

FROM THE DESK OF  
**GEORGE SAUNDERS**

August 23, 2005

Dear Awesome Bookseller,

I'm writing to you, a little awkwardly, to say what is probably obvious by now, which is I've written a book called *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil* and would like to encourage you to sell the hell out of it. In fact, if you'd be willing, I'd really appreciate it if you would cease selling all other books, and actually start deprecating all other books, even the classics, during the short window when my book will be for sale. I'm no marketing wiz, but I suspect this would help boost my sales.

I'm also writing—seriously, and even more awkwardly—to thank you, from the heart, for your support of my work over the years. My career is, you know, kind of pathetic, compared to the careers of a lot of writers, who apparently sell books in the triple digits and everything, but I know that it would be basically no career at all if not for the care and attention that booksellers like you have so generously given my work.


This one means a lot to me, for various reasons. First, because it got out of hand early and wrote itself out of my initial idea of it (a best-selling feel-good kid's book) and into something else entirely (a fable about genocide). And also because in the end, although I think (hope) it has a certain political/ethical edge to it, being about that universal urge to separate the world into Us and Them and then begin killing Them, it's ultimately also sort of useless, in the way that art can and maybe should be. A work of fiction can't really prove anything or advocate anything, being made up, and therefore possible of being rigged, but it can—and I hope this one does—give some pleasure, in the areas of language and form and what I think used to be called 'whimsy,' before that word started conjuring up revolting images of Victorians in flower-wreaths.

Finally, I hope you won't be put off by the author "photo," which Riverhead tells me is part of the "next wave" of author representations, in which all writers will be required to look like a former member of The Eagles. The little squiggles coming out of my face are, as I understand it, meant to have something to do with the "acid trip" I was on when I wrote the book. I don't know. In real life I am going rapidly bald and almost never smile like some Scottish Highlander playing pocket-pool, but I guess that's the advantage of an "author drawing"—they can make you look like someone else entirely, in this case, the Brawny paper-towel guy after some 'shrooms.

Honestly and finally, really in seriousness: I am deeply grateful for your support, and understand how many of my readers came from someone who took the trouble to recommend my work to somebody else, and I really appreciate it.

If you have any questions about the book—or would simply like to instigate a scheme wherein you charge twice the marked price and we split the profits—feel free to email me at [gwsaunde@syr.edu](mailto:gwsaunde@syr.edu).

All the best,



George Saunders