attention. She was so upset that she was pregnant that initially she'd only eat apples and eggs and never gained much weight. I was a pain in her ass immediately and I always felt she didn't want me.

I believe in energy in utero, so maybe I already felt her vibe of trying to get rid of me. At the time, she didn't have great maternal instincts.

That might be what's wrong with me.



When I was little, I would often watch my mother do her makeup. There were two sinks in her bathroom, and in between them a huge vanity. My mother had more makeup than any little girl could dream of—MAC and Kevyn Aucoin, drawers and drawers of brushes and lip pencils, eye shadows, and the most famous of MAC lip colors: Spice. She would line her lips—the Cupid's bow she loved and that we all inherited from her father—

looking into a small mirror on the vanity, and I thought they were so perfect. To me she was the most beautiful woman in the world.

I looked at her and said, "How old are you?"

It was the first time her age had ever been something I'd considered. She laughed and said, "I'm twenty-eight."

How young that was.

My mom fundamentally felt she was broken, unlovable, not beautiful. There was a profound sense of unworthiness in her, and I could never really figure out why. I've spent my whole life trying to work out the answer. My mother was an incredibly complicated person and deeply misunderstood.

In my family, there's a long history of young girls becoming mothers—my great-grandmother, my grandmother, and my mother all had their first babies young, when they were just babies themselves.

As I got older, I remember wishing that I could have been my mother's mother and my grandmother's mother. I began to recognize what all of the young mothers were missing.



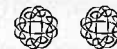
I've been told that mine was a sweet birth story. My dad was very nervous, everyone was. They had lots of dress rehearsals, trying to find the quickest route to the hospital. They had done a few test runs and everything was fine. Then Jerry Schilling, one of my dad's oldest friends, who was driving, almost went to the wrong hospital.

Then I was born.

My mom wanted to look good for my dad, so she decided to put on false eyelashes before he came in to see us. But she was still drugged out and glued them to the mirror instead of to her eyelids.

After that there was a press conference—my mom and my dad walked out of the hospital, did their wave, everyone was taking pictures. So the press was always there, right out of the gate, from the day I was born.

Then they took me home to Graceland.



Graceland was built in 1939 by a doctor and his wife, Tom and Ruth Moore. The land had been gifted to the family by the wife's aunt Grace, so they named it after her. Elvis liked the name so much that he kept it when, in 1957, he paid \$102,000 for the then-ten-thousand-square-foot house and its fourteen acres.