



Stranger on a Train: Daydreaming and Smoking Around America with Interruptions

By Jenny Diski

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"I am not a travel writer in any reasonable sense of the word," Diski confesses. "I do not feel compelled to bring the world to people, or meet interesting characters, or enlarge my circle of acquaintance. I just want to drift in the actual landscape of my destination." Despite the disclaimer, the British novelist (*Only Human*) does all of the above in this eloquent exploration of the psyche America's and her own. The work is divided into two parts. Journey One begins aboard a transatlantic cargo ship where Diski is among a handful of passengers en route to Savannah, Ga. From there, she takes Amtrak to Arizona. Journey Two takes place a year later as Diski circumnavigates the U.S. from New York's Penn Station to Portland, Ore., and back, stopping in the suburbs of Albuquerque to stay in the backyard trailer of a friend from the first sojourn. As in the Hitchcock thriller of (almost) the same title, strangers whom Diski befriends in the smoking sections, or "sin bins," of the trains divulge the details of their lives; Diski, however, plays it close to the vest, sharing intimacies with readers only about her difficult childhood, struggles with substance abuse and more. "I became remarkably unhappy at having been chosen to survive," she recollects after her first trip, comparing the experience of saying goodbye to her travel mates to leaving the psych ward of England's Lady Chichester Hospital at age 14. As she did in *Skating to Antarctica: A Journey to the End of the World* (1998), Diski again blurs the borders between traditional travelogue and memoir to create a transcendent work. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

English novelist Diski (*Only Human*) mixes memoir and travelog in a sharp, vivid, but ultimately disappointing narrative written around two train journeys, one across the southern United States and the other around its perimeter. She begins each journey with seeming enthusiasm, but before long, she starts feeling that she has opened herself up too much to strangers. She then panics and withdraws, needing to hide away in her tiny cabin on the train. A short visit to the home of a woman she meets on the first journey ends in paranoid terror when Diski becomes convinced that the family won't let her leave. Intermittently, she flashes back to other times in her life, including an unhappy childhood and several episodes of severe depression. The places she visits (Phoenix, Chicago, Jacksonville) are entirely incidental to the story, the scenery is best seen through a train window, if at all, and the people she meets are unremarkable. In the end, Diski seems happiest when exiled to a dingy smoking car puffing desperately on a cigarette, heading home. Not a priority purchase. Linda M. Kaufmann, Massachusetts Coll. of Liberal Arts Lib., North Adams Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Review

"Distinctly Nabokovian. . . Funny, surprising and harrowing, *Stranger on a Train* delivers the kind of adventure travel we will always need: its discoveries aren't new places but fresh new ways of seeing old ones." ?*The New York Times Book Review*

"*Stranger on a Train* is not only a fun book (how un-British), it is an important book." ?*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"A dream of a writer...[*Stranger on a Train*] does what the best travel literature does: It takes you somewhere. . . lovely." ?*The Washington Post*

“A strange and wonderful journey that reads like a synthesis of Sylvia Plath, Martin Amis and the new journalism of John McPhee.” *The Times (London)*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Josephine Lowe:

The ability that you get from *Stranger on a Train: Daydreaming and Smoking Around America with Interruptions* could be the more deep you digging the information that hide within the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but *Stranger on a Train: Daydreaming and Smoking Around America with Interruptions* giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood simply by anyone who read the item because the author of this book is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this *Stranger on a Train: Daydreaming and Smoking Around America with Interruptions* instantly.

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