

ESSAY

The Between Boyfriends Tour

By Cindy Chupack

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I used to be known as the writer from "Sex and the City" who wrote a book. Until two other writers from "Sex and the City" wrote a book called "He's Just Not That Into You," and then I became known as someone who actually knows the people who wrote "He's Just Not That Into You."

Yes, at the same time that single women around the world (and I mean every single woman) realized, thanks to that book, that her relationship was not going as well as she thought, I realized my book sales were not going as well as I thought. Apparently, people were just not that into my book. They liked it, as a friend, some even loved it, but it wasn't The One, and by that I mean No. 1 on Amazon like some other books we know. In fact, the last time I checked -- today -- my book ("The Between Boyfriends Book: A Collection of Cautiously Hopeful Essays") was No. 75,314 on Amazon, and that's in paperback. In hardcover it's No. 174,852.

Incidentally, these numbers are something only authors are concerned with. The general public has no idea that you can check sales rankings hourly on most major bookstore sites, or that those rankings can change drastically if five people buy your book (or if you buy five of your books) during one hour. Not that

I have. I'm just pointing out that it's clearly masturbatory (or masochistic) to check and compare rankings like this, when writers would be better served gauging self-worth the old-fashioned way: by simply Googling ourselves.

You can't measure success in book sales, though let me just say: their book sold what my book sold while you were reading this. And you can't measure success in media attention, though let me just say: they were recently on Leno, and I was on Leeza. "Leeza at Night." It's a radio show hosted by Leeza Gibbons, who was very nice, and said on the air that my eyes sparkled.

No, success can only be measured by your own definition of success, and when I wrote my book I had three modest hopes: (1) I wanted to be proud of the book, and I am. (2) I wanted the book to sell to people who were not in my immediate family, and it has. In fact, what I didn't anticipate is that my immediate family would not want to pay for their copies. And (3) I wanted to meet the love of my life on the book tour. And I did . . . meet a lot of people on my book tour. A lot of great single women.

My readings were filled with women (as long as I got the apologetic, self-promoting e-mail message out in time), and what these friends of friends wanted to know was not what inspired me to write the book, or how I came up with the clever title; they wanted to know how to meet men. "On the show there are always men!" they would shout. "Where the hell are the men?" I was hoping they'd tell me.

One by one I met my book's audience, in Chicago, in Dallas, in Fort Lauderdale -- not in concert halls like David Sedaris, but at least in bookstores, as opposed to another writer I know whose readings were banished to living rooms after his publisher caught him trying to set up his own bookstore appearances.

Apparently a publisher only gets so many readings in each store, and it was made clear to my friend (when he was told never to call another bookstore again, not even about books) that he was not a priority. So there's that: I was a

priority, but only because of my "Sex and the City" credit, which I did not want on the cover of my book for reasons that now elude me. Thus, the second most popular question at my readings after "Where the hell are the men?" was: "Does Sarah Jessica Parker get to keep her shoes?" (Yes, but she donates most of them to charity.)

I actually enjoyed meeting fans of the show, and meeting the occasional fan of the book, but it became clear this was not how I would be meeting the love of my life. Sure, once in a blue moon a nice-looking man would show up, and he would invariably be someone I once dated. Someone who had heard that I wrote a book. Someone I might have mentioned in the book. Someone who was, frankly, not pleased.

When this happened, when an ex showed up, he would never say hello before the reading. The ex likes to be discovered during the reading, but not like Mr. Big at Carrie's book reading, a breath of fresh air -- more like the Evil Fairy arriving at the christening she wasn't invited to. And then he would smile, as if to say, "Look who's here!" throwing me off completely. I'd be thinking, When did he move to Phoenix? How did he find out about this, was there actually publicity? Have I gained weight since I saw him last? What did I say about him in the book? It wasn't so bad, was it? Am I reading about him now? And then he would approach me afterward -- without a book, always without a book, because, "Oh, I've read the book" -- and introduce me to the prettier, thinner, more appreciative, more discreet woman he is now happily married to. In fact, they're having a baby, which they probably conceived in the Barnes & Noble bathroom while I was discussing whether Kim Cattrall was like her on-screen character. (Sometimes.)

Anyhow, all was not lost because a book tour is not only bookstores. There is press. And press is read by men, often on the toilet, but still, press seemed more promising than the Lilith Fair my readings had become. And I did get some press. I even got interviewed on the "Today" show," which seemed like a giant

coup until "He's Just Not That Into You" was an entire episode of "Oprah." And then another episode of "Oprah." And then an entire "Larry King" show. They still haven't been on Leeza though.

So I did not meet the man of my dreams on my book tour. In fact, although my book was popular with women (it was, for one week following my "Today Show" appearance, No. 27 on the extended New York Times best-seller list, the "extended" list being another thing only authors know about), I realized it was not a great selling tool for potential boyfriends. My unfortunately nonfiction book basically outlined and highlighted every mistake I'd ever made with men, except the mistake of giving a guy my book as soon as I met him, because I was so excited to have written a book. But that's what I did when I finally met the man of my dreams (post-tour, once I had contact with men again), and despite that tactical error, despite breaking every rule in "The Rules," despite his many disclaimers that he was "not the marrying kind," which, according to "He's Just Not That Into You" translates into "he's just not that into you"- despite all that, he recently proposed. He actually rode up on a white horse dressed as a knight (I'm not making this up) after a friend lured me to the beach at sunset. And that friend was Liz Tuccillo, one of the authors of "He's Just Not That Into You."

I will always be amazed that Mr. Not the Marrying Kind got the horse, the suit of armor and the perfect ring, but the fact that he got Liz Tuccillo . . . she's very hard to book these days.

ESSAY Cindy Chupack was an executive producer of "Sex and the City." She is the author of "The Between Boyfriends Book."