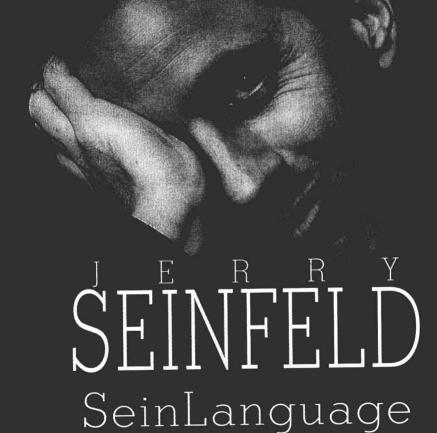
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To my wonderful parents Betty and Kal, and my also wonderful sister Carolyn, who when they heard I wanted to become a comedian, thought it was a great idea.

When I was a kid my father used to take me around with him in his truck. He was in the sign business on Long Island and he had a little shop called the Kal Signfeld Sign Co.

He really did.

I'd ride in the van with my sneakers up on the dashboard and it was there that I first learned one of life's great pleasures, watching other people work.

In truth, there were few people as much fun to watch work as my father. There has never been a professional comedian with better stage presence, attitude, timing, or delivery. He was a comic genius selling painted plastic signs that said things like "Phil's Color TV" and cardboard ones like "If you want to raise cattle, why do you keep shooting the bull?"

The thing I remember most about those afternoons is how often my father would say to me, "Sometimes I don't even care if I get the order, I just have to break that face." He hated to see those serious businessman faces. I guess that's why he, like me, never seemed to be able to hold down any kind of real job.

Often when I'm on stage I'll catch myself imitating a little physical move or certain kind of timing that he would do.

"To break that face."

It was a valued thing in my house. I remember when Alan King would walk out on the Ed Sullivan Show hearing my mother say, "Now, quiet." We could talk during the news but not during Alan King. This was an important man.

And I was proud to be the only kid in my neighborhood with a complete Bill Cosby album collection. He was my favorite comedian and the first black actor to star in a series. But to me, he was the first adult on TV to wear sneakers on a regular basis. I know that affected me, but I'm not sure in what way.

My father lived to see me start to make it as a comedian and he was always my most enthusiastic supporter. He taught me a gift is to be given. And just as he gave it to me, I hope I am able to give it to you.

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INTRODUCTION

I certainly never imagined at fifteen, when I started writing down these funny thoughts that kept coming into my head, that someday they would amount to a book. I never thought they would amount to anything, really. But a lot of people have this little corner of their brain that wants to play all the time. The idea of this book for me and for you is to keep that corner alive. It's good to play, and you must keep in practice.

I still can't believe this book is in a bookstore. I love bookstores. A bookstore is one of the only pieces of physical evidence we have that people are still thinking. And I like the way it breaks down into fiction and nonfiction. In other words, these people are lying, and these people are telling the truth. That's the way the world should be.

"Hi, I'm Jerry Seinfeld. I'm fiction."

"I know."

"How did you know?"

"Because I'm nonfiction."

I also find a bookstore to be a wonderful laxative. I don't know what it is. I don't know whether it's the quiet,

or all the available reading material, but you walk in there and something just happens. I really think they should eliminate a couple of aisles and put in some nice men's and ladies' rooms in the back, and then a bookstore would really be a wonderful place to visit.

I think the biggest problem bookstores have is not enough room by the cash register to sell stuff. They seem to feel this is the only really good selling area. They think "The only way we're going to unload this one is if their money's already out." Why not give each salesperson in the store their own cash register, and let them follow the customers around? When they see someone pick up a book, they sneak up behind them and go, "cha-ching" and the customer will turn around and go, "Well I guess as long as you've got it rung up already . . ."

I would say the main competition for the book is the video because for some reason people feel they need to come home with a rectangular block of something that they don't know the end of. The big advantage of a book is it's very easy to rewind. Close it and you're right back at the beginning.

It must be frustrating to work at a bookstore. They see someone come in, spend two hours, and walk out with nothing. They must want to explode—just push the customer in the back as they exit, "So you know

everything? There's nothing you need in here? There must be something you're at least interested in. Why did you come in here in the first place? We don't need you, you know."

In a lot of ways, that's what a bookstore is. It's a "smarter than you" store. And that's why people are intimidated—because to walk into a bookstore, you have to admit there's something you don't know.

And the worst part is you don't even know where it is. You go in the bookstore and you have to ask people, "Where is this? Where is that? Not only do I lack knowledge, I don't even know where to get it." So just to walk into a bookstore you're admitting to the world, "I'm not too bright."

It's pretty impressive, really.

But the pressure is on you now. This book is filled with funny ideas but you have to provide the delivery. So when you read it, remember—timing, inflection, attitude. That's comedy. I've done my part. The performance is up to you.

And if you find at some point that you're not laughing, keep smiling, wipe your brow, and try to get them on the next bit.



FREEWAY OF LOVE

Well that's it, I give up. I really don't know what the women are thinking. I've talked with them. I've studied them. I've asked them to study me. And I have to admit I am still at square one. Not that I really object to square one. It is the only numbered square in the game. At least you know your position. Nobody ever screws up and goes, "Well, back to oval seven."

I believe we're all secretly happy we can't figure our relationships out. It keeps our minds working. I think we have to be grateful for the one thing in our lives that keeps us from being totally focused on eating.

THE DATE

Dating is pressure and tension. What is a date really, but a job interview that lasts all night? The only difference between a date and a job interview is that in not many job interviews is there a chance you'll wind up naked at the end of it.

"Well Bill, the boss thinks you're the man for the position. Why don't you strip down and meet some of the people you'll be working with?"

Maybe we need some kind of pre-date ritual. Maybe first meet up in one of those rooms where you visit prisoners. You have that glass between you. You talk on the phones. See how that goes before you attempt an actual date. This way the only sexual tension would be deciding if you should put your hand on the glass or not. And if you're not comfortable at any point, you just signal to the guard and they take the other person away.

It's hard to have fun when you're feeling evaluated. We should say, "You seem nice. Why don't we get together sometime for some serious scrutiny?"

Because that's the thing that happens. Whenever you think about this person in terms of maybe spending your future with them, you have to magnify every little thing about them.

The guy will be like, "I don't think her eyebrows are even. I can't believe it. Her eyebrows *are* uneven. Could I look at uneven eyebrows for the rest of my life?" And of course, the woman's thinking, "What is he looking at? Do I want someone looking at me like this for the rest of my life?"

Women, of course, have powers far beyond those of mortal men.

A woman left a message on my phone machine the other day, with kind of a breathy voice. And no matter what a woman says, if it's in that breathy voice, it sounds so appealing. A stewardess could lean over, whisper in my ear, "Would you put on your seatbelt? We're about to crash into a mountain." And I would go, "Really? So what are you doing later by the ruptured fuselage? What do you