



Rob Delaney: Mother. Wife. Sister. Human. Warrior. Falcon. Yardstick. Turban. Cabbage.

By Rob Delaney

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A memoir about sex, death, love, addiction, and fatherhood from one of the stars of the hit series *Catastrophe*, Rob Delaney—winner of the “Funniest Person on Twitter” at the Comedy Central Comedy Awards

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Rob Delaney is a father, a husband, a comedian, a writer. He is the author of an endless stream of beautiful, insane jokes on Twitter. He is sober. He is sometimes brave. He speaks French. He loves women with abundant pubic hair and saggy naturals. He has bungee jumped off of the Manhattan Bridge. He enjoys antagonizing political figures. He listens to metal while he works out. He likes to fart. He broke into an abandoned mental hospital with his mother. He played Sir Lancelot in *Camelot*. He has battled depression. He is funny as s***. He cleans up well. He is friends with Margaret Atwood. He is lucky to be alive.

Read these hilarious and heartbreaking true stories and learn how Rob came to be the man he is today.

Praise for *Rob Delaney*

“Hilarious, raw.”—*Rolling Stone*

“Unlike some books by comics, [Rob] Delaney’s volume offers a rich, deeply considered (and yes, funny) look at his life, from jumping off a bridge to crashing a car while drunk to getting and staying sober while other friends died trying. A great read by any standard, but even more so for including stories about needing (and failing) to find a bathroom while jogging.”—**E! Online**

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“Heart-wrenchingly true tales exuding self-effacing whimsy and smart-guy charm . . . There are plenty of books by male comedians about being drunk and stupid and depressed and getting out of the hole they dug for themselves, but this book feels like you are reading the account told by a grownup who actually learned something about himself worthy enough to share in book form.”—*Splitsider*

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Rob Delaney: Mother. Wife. Sister. Human. Warrior. Falcon. Yardstick. Turban. Cabbage. By Rob Delaney Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #89650 in Books
- Published on: 2014-12-02
- Released on: 2014-12-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.94" h x .56" w x 5.15" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

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“A surprisingly moving story of how humor can alleviate sorrow, if never completely eradicate it. The chapter about visiting the abandoned Danvers State Hospital—infamous for carrying out countless lobotomies in the twentieth century—is worth reading on its own for the empathy it evokes for the casualties of early mental health treatment. Candid and conversational, this memoir shows there’s more to Delaney than pithy tweets.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Rob Delaney has been named the “Funniest Person on Twitter” by Comedy Central and one of the “50 Funniest People” by *Rolling Stone*. He writes for *Vice* and *The Guardian*. This is his first book.

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la curiosité

We got our first microwave when I was ten. I’m not even sure if I was warned that it was dangerous. My parents must have thought I should understand, by that age, that if something can make ice-cold water scalding hot faster than any machine in history, I shouldn’t monkey with it. The microwave’s primary use was to make hot water for my mom’s nightly tea. It took us years to collectively figure out that a kettle was a vastly superior tool to make tea. I guess our understanding of technology evolved backward. It’s not odd, I suppose, considering that my dad grew up very poor and my mom grew up in relative wealth. My dad spent a portion of his childhood in Catholic orphanages and foster homes in Boston—even though his parents were still alive—and for part of her youth, my mom’s home had an elevator in it. My dad’s mom wasn’t terribly interested in parenting and ran around on my grandfather, disappearing for years at a time. My dad’s father was very poor and wrestled with alcoholism, so sometimes his four kids—of whom my dad was the second youngest—were placed in an orphanage or foster home for a year or two. Fuck. Now that I’m a dad, I wonder how you could arrive at the decision to let your kids out of your sight like that. Physical distance between me and my son is my least favorite thing in the world.

My mom grew up in a decidedly different situation. She was the fourth of five children in a wealthy Catholic family who lived an hour north of Boston. To this day, my family spends a couple of weeks every summer at the beach house her parents bought back in the 1950s. My mom went to Catholic school from first grade all the way through her senior year at Regis College, just outside of Boston. She has a fantastic story about a nun brutally yanking her pigtails when she laughed at a friend’s antics one time in first grade, the way a beautiful little girl in first grade fucking should. A friend of my uncle’s, at the same school, had his ear boxed by a nun until it bled. Desks in the classroom were set up in order of the students’ grades, so there was quite literally a “stupid corner.” It was a phenomenal school.

When I was in sixth grade, I did not sit in the stupid corner. We didn’t have one, but I wouldn’t have been placed in it anyway. I loved to read, so I loved English and Social Studies. I coasted to good grades in all the other subjects. That changed in later years, when I discovered shoplifting, cigarettes, girls, and booze, and allowed my self-will a little more free reign. But just because I did well in sixth grade didn’t mean I had any kind of street smarts or would be inclined to obey the rules of thermodynamics as they applied to microwave ovens.

My mom and dad had settled in Marblehead, Massachusetts, right before my third birthday. Marblehead is comprised of two peninsulas that stick out into Massachusetts Bay, about a half an hour north of Boston. I would ride my bicycle around its perimeter most days after high school. That took a little over an hour. It’s tiny. But it’s beautiful, has lots of trees and beaches, and is filled with white people.

I knew a microwave oven was dangerous, in theory, and that you weren’t supposed to put certain things in it. I knew, for example, that metal did not belong in the microwave. But what about an egg? It seemed like you really probably shouldn’t put one in there, what with the fact that an egg is totally sealed and is soft and wet in the middle and hard on the outside.

One day, after school, I decided to put an egg in the microwave and see what happened. I ceremoniously

placed the egg in the center of the microwave, closed the door, and punched in one minute. Then I watched intently as a fair amount of nothing happened. I didn't want to tempt fate, so I took the apparently unchanged egg out of the microwave, set it on the counter, and tried to dream up another experiment. Then I heard a quiet humming. It was coming from the egg. The egg was humming at a very high pitch, higher than human vocal cords can replicate, like a tiny little egg-kettle. I bent down to examine the egg and listen more closely to its song. "Eggs shouldn't hum," I thought. "Is it in pain?" Was this a fertilized egg and had I unknowingly tortured a chick and it was now screaming for death's release in its tiny prison?

I took a butter knife from a drawer and held it over the egg. I gently tapped the egg. It immediately exploded with a loud WHOMP. An amazing volume of foul-smelling scrambled egg sprayed out. Much more foulness than one solitary egg should hold. It was all over the walls and the cupboards and the ceiling. Bits of scrambled egg stuck to my face, burning me. I brushed the egg bits off, horrified and injured. I was wide-eyed and in shock at what I had wrought.

The amount of scrambled yellow matter that blew out of the egg was roughly enough to fill a large mixing bowl that you'd use to prepare cake batter. Science-wise, it was as fascinating as watching a shuttle launch or discovering that there are fish miles below the surface of the sea that produce their own light. I now knew precisely how and why it was a bad idea to microwave an egg.

I slowly sponged egg off the walls, cupboards, and ceiling. I opened the windows because it smelled disgusting—a sick, wrong smell that called to mind a hospital trash barrel. I can still re-create the smell in my mind. It smelled much, much worse than if someone farted directly into your nose and mouth. The cleaning process wasn't a panicked one; the smell was such that, even as I climbed up and stood on top of counters to clean egg bits out of the ceiling molding, I knew my parents were going to find out. As pretty as the scrambled eggs looked, the smell immediately alerted you to the fact that they'd been prepared in an unconventional manner. It fucking stank, like a dog fart in a slaughterhouse, or if an old man prepared a cottage cheese soufflé in his underpants. There was no hiding what I'd done.

Additionally, I now had two good-sized burns on my face. One on my forehead and one beside my nose. When my mom came home, I told her what had happened. I couldn't not; her home smelled like a tomb and her son had suppurating bloody wounds on his forehead and on the side of his nose. She just gave me a look that said, "Wow, you can fuck up in ways I'd never even imagined," and told me not to do it again.

My wounds blistered and everyone in school asked me what had happened. I was too embarrassed to tell the truth, so I told people that my sister had thrown a potato peeler at me. Let's pause: How fucking awful and unrealistic is that as an excuse? Excuses are not my strong suit. Plus, what if she really had thrown a potato peeler at my face? Wouldn't that speak to a home-life situation that was more "embarrassing" than adolescent curiosity gone wrong? Also, my sister is, and was, one of the gentlest people I have ever met and she would never throw a napkin at someone, let alone a potato peeler.

A few days after my microwave experiment, I was sitting in class and felt a gentle "pop" on my forehead and hot liquid ran down my face. It was the burn on my forehead just tenderly exploding, of its own volition, on my eleven-year-old face. As the pus—filled with healing white blood cells—trickled down my face, I thought, "I deserve this."

ma vie avec les juifs

In Marblehead, Massachusetts, there are a lot of Jewish people doing all kinds of Jewish things all over the place. I'm Catholic, but I went to the Jewish community center for nursery school, so I witnessed much

Jewish activity from an early age. I blew the shofar, ate challah, spun dreidels, and even had my penis customized in keeping with Abraham's covenant with G-d. (I omitted the "o" in that last word out of respect for my Jewish readers, even though, as a Catholic, I can write that word all day long if I want. But I don't, because I'm not a serial killer. Plus I have a family and a job.)

On my first day of nursery school at the JCC, my dad, who grew up in Catholic orphanages and foster homes (i.e., not a Jew), accompanied me for the first hour or so. Other parents were with their kids too, to ease the transition from hiding behind Mommy's skirt to socializing with other dirty human children. The first activity our teacher, Ms. Sherry, led us in was a song to learn one another's names.

The class would sing (to the tune of "Frère Jacques"), "Where is Robby? Where is Robby?" It was then my duty to stand and sing, "Here I am! Here I am!" Which I did, beautifully I'm sure.

The class then replied with, "Very nice to meet you. Very nice to meet you. Please sit down."

After my angelic solo, they moved to a boy named Andrew.

"Where is Andrew? Where is Andrew?"

I stood up and announced to the class, "ANDREW'S DEAD." A not-dead little boy named Andrew immediately began crying and his father ran and scooped him up to protect him from any further terrifying bombshells the scary gentile interloper might decide to drop.

The reason I announced Andrew's passing was because my grandparents' dog had moved on to that big kennel in the sky a few days prior. His name was Andrew. I'd assumed Ms. Sherry was singing about him.

Today I live in Los Angeles, California, which has even more Jewish people than Marblehead. To be honest, I wouldn't even think of living somewhere that wasn't swarming with Jews.

Not long ago I leapt out of bed at about 6:30 a.m. and went for a run in a residential part of Hollywood. When I was a few miles from my home my bowels sent an urgent cable to my brain, apologizing for the short notice and saying that they'd be emptying themselves in one minute or less; the location was up to me. I frantically searched for an alley or a dumpster I could hide behind. Nothing. Two parked cars I could crouch between? No. It would be a terrible neighborhood in which to play hide-and-seek or smoke pot surreptitiously as a teenager—no little nooks for sneaky behavior anywhere. It was particularly ill-suited for public adult shitting. The one plus—and it was a big one—was that it was so early in the morning. No one was around, in any direction. I knew that whatever horror was about to ensue, it would be over quickly. I crouched in the gutter at the end of a driveway that led to the garage of a home that actual people lived in, and shit furiously and hatefully into the street. I began to know relief.

My relief was short lived, however, because when I looked up from my pathetic al fresco bio-vandal squat, I locked eyes with a Hasidic woman who had materialized across the street. She was paralyzed by what she saw. We gazed into each other's souls and silently agreed that I was the worst person in the history of humanity and that my name belonged nowhere near the Book of Life.

Users Review

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