



The Boy Detective: A New York Childhood

Roger Rosenblatt

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The Washington Post hailed Roger Rosenblatt's *Making Toast* as "a textbook on what constitutes perfect writing," and *People* lauded *Kayak Morning* as "intimate, expansive and profoundly moving." Classic tales of love and grief, the *New York Times* bestselling memoirs are also original literary works that carve out new territory at the intersection of poetry and prose. Now comes *The Boy Detective*, a story of the author's childhood in New York City, suffused with the same mixture of acute observation and bracing humor, lyricism and wit.

Resisting the deadening silence of his family home in the elegant yet stiflingly safe neighborhood of Gramercy Park, nine-year-old Roger imagines himself a private eye in pursuit of criminals. With the dreamlike mystery of the city before him, he sets off alone, out into the streets of Manhattan, thrilling to a life of unsolved cases.

Six decades later, Rosenblatt finds himself again patrolling the territory of his youth: The writing class he teaches has just wrapped up, releasing him into the winter night and the very neighborhood in which he grew up. A grown man now, he investigates his own life and the life of the city as he walks, exploring the New York of the 1950s; the lives of the writers who walked these streets before him, such as Poe and Melville; the great detectives of fiction and the essence of detective work; and the monuments of his childhood, such as the New York Public Library, once the site of an immense reservoir that nourished the city with water before it nourished it with books, and the Empire State Building, which, in Rosenblatt's imagination, vibrates sympathetically with the oversize loneliness of King Kong: "If you must fall, fall from me."

As he walks, he is returned to himself, the boy detective on the case. Just as Rosenblatt invented a world for himself as a child, he creates one on this night—the writer a detective still, the chief suspect in the case of his own life, a case that discloses the shared mysteries of all our lives. A masterly evocation of the city and a meditation on memory as an act of faith, *The Boy Detective* treads the line between a novel and a poem, displaying a world at once dangerous and beautiful.

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