

Sedaris releases essay collection

from page 1

is that what you're saying?

(laughs) That's exactly what I'm saying. I also love the story about the straight cab driver who kept pressuring you to discuss your sex life and hook up with lesbians.

It's my belief that all men know that cab driver. I was in Toronto and I went to a barber shop and I got my hair cut and the guy, who was Italian, asked me where I live and I said I live in France and he said, "Do you get a lot of pussy in France? Do you get a lot of French pussy?" Does that ever happen to you? It'll be a barber or a cab driver and part of me is like, "Can't you tell I'm gay?"

I think you should get into cabs wearing a bib that instead of a picture of a lobster has a picture of a penis.

(laughs) That's a good one. (laughs more) Oh goodness.

Have you considered being a Santa's elf again? Would you revisit the experience?

No, I did it for two years and that was kind of enough for me. It would seem gimmicky. The reason that ["Santaland Diaries"] story worked was I just needed a job and they hired me. I didn't get the job to write about it. I feel like when you do things specifically to write about them you're trapped into writing about them. You're under pressure to find what's interesting about them. I would rather have all that come about organically.

Now that you have mined most of your life for material, how do you go about filling up the well with fresh experiences for stories? Do you ever turn to Craigslist for ideas? There's crackpot everything on there.

No, I don't know anything about it. I saw the internet for the first time last September and I got my very first email about 10 days ago. The first one in my life. Hugh set something up so I could get email. I can sort of understand what people are talking about — email is good if you don't want to talk to people. Like sometimes you call and somebody's girlfriend gets on and you have to say, "How are you doing?" You'd just as soon leave a message. I can see that. The internet is so new to me. I didn't realize you could just go on and lie about people. I can get on a computer right now and write "Michelle Obama said to me she hates Jews." Somebody called me the other day, "Oh there's that thing on Gawker that you try to pick guys up during your readings." I've never done that. Ever, ever, ever. I will have gifts for teenage girls when I go on tour because I'm always honored when they come and it's fun to make a big deal out of a teenager. I take the shampoo and conditioners from my room, and yesterday I went to the museum and got a bunch of cheap bracelets. I'll often talk about how pretty she is, like, "It must be so good to be you, and you're what guys in prison dream about." But a guy? I won't talk like that to a teenage boy because I don't want it to be weird or



Photo Credit: Anne Fishbein

uncomfortable. Early on I saw somebody on a book tour try to pick someone up from the audience. They respect you and are in awe of you so it would be weird to put any move on them. Plus I'm involved with somebody. So I was appalled because I've never done a thing like that.

Anything else online that has surprised you so far?

I went on YouTube to hear Billie Holiday and then it said, what do you think of this? It's Billie Holiday singing "Strange Fruit" in 1955. What do you mean what do you think of it? Who the fuck cares? Are you going to give a thumbs-down? And then someone commented, "Oh she needs to take singing lessons from Diana Ross, there's somebody who knows how to sing." And then someone below that responded, "Shut up asshole," and the

other person said, "You're an asshole, you shut up." I didn't know that stuff existed! It's like talking during a concert — shut the fuck up, Billie Holiday is singing!

Does your sister Amy pressure you into putting her in more of your stories?

I gave her good lines in this book. She has the best lines. But no, no she doesn't. I've written about Amy before but I never said she was an actress, because if you write someone is an actress they become suspicious of their motives. Oh, that person can't really be behaving that way because they want attention. And Amy is not really that kind of a person.

During last year's controversy over fabrication in memoirs, an article in *The New Republic* lumped you in as one of the guilty. Your thoughts on that, a year later?

The [author of that article] is an editor at *Outside Magazine*, he fact-checks, fixes grammar in stories about camping. This guy went to North Carolina with my book "Naked," and this was a book in which a cat is hit by a car, dies, comes back to life and speaks English — and that's the book he's fact-checking. The things he came up with, like I got the building style wrong in the mental hospital where I volunteered when I was 15. I don't really feel like he came up with anything. If it was a story on the styles of buildings, of mental hospitals in the United States, then I think that would be pretty glaring but people don't read me for that. I'm a humorist. So I guess I was surprised.

You have homes in London and France, where same-sex civil unions exist. Have you been keeping an eye on the gay marriage struggle here in the U.S.A.?

I guess it's one of those things where when people oppose it I don't understand what they're talking about. I watched this Chris Rock concert and he was talking about how people say gay marriage threatens the sanctity of straight marriage but Michael Jackson got married. There are shows like "I Want to Marry a Millionaire." How sacred can it be? It's just something I don't understand the opposition to. I don't understand how, if two lesbians want to exchange bad poetry on a mountain top, that would

threaten the marriage of the people who grew up next door to me in North Carolina. I don't get it.

Any plans to get married or a union with Hugh?

We've been together for 17 years. I know straight people who just don't see the need to get married, they just live together, and I think we're like that. That said, if you handed me a piece of paper and said you can save 18 cents by signing this piece of paper, I would sign the piece of paper. In France right now they have civil unions but Hugh and I haven't done it yet so if I were to die tomorrow he would have to pay 60 percent inheritance tax on our apartment. It would go down to 30 percent if we had a civil union. It saves money so I would do it because it saves money.

What else is in the works?

I just have my hands full on this tour and I have a book I turn in a year from now, little fables about animals. It's all new fiction. ▶

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