



Stories I Tell On Dates

Paul Shirley

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Everyone tells stories on dates. Sometimes we tell these stories to make people laugh. Sometimes we tell them to make people think. Sometimes we tell them so we can increase the chances we'll see the other person naked.

Paul Shirley's stories are about an adulthood spent all over the world: living in Spain, playing in the NBA, and having his heart (and spleen) broken. But they're also stories about growing up in small-town Kansas: triumphant spelling bees, catastrophic middle school dances, and a Sex Ed. class taught by his mother.

They're funny stories. They're vulnerable stories. Most of all, they're universal stories, just as the stories we tell on dates should be.

Stories I Tell On Dates Details

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D. Johannes Bayer says

One of my favorite books to come out this year (2017). I don't think you need to be into dating books, memoirs, or sports autobiographies in order to really enjoy this book. You don't have to like all those genres or even any of them. It is so skillfully, well-written while being woven together in such a unique way that anyone could get engrossed in this book.

It may sound like an unusual undertaking to combine the elements of personal memoir (finding love/personal narrative), sports autobiography, and a kind of meta-story of why we choose to tell certain stories when we are trying to introduce our true selves to a potential partner on a date; but I would say that having this told by someone that achieved elite excellence in one field (in this case basketball) while trying to balance out the human need for developing romantic relationships emotionally is the most intriguing thing about this book. Extreme excellence in one particular, specific field is somewhat anathema to being well-adjusted in every single aspect of your life, and so Paul (a former nba player) still feels like an underdog in most of his hilarious coming-of-age yarns. Following Paul as a late-bloomer in romance (and a few other areas) while becoming a professional basketball player traveling the world will probably be fascinating to anyone that ever tried to attain excellence in anything and realized that the sacrifices made in order to achieve also came with unwanted side-effects of missing out on basic experiences that are part of the everyday humanity of the average person. Sounds like common sense, since we generally acknowledge that high-achievers make 'sacrifices', but this book will give you new insights that will apply to anything in your life and all through tales which are incredibly funny, down-to-earth, relatable, touching, and universal.

A really well-written book by any standards you would set for any professional author. Don't think that because he was an athlete he didn't put the work into learning how to write at an extremely high level. I read his first book, and would have said he was an amazing writer "for an athlete" .. now with this book, I would just say he is a great writer period.

Jane Shirley says

Sincere and honest stories that will feel personal to the reader. Paul makes you laugh and cry and feel both sorry for him and cheer for his successes.

Scott Muska says

[tl;dr—This book is entertaining, interesting and well-written, and one I've been citing when people ask me if I've "read anything good lately." I highly recommend it.]

In this essay collection, and in pretty much everything he puts out into the world, Paul Shirley manages to write the kind of stuff that makes me feel less alone in a world where it's often all too easy to fall into the trap that you are at least close to alone in the way you think and feel. And he does so in ways that will definitely make you laugh and might make you cry. Sometimes you might do both simultaneously

(“craughing?”).

There were several passages in this book that made me think, “I know exactly what he’s talking about, and I feel the very same way, but he just said it in a way I have never been able to articulate.” I can list on two hands the other people who have managed to consistently do that, and the list includes David Sedaris, Sloane Crosley, Louis C.K., George Saunders, David Foster Wallace, Neil Gaiman, Kelly Oxford, Aziz Ansari and Chuck Klosterman. (I do not make any of these comparisons lightly.)

Shirley is so open and earnest, making it pretty much impossible to not feel connected to his stories—to feel sympathy if not empathy. This is impressive for many reasons, one being that Shirley has lived a very atypical life. His years as a nomadic professional basketball player sent him all over the world, and the book tells about some of the experiences that came from that career, ranging from the amazing to amazing to elating and sometimes heartbreaking. But to say that this is a book about basketball is as inaccurate as saying “Fight Club” is a book about fist-fighting or that “Moby Dick” is a book about whales. It is about how we go through our lives caring about things and doing things that not only make for good stories—but that also shape who we are and help us make some sort of sense of the life we’re living and the world around us.

Mindy says

My first thought after finishing this book was "How is he still single?" and my second thought was "NOOOO! I want more stories!" Paul Shirley is damn funny, damn smart, humble, and stomach-clenchingly honest. If I wasn't laughing out loud (much to the consternation of my seatmates on my flight), I was trying unsuccessfully not to cry over a homesick kid away from home for the first time. This is such a beautiful (and brutally honest) love letter to not just the women he dated but to the all people and events that formed him that I selfishly hope the author remains single for a really long time so I can read more stories he tells on dates.

John says

Paul Shirley reads the audiobook and it really flies by.

It has clever insights from an "innocent(s) abroad", and recalls youth in a way that's uniquely enriching as opposed to the empty-to-all-but-the-author mode I normally find done elsewhere.

You'll laugh on the street, your commute, while you assemble a fake Eames rocker, however it won't be from setup, tick, tick, punchline but something much more refreshing. Every chapter is better than the one before and when people ask what you are laughing about you'll be keen to do a retelling but vexed about where to start.

Amber Christ says

While Paul’s life may have taken a different path than most (I mean, he’s 6’9 and played professional basketball for heaven’s sake), his stories are our stories. They are stories of failure, and firsts, of loss, love,

and growth. You'll definitely laugh and probably cringe, because well, life is hard and Paul's storytelling is funny, insightful, and chock-full of embarrassing admissions the rest of us would take to our grave. I give it five red balloons!

Stephen Mayer says

It would be nice if all short story collections were this much fun to read from start to finish - in my experience there might be one or two stories that fulfill expectations, but the rest quickly become forgettable and mundane. This book grabbed me from the first few pages and invited me on a tour of Paul Shirley's life. Well at least the parts of it he might share on a date.

This is easily Shirley's best work. Often funny, always relatable, sometimes heart-wrenching, and surprisingly vulnerable. Do yourself a favor and pick up a copy.

Tiffany says

This book is something very special and I knew it would be (that's why I pre-ordered it!) There's too many authors who find conveying the honesty you do so compellingly to be completely insurmountable. They gloss over or share experiences aren't nearly as engaging. Paul Shirley continues to raise the bar. For me, this book is/was entertaining "AF".

Love, revenge, coming of age, schemes, drama, sex, adventure, wins and defeat, self depreciation in amusing manners (probably because I do this myself) self exploration and life lessons, humor, and a imaginative side of you. Also, he cries like every chapter (haha j/k not ALL of them) and I really dig the vulnerability of that. Between both of his books my opinion remains that it's obvious he is a hell of a contender of a guy. I find that commendable. This is easily my Book Of the Year. (Probably 2018 too since 2017 is over almost.) People are getting this in their stockings this Christmas.

Katherine says

This books showed up in the mail a few days ago because my boyfriend is really into sports and loved Paul Shirley's last book. I picked it up yesterday and started reading it because that's what I do with random books that are sitting on my kitchen counter.

I finished reading it roughly 15 hours later (I'm a slow reader so that's almost unheard of). This book is hilarious and moving, insightful and entertaining. Shirley is a good writer and great story teller.

You don't have to be a basketball person, or a sports fan to enjoy this book, just a human being who likes learning a little bit about other people. But for once in my life I finished a "sports" book before my boyfriend. Take that Eric.

Jenni V. says

Although I've never met the author I still feel my 5 star rating needs a small disclaimer. Not only am I an Iowa State graduate but my husband and I were enjoying our college years at the exact same time that Paul Shirley was there playing basketball and, as a fellow engineering major, he was my husband's favorite player. So even though I'm not much of a basketball fan (even now I only follow ISU's entire season and everyone else during March Madness) I knew every player/coach he was talking about, even the ones he didn't mention by name, I saw pretty much every college game he referenced and we followed his career enough to be able to be familiar with his overseas and NBA career.

Honestly, the only reason I didn't finish this book in one sitting is because I had to put it aside after reliving the MSU heartbreak/bullshit call all over again. It's been almost 20 years but I can still remember seeing his tears of frustration and sadness as our entire floor was watching it as a group; we had dragged tvs and couches out of our rooms and set up in between the elevators of Towers. There is no such thing as a double foul!!!!

Even though I can't rate it objectively since it was so easy for me to find a connection to his stories, I will say that he's a great writer (I really enjoyed his first book as well) and I believe anyone would be able to relate to his struggles and accomplishments over the years.

Quote from the Book

"The stories in this book are my stories.

Sometimes they are the stories I tell when I am trying to explain where I came from. Sometimes they are the stories I tell when I am trying to explain where I'm going. Sometimes they are the stories I tell when I'm just trying to make someone laugh."

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Katie Savage says

I really love the premise of this collection of charming essays-- stories that we tell people when we're first getting to know them, trying to impress them, hoping to connect with them. And the premise lets you know just what to expect from the book-- you feel like you're sitting across the table from Shirley, his voice is that honest, intimate, funny. I've already recommended "Stories I Tell on Dates" to many friends and loved it my first time through.

Michelle Flores says

I was at Iowa State when Paul Shirley was there. During my time at Iowa State, I met many players on the basketball team, but I never met Paul. I desperately wanted to and tried several times. To me, Paul Shirley was the best of what is right about college sports: small town, talent, and intelligence. Following Paul's NBA career and the writing he had done during that time, I always wondered what he might do post-professional basketball.

His first book was good, but his second book has cemented for me Paul's talent as a writer. As someone who loves interesting set-ups for narration, Paul's book, to me has a fresh approach. Stories from Paul's life are nestled into date scenarios, where Paul might have originally told such stories to the women he squired. Some of the stories Paul tells on these dates are funny; some, like the one about his first love, are so poignant and real they make your heart hurt. All of the stories share a common thread of not knowing-- who you are, where your place is, what you're doing, why you're doing, and what matters most. Being vulnerable, in the way that Paul is through these stories, is refreshing.

Both my husband and I read the book together, and we had the same reaction: Paul's stories were eerily similar to our own, minus the whole basketball part, and thus, we felt like they were our stories too. To have that kind of reaction from two very different people speaks volumes about the content of this book.

Sara says

I laughed out loud, cried a little, and I smiled a lot (yes, I too believed in Santa Claus until I was like 12!). I really enjoyed reading Paul Shirley's first book ("Can I Keep My Jersey?"), but I loved this new one. The stories are relatable, honest, and funny. I didn't want it to end. I want more stories!! Can't wait to share this with my family and friends.

Katharine says

Truly a delightful read, and from a perspective that seems missing in both literature and in our fragile times. To have an authentic and humble voice that can both fumble and charm is needed at a time when boys in particular are not given the permission to express feelings. The stories get richer and deeper as the book goes on. Reading all the joys and vulnerabilities of a young boy and seeing those same qualities into his mature young adulthood and the grace and learning that goes into that journey was both a soft and powerful read.

Brittany says

What an enjoyable read!! The author's writing is funny and poignant at the same time. And it's a lovely concept for a memoir. Even though Paul Shirley's life as a NBA basketball player is different than most, you cannot get through this book, without reflecting on your own life and the stories you, yourself, carry around like party favors. In fact, both my husband and I read this book, and it opened the door for some great conversations and a lot of memories that we'd never shared with each other before. I recommend to anyone looking for a good read and some wonderful nostalgia the moments that shape who we are.
