

ely inventive...Stunningly effective...
surreal Saunders magic is working."
THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



GEORGE SAUNDERS

STORIES

IN PERSUASION NATION

PRAISE FOR IN PERSUASION NATION

"The first thing you ought to know is that Saunders is the funniest writer in America....[But] Saunders's laughs are a cover, a diversion, beneath which reside some profoundly serious intentions regarding the morality of how we live and the power of love and immanent death to transform us into vastly better creatures....I can't think of another writer who would try to do what Saunders is doing, or anything close to it. This is an important book."

—THE NATION

"Saunders is a hilarious, wicked, and pitch-perfect satirist of our times, of course, but for a satirist he has a whole lot of heart."

—ESQUIRE

"Saunders has been likened to other great American social satirists—Nathaniel West, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon—and it's a valid comparison in terms of effect. But he is definitely a voice of his own time, keeping up with the heaving cultural tide."

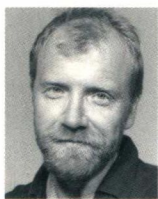
—MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

"Back when Philip K. Dick asked, 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?' who could have imagined that George Saunders would answer?...Saunders's caustic wit, imaginative flair, and the ping-pong speed of his dialogue are on full display here."

—LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW

"Leaves you startled and hushed, grateful to be alive and to be reading."

—THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



GEORGE SAUNDERS is the author of *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil*; *Pastoralia*; *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*; and a children's book, *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip*. He writes regularly for the *New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and *GQ*. In 2006, he was awarded a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" for "bringing to contemporary American fiction a sense of humor, pathos, and literary style all his own."

FICTION



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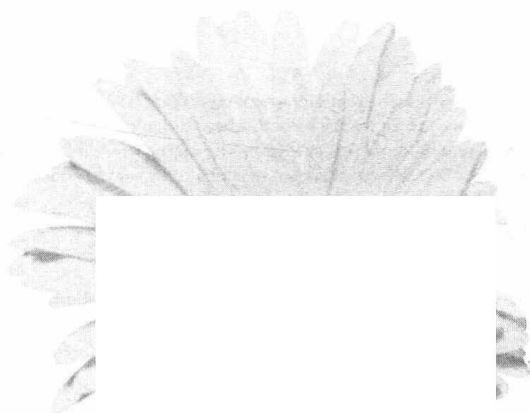
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IN PERSUASION NATION
GEORGE SAUNDERS



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in persuasion nation



stories by george saunders

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Some of these stories have appeared in different form in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, and *McSweeney's*.

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MORE PRAISE FOR

In Persuasion Nation

"At once insanely inventive and calmly convincing . . . The dozen stories that make up *In Persuasion Nation* achieve a delicate balance between the grim and the funny, tipped in the end toward bliss."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Mr. Saunders is often compared to Kurt Vonnegut for his playfulness, his genius for the vernacular, and his pained recognition that it's not only under totalitarian regimes that you'll find cultural lockstep: People love to conform, even if they have to chew off their own nonconforming bits. What sets Mr. Saunders apart is that his idea of goodness—protection of the weak, bravery, open dissent—has a pop-spiritual basis. . . . Dementedly brilliant."

—*The New York Observer*

"Satirist George Saunders often is accurately compared to George Orwell, but his sci-fi-by-way-of-a-Gap-ad style and anarchic tendencies are superbly unique. . . . Nobody can top [his] gleeful, apocalyptic skewering of modern-day America. . . . Saunders proves his admirable skills at balancing satire and emotion, and his inspired and savage imagination is peerless."

—*The Miami Herald*

"Ludicrously funny and outrageously prescient . . . Saunders's finest gift . . . is to construct a story of absurdist satire, then locate within it a moment of searing humanity."

—*The Boston Globe*

"Laugh-out-loud, uncontrollably urinating-on-yourself hilarious."

—*Time Out New York*

"Pynchon-meets-Wonder Showzen."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

continued . . .

"George Saunders's stories are so strange, so funny, and so unexpectedly moving, that they can make you feel oddly protective. . . . 'CommComm,' the collection's capstone, is not just the strongest story Saunders has ever written, but one of the best and most surprising modern stories that anyone has. . . . Saunders accesses a new register here, making tags like 'satirist' seem hopelessly beside the point. Like all of his best stories, this one leaves you startled and hushed, grateful to be alive and be reading."

—The Associated Press

"Brilliant . . . [Saunders] has a singular skill at manipulating language. It's almost as though he learned English from watching television and reading poetry, and then fermented his findings into a weird new language all his own. His sentences, bursting with barely perceptible tweaks to standard usage, are multilayered and profound, yet instantly digestible. 'Think these things up in your heart,' one of his characters says. 'Treasure them around, see what it is.' Treasuring Saunders around, you find yourself laughing, a bit moved and ultimately won over."

—*Time Out Chicago*

"George Saunders is a goddamned genius. . . . Of the few fiction writers currently tackling the Big Issues, few are as consistently successful as George Saunders. . . . If you haven't yet been exposed to Saunders's singular point of view and knockout storytelling ability, [*In Persuasion Nation* is] a fantastic place to start."

—*Giant Magazine*

"*In Persuasion Nation* is another blast of savage Swiftian satire. . . . It's *Babbitt*, updated and unhinged . . . [it's] like Kafka trapped in a Jerry Springer universe."

—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"So funny, so surreal, and so disturbing . . . Few today can match Saunders's depth of inventiveness. . . . This book should persuade the nation that we are in the presence of a talent that can, without exaggeration, be called unique."

—*The Hartford Courant*

"Technically, George Saunders has not yet published a novel. He simply creates whole worlds, frequently in less than, say, twenty pages. In *Persuasion Nation*, his third collection, is packed with oddities, brand names, and sly moral fables."

—Metro

"These stories are blazingly fast, and his sentences are both funny and heavy with sympathy. . . . Saunders solves the postmodern problem of inventing a Frankenstein language from the ruins of our murdered public discourse, and does so in a way that does not condescend or simplify. He makes the near-impossible look easy. . . . [Saunders] is busy taking risks, pushing at the boundaries of his talent, and American culture."

—*The Believer*

"Saunders's surreal (yet prescient) tales of American life, where everybody gets kneecapped for just wanting to get ahead—like the family that ends up killing all the dogs in their town in a fit of paranoia . . . are not exactly like your life—until the second or third time you read them."

—*Jane Magazine*

"Savor Saunders's darkly hilarious vision of how twisted America is now or might be on the brink of becoming. . . . These stories are funny, often absurd, and, upon reflection, utterly serious. It is the kind of humor that makes your belly ache and your stomach turn."

—*The Oregonian*

"Everyone who reads him knows that George Saunders is one of the funniest writers at work today. What's less remarked on is his capacity to wrench pathos from comedy. While other writers seek out beauty, Saunders restricts himself to America's chintzy landscape, our vocabulary of bureaucratese and self-empowerment. . . . [But] where David Foster Wallace paints a world utterly dehumanized by these conditions, Saunders finds great humanity."

—*The Boston Phoenix*

continued . . .

"[Saunders's] writing style is cerebral like Samuel Beckett, simple like Charles Schulz's *Peanuts*. He's also fucking hilarious. Like if MTV and Borders organized a spring-break party for fans of literary fiction."

—*LA Weekly*

"Burst[s] with energy and glee and scope far beyond what the slim size of this book would seem to promise . . . The reader surfacing from an immersion in Saunders's peculiar stew of wit, rage, and sometimes savage satire might never look at the world with quite the same eyes again."

—*The (NC) News & Observer*

"Sweetly acerbic . . . Saunders reaffirms his sharp, surreal vision of contemporary, media-saturated life. . . . Saunders's vital theme—the persistence of humanity in a vacuous, nefarious marketing culture of its own creation—comes through with subtlety and fresh turns."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Following in the footsteps of Orwell, Bradbury, and Atwood, Saunders writes shrewd, off-the-charts speculative fiction, leading a coterie of similarly inclined short-story writers that includes Scott Bradfield, Judy Budnitz, and David Foster Wallace. In this third savagely imaginative collection, his most riveting to date, he considers various forms of diabolical persuasion in a techno-colonized world in which advertising governs every aspect of life. . . . Funny, creepy, mournful, and outraged, Saunders's ingenious and superbly crafted satirical stories blaze like warning lights on the road to hell."

—*Booklist* (starred review)

For Paula, again, and always

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Our enemies will first assail the health of our commerce, throwing up this objection and that to innovative methods and approaches designed to expand our prosperity, and thus our freedom. Their old-fashioned clinging to obsolete ideas only signals their extinction. In the end, we must pity them: we are going forward with joy and hope; they are being left behind, mired in fear.

—Bernard “Ed” Alton,
Taskbook for the New Nation,
Chapter 1. “New Man, New Growth-Community”

I CAN SPEAK!™



Mrs. Ruth Faniglia
210 Lester Way
Rochester, NY 14623

Dear Mrs. Faniglia,

We were very sorry to receive your letter of 23 Feb., which accompanied the I CAN SPEAK!™ you returned, much to our disappointment. We here at KidLuv believe that the I CAN SPEAK!™ is an innovative and essential educational tool that, used with proper parental guidance, offers a rare early-development opportunity for babies and toddlers alike. And so I thought I would take some of my personal time (I am on lunch) and try to address the questions you raised in your letter, which is here in front of me on my (cluttered!) desk.

First, may I be so bold as to suggest that some of your disappointment may stem from your own, perhaps unreasonable, expectations? Because in your letter, what you indicated, when I read it? Was that you think and/or thought that somehow the product can read your baby's mind? Our product cannot read your baby's mind, Mrs. Faniglia. No one can read a baby's mind. At least not yet. Although we are probably working on it! What the I CAN SPEAK!™ can do, however, is recognize *familiar aural patterns* and respond to these patterns in a way that makes *baby seem older*. Say baby sees a peach. If you or Mr. Faniglia (I hope I do not presume) were to loudly say something like: "What a delicious peach!" the I CAN SPEAK!™, hearing this, through that hole, that little slotted hole near the neck, might respond by saying something like: "I LIKE PEACH." Or: "I WANT PEACH." Or, if you had chosen the ICS2000 (which you did not, you chose the ICS1900, which is fine, perfectly good for most babies) the I CAN SPEAK!™ might even respond by saying something like: "FRUIT, ISN'T THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR FOOD GROUPS?"

Which would be pretty good for a six-month-old, don't you think, which my Warranty Response Card shows is the age of your son Derek, Derek Faniglia?

But here I must reiterate: That would not in reality be Derek speaking. Derek would not in reality know that a peach is fruit, or that fruit is a major food group. The I CAN SPEAK!™ knows it, however, and, from its position on Derek's face, gives the illusion that Derek knows it, by giving the illusion that Derek is speaking out of its twin moving SimuLips™. But that is it. That is all we claim.