

# The Garden of Old Man Hush

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This book contains traces of math, but is safe for math allergics, beneficial even!

## HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This book doesn't read like other books, starting at the beginning and turning pages one by one until you get to the end. Here you'll be flipping back and forth between sections, and playing as the main protagonist of this special book. You decide which way to go and who to talk to, while navigating chapter sections numbered 1 to 300.

Here's a few tips:

- **WEIGH YOUR OPTIONS** about which direction to take and who to speak to. You are free to move around in the book, so you might end up revisiting the same spaces multiple times, even as part of completing a task.
- **TALK** to anyone you possibly can to gather useful clues.
- **PICK UP ITEMS** – the more the better, in case two's still not enough! Keep track of your stash on the Adventure Sheet at the back of the book. You can only use items that you actually have. If an unknown item is mentioned, you need to find it before you can use it. Once you picked it up, you can return to where you got stuck before. If you gift or use an item, it must be crossed off your adventure sheet. Items are highlighted in bold green letters throughout the book.
- **GATHER INFORMATION** – Jot down what you've learned on the adventure sheet. Each sheet features a blank page for noting new information, and one for your stash of items. You'll find essential information highlighted in green italics, but feel free to jot down anything you find useful.
- **SOLVE PUZZLES** – You will come across many puzzles that need solving in order to get on with the story. Be brave, think hard, don't give up! And use the note pages at the end of the book. It's better to keep searching in the wrong direction than not to try at all. If you can't crack it, don't worry, the book will help you toward the solution. But the best success is solving a puzzle on your own, so don't hurry along the easiest path.
- **NAVIGATE AND TAKE NOTES** – This is essential: along the way, you'll come across a map. On it you can mark passages in colored pencil, and log which point you reached each scene. This will come in handy later, when you need to retrace your way to somewhere you've been. Without the map, you're sure to lose your way.

There are ways to get lost in this book. But don't worry, it's not the same as taking the wrong direction in a maze. In case you do get stuck at some point, just flip back to the previous scene and take a different turn.

And now, let the adventure begin!

001

In a daze, you raise your head up from the school desk to blink at the phone screen stuck under your nose. On screen you see a photo of a brick wall graffitied with a poem:

*Over the hill a derelict garden lies,  
hidden away from curious gazing eyes.  
Its fence of stone feels colder than the tomb,  
you'll never smell its many flowers in bloom.  
Its crickets chirp their songs you'll never hear,  
nor will its lawns their lovely green reveal.  
But once you cross the gates in likelihood,  
you'll end up wandering lost, perhaps for good.*

- What the heck is this supposed to be? - you groan to your friend Ziggy.
- A poem, you doofus!
- So what? You woke me up for this?
- We're almost out of here anyway. Just tell me, have you seen Gerda today?
- Your sister, like wow, I wouldn't know or care. But wait no, she wasn't at lunch with her class today. Missing her, are you? - You grin, but seeing Ziggy's desperate look you turn serious instead. - Alright, what's going on?
- I think Gerda's in trouble, and it's got something to do with the garden in this poem. It's supposed to belong to some guy called Old Man Hush? - he explains, looking agitated. - What do I know about some guy called Hush. Maybe he's like a sugar daddy, some old perv hunting for kids...
- So your know-it-all sister's landed herself in trouble, - you smirk, - Something interesting at last.
- This isn't funny! You know what Gerda's like with a new idea. She's finally given up family history, I was about to die with all those faded photos everywhere, and now she's obsessed with old buildings and towers and stuff. She hangs out after school checking out our neighborhood. And she's raiding the library for books and albums and stuff, reading up on that wreck of a garden up the top of the Hill...
- Hilltop, yeah right... A bunch of fancy villas is all you see up there. Pool, lawn, two-car garage.
- You try telling Gerda. She's completely lost it! Set out to find that garden, no matter what.
- What's in it for her?
- How should I know? I told you, she found some clue in the library and followed up on it. Old Man Hush's garden, behind the old stone wall. She tried dragging me along, but I wasn't having it. I'm pretty sure there's no such place up there. So Gerda's gone off yesterday, and today she's not at school. Missing! Mom and Dad will be so freaked. Aw, what do I do now? - Ziggy sighs.  
Do you ask how he knows Gerda's gone missing? → 004  
Or do you ask about the photograph? → 008

002

- Okay, this is just the thing! - Ziggy nods. You approach the Librarian, and she gives you both a strict look.
- No bags allowed inside, gentlemen. Use the lockers at the entrance. We're closing in a few minutes anyway.
- Well, now, we... - Ziggy mumbles.
- We're here for a book, Gerda sent us, he's her brother, - you say quite firmly.
- Ah, friends of little Gerda's, - the Librarian smiles. - And which book are you after?
- The one she checked out last.
- Didn't she give you a title? - she raises her eyebrows.

- Uh, sure she did, but I forgot, - Ziggy pitches in. - If you look up her record, you'll see which one she meant.

- Alright then, - the Librarian nods and turns to her computer screen, typing. - Let's see now. Her last registered book was Local Architectural Relics from the Middle Ages to the Present Day...

- Yes, that's it! - Ziggy whoops, then looks around quickly and lowers his voice, - So can we borrow that please?

- I'm sorry, it's Reference Section material, and can't be borrowed.

- Can't be borrowed? - you ask.

- Well, you're free to take a look at it here, and that's about it. You can't take it out of the library. It's probably her last borrowed book she meant, The Rabbit Shaped Dog, she just dropped it off today. Do you want me to look it up?

- No thank you, we're not here for any rabbit, I remember very well now, my sister mentioned Local Architecture Something-something, - Ziggy blurts out quickly. - We'll have to look something up from that book. Something for Gerda, of course!

- Well alright, go ahead, you have 10 minutes until closing time. But I'll be keeping an eye on you! - she says, handing over a big battered book before sitting back to her computer.

You haul the book to a library desk and sit down to read. It's from way back, like at least 30 years ago. There's a chapter on the Hill neighborhood, but it's only a paragraph. It says the Hilltop used to be a vineyard, with a few villas and their ample gardens bordered by a tall stone fence. One of these is The Garden of Old Man Hush, the stuff of many local legends. It was practically impossible to locate, and always shrouded in impenetrable quiet. Its residents are unknown, but are said to have been eccentrics, with a sculpture park in a hedge maze. All the villas are since gone, and the vineyard's been cleared to make way for modern houses. Only one old Hilltop villa remains standing, at the corner of Mirage Street and Iron Horse Street. The facade refers to Old Man Hush and his garden.

- That's it right there! - says Ziggy. - That's the clue! Let's go!

With that he drags you from the library, and you're both rushing to the address you'd found in the book. → 002

### 003

You've turned left at Mirage Street. A few minutes later, the street turns from the hill and takes you downward.

- I don't think this is the right way, - says Ziggy.

- You don't say! So maybe it wasn't waves we saw most of?

- I'm not really sure anymore. Let's just go back and count them again.

Flip back to → 23 and check the mural again, then choose a new path.

### 004

- She told me she was going to Old Man Hush's garden, but she told her parents it was a sleepover at her friend Sophie's, and she's staying all day, a cram session for the entrance exams.

- Yeah right. And your parents bought the story?

- Sure, Gerda is always so trustworthy, - Says Ziggy morosely, then adding, - She never came to school today. I ran into Sophie in the hall, and she didn't know what I was talking about. And I keep calling her, but she won't pick up.

- That's real messed up.

Do you tell your parents? → 011

Have you tried to look for her? → 014

When did you last hear from her? → 019

### 005

The Librarian eyes you suspiciously.

- Aren't you a little old for that?

- Well, it's for my little sister, - you reply, all innocence.

- Okay, follow me.

She shuffles along before you, taking a turn for the first row of shelves.

- This is our story section. Here's all the Berry and Dolly books, have fun browsing.

She turns on her heels and goes back to her desk. You should have asked her to some other shelf further away, but that's too bad. You must warn Ziggy quick! But it's too late already. The Librarian spots him tampering with the computer. She's taking him by the ear, then comes back for you before throwing you both out over the library doorstep. Your adventure is over.

## 006

You suggest the fish.

- Okay, let's go with the flow, - says Ziggy. Shouldering your schoolbags, you start climbing up the gentle slope of Iron Horse Street. Suddenly you spot a familiar figure up ahead.

- Look, here comes old Lady Gray, - says Ziggy, pointing out an old-looking lady swathed in a thick knit gray cardigan, standing on the sidewalk. - She's always hanging around the corner of Iron Horse and Mirage Street, like she was there waiting for someone, or something.

- But why wear a thick wooly in the middle of summer? - you ask in a low whisper.

- She must be halfway gone in the head, - Ziggy replies.

The old lady turns toward the two of you, but her gray eyes seem to be looking at something behind you. Lowering your eyes, you quicken your steps as you pass her along the sidewalk, and hurry on till you reach a street that closes off this end of Iron Horse. There's a run-down dark brick house before you, its walls are shedding paint. Right ahead there's a red cellar door, with a combination padlock tight on a chain. There's a picture of a fish on the cellar door, and writing: "The stars will guide you".

What do you do?

Try and pry the door open → 021

Take a look around the house → 035

Look up at the sky → 010

## 007

- Not yet I haven't, - Ziggy slaps his forehead, - Good call! Let's take a look.

He does a search on Old Man Hush's Garden over his phone, and gets a lot of pointless and weird hits, from automatic lawnmowers and hush puppies down to Old Goriot, who seems to be a literary character. It doesn't add up to much. Then Ziggy opens his map app, and navigates to the Hill.

You're both hunched over the screen, in case street view might reveal a secret hidden garden somewhere. But all you see are boring fancy newly-built houses.

- We need a different search, - you tell him, - Didn't you say Gerda found some kind of clue in the library? Is the library even open now? → 017

## 008

- Gerda sent this, late in the afternoon just yesterday. And that was the last I heard from her.

Couldn't reach her since, though I've tried her phone and on chat, but nothing, - says Ziggy with a sigh.

- There's a brick wall on this photo, with the poem on it.

- That could be the clue she'd found in the library! And she might have followed up the lead, to who knows where. Too bad we don't know where the photo was taken.

Do you tell your parents? → 011

Have you tried searching for Gerda yet? → 014

009

- Really, you want to know about history? Alright, follow me.

She shuffles along the rows of bookcases, and you tag along until she's led you to the far end of the library. Good thing you remembered the history books are in the back! She shows you some titles, but you just smirk at all of them, playing for time. In final exasperation, she unloads a pile of fat history books on your desk before she heads back to hers. Holding your breath, you listen for any sound of Ziggy getting busted snooping the library computer. But all's quiet. You sneak a look between the bookcases, and see Ziggy thumbing through some big book. He slams it shut, and scuttles over to your desk. His eyes are shining bright.

- We have it, come on, - he blurts, dragging you away.

- Hey, what about your Ghengis Khan? - the Librarian hollers at your back, - Aren't you checking out any books?

- Uh, not right now, thanks, goodbye - you say, and make a beeline for the exit, trying not to think of the pile-up you left behind on the reading table. Outside, Ziggy leads on, explaining as you go.

- I've found it in the records! Gerda was reading something called Local Architectural Relics from the Middle Ages to the Present Day, and it can't be borrowed from the reference section. I looked it up, it's about a million years old and run-over twice. I found the part about our neighborhood. It said there were villas behind a tall stone wall on the top of the Hill, and they've all been torn down. One of them must've belonged to Old Man Hush. Apparently it's totally hard to find, and the place is always real quiet. There's special sculptures in the garden, and hedge dividing walls. Nobody even knows what street this was in! This one house is left from way back then, a dark brick one. That's the wall with the poem about Old Man Hush's was on! Corner of Mirage and Iron Horse. Let's go! Buzzing with excitement, he drags you along the street. → 023

010

- What are you looking at? - asks Ziggy.

- I'm checking the stars, to see if they'll guide me.

- Why do that, when it's broad daylight?

He has a point, you can't see a single star overhead. Well, it seemed like a good idea anyway.

Will you try prying the lock open? → 021

Or look around the house? → 035

011

- No. Gerda asked me not to tell. Dad's such a worrier, he'd be totally freaked. Let's try and find her, just until the evening, then I'll tell them. Will you help me?

- Yeah, sure!

But wait, have you tried looking for Gerda yet? → 014

Or have you googled Old Man Hush's garden? → 007

Is the library still open? → 017

012

- That's a good idea, get her away from the desk, and I'll look up Gerda's book from the computer record! - says Ziggy. You're feeling nervous about this, but are pretty sure you won't get caught. You walk up to the Librarian.

- Good afternoon, - you say politely, - I need to find a book, can you help me please?

- Of course I can! What's the book?

What do you tell her?

- A Berry and Dolly book? → 005

- A book about Ghengis Khan? → 009

### 013

From the entrance, you can start either to the north or west. The eastern pass has disappeared since your trip through the maze, so you can't go that way.

Do you head west? → 080

Do you go north? → 100

Or do you go to the gate and call for Ziggy? → 055

### 014

- Yeah, after lunch I took off from school, just to look around a little. It was beastly bean soup for lunch again... Anyway, I took a walk up the Hill, and went along every street, looking for old gardens, but of course I found none. There was hardly anyone out in the sun, except the gray old lady that's always there on the corner. Oh, and I got barked at by a dog. But not a trace of Gerda, - he reports, sounding exhausted. - Then I came straight back to school to you.

You nod in sympathy, before asking him a question:

- Have you googled Old Man Hush's garden? → 007

- Is the library still open? → 017

### 015

Lazily, the tiger lays its shaggy head on its soft paws and drifts off to sleep, as you scuttle away going north → 129

going south → 060

heading east → 150

### 016

You turn left along Mirage Street. It soon swerves sharply to the left, and ends abruptly at a house. You and Ziggy scout around looking for a red door, but all you can find is the bright green front door. Ziggy scratches the paint in case it's a red gate painted over, but no luck. You made the wrong choice with the hen's feet. You decide to double back to the crossing.

Flip to 023 and check the diagram again, before choosing another path.

### 017

- Yes, but we haven't much time, - says Ziggy as he checks his watch. - You're right though, if that's where Gerda found her clue, it's where we need to look. C'mon, let's go!

You're packing up your stuff, and Ziggy huffs as he stuffs schoolbooks into his oversize bag.

- In a hurry are we, laziggy? - your classmate Charlie pokes him in the ribs. - Packing up your troubles in your old kit bag? Hey, d'you know why the mail always arrives late?

- Homing pigeons used to fly straight, but postmen move in zigzags, just tell us another one Charlie,

- Ziggy mumbles nervously, then turns to you. - All done, let's go!

You leave the school gates and head to the City Library. Luckily it's practically next door, and in a minute you're standing before the modern three-storey library building. You'd never been inside before, and Ziggy's only been once or twice. But to Gerda, this was like her second home. You enter the spacious library hall. You can almost feel the silence following as you walk up and down rows of bookcases. You pass some history books first, then comes literature, arts, and finally the children's section. You reach the library desk where the Librarian stands waiting. There are a few scattered readers at the book-laden library tables.

- Do you know what to tell her? - you whisper to Ziggy.

- Uh, no idea, I was too distracted, - says Ziggy, embarrassed. Looks like you'll have to be the brains of this operation. What do you suggest?

Do you say Gerda sent you to pick up the book she last read here? → 002

The Garden of Old Man Hush by Anna Bojtí  
Translated by Dániel Dányi

Or do you distract the Librarian instead, and look up Gerda's library history in the records? → 012

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