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21 Dog Years: Doing Time @ Amazon.com

Mike Daisey

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Boy meets dot-com, boy falls for dot-com, boy flees dot-com in horror. So goes one of the most perversely hilarious love stories you will ever read, one that blends tech culture, hero worship, cat litter, Albanian economics, venture capitalism, and free bagels into a surreal cocktail of delusion.
In 1998, when Amazon.com went to temp agencies to recruit people, they gave them a simple directive: send us your freaks. Mike Daisey -- slacker, onetime aesthetics major, dilettante -- seemed perfect for the job. His ascension from lowly temp to customer service representative to business development hustler over the course of twenty-one dog years is the stuff of both dreams and nightmares.
With lunatic precision, Daisey describes the lightless cube farms in which book orders were scrawled on Post-its while technicians struggled to bring computers back online; the fourteen-hour days fueled by caffeine, fanaticism, and illicit day-trading from office desks made from doors; his strange compulsion to send free books to Norwegians; and the fevered insistence of BizDev higher-ups that the perfect business partner was Pets.com -- the now-extinct company that spent all its assets on a sock puppet.
In these pages, you'll meet Warren, the cowboy of customer service, capable of verbally hog-tying even the most abusive customer; Amazon employee #5, a reclusive computer gamer worth a cool $300 million, who spends at least six hours a day locked in his office killing goblins; and Jean-Michele, Mike's girlfriend and sparring partner, who tries to keep him grounded, even as dot-com mania seduces them both. At strategic intervals, the narrative is punctuated by hysterically honest letters to CEO Jeff Bezos -- missives that seem ripped from the collective unconscious of dot-com disciples the world over.
21 Dog Years is an epic story of greed, self-deception, and heartbreak, a wickedly funny anthem to an era of bounteous stock options and boundless insanity.

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