

Reading Zone 4.3

Read the following passage and then answer the questions that follow. You can check your answers on page 238.

October 31

A week ago I laughed myself silly over Macy's "Elf Wanted" ad; this afternoon I sat in the SantaLand office and was told, "Congratulations, Mr. Sedaris, you're an elf."

In order to become an elf, I had to fill out ten pages of forms, take a multiple-choice personality test, undergo two interviews, and submit urine for a drug test. The first interview was general, designed to eliminate the obvious sociopaths. During the second interview we were asked why we wanted to be elves, which, when you think about it, is a fairly tough question. When the woman next to me, a former waitress in her late twenties, answered, she put question marks after everything she said. "I really want to be an elf? Because I think it's really about acting? And before this I worked in a restaurant? Which was owned by this really wonderful woman who had a dream to open a restaurant? And it made me think that it's like, really, really important? To have a dream?"

I told the interviewers that I wanted to be an elf because it was the most ridiculous thing I had ever heard of. I figured that for once in my life I would be completely honest and see how far it got me. I also failed the drug test. But they hired me anyway. Honesty had nothing to do with it. They hired me because I am five feet five inches tall.

November 19

Today we began our elf training. We learned the name of the various elf positions. You can be, for example, an "Oh, my God!" elf and stand at the corner near the escalator. People arrive, see the long line around the corner, and say, "Oh, my God!"; your job is to tell them that it won't take more than an hour to see Santa.

You can be an Entrance Elf, a Watercooler Elf, a Bridge Elf, Train Elf, Maze Elf, Island Elf, Magic-Window Elf, Emergency-Exit Elf, Counter Elf, Magic-Tree

Elf, Pointer Elf, Santa Elf, Photo Elf, Usher Elf, Cash-Register Elf, or Exit Elf. We were given a demonstration of the various positions, acted out by returning elves who were so “on stage” and goofy that it made me a little sick to my stomach. I didn’t know that I could look anyone in the eye and exclaim, “Oh, my goodness, I think I see Santa!” or, “Can you close your eyes and make a very special Christmas wish!” It makes one’s mouth hurt to speak with such forced merriment. It embarrasses me to hear people talk this way. I prefer being frank with children. I’m more likely to say, “You must be exhausted” or, “I know a lot of people who would kill for that little waistline of yours.”

I am afraid I won’t be able to provide the enthusiasm Santa is asking for. I think I’ll be a low-key sort of elf.

November 21

My costume is green. I wear green velvet knickers, a yellow turtleneck, a forest-green velvet smock, and a perky little hat decorated with spangles. This is my work uniform.

Today was elf dress rehearsal. I worked as a Santa Elf for house number two. A Santa Elf greets children at the Magic Tree and leads them to Santa’s house. When you work as a Santa Elf you have to go by your elf name. My elf name is Crumpet. The other Santa Elves have names like Jingle and Frosty. They take the children by the hand and squeal with forced delight. They sing and prance and behave like cartoon characters come to life. They frighten me.

1. The tone of the author is best described as
 - (A) jocular
 - (B) ironic
 - (C) desperate
 - (D) angry
 - (E) pedantic

2. The author's "elf name" is
- (A) Creamy
 - (B) Dreamboat
 - (C) Strumpet
 - (D) Trumpet
 - (E) Crumpet
3. According to the passage, what was the author's reason for wanting to be an elf?
- (A) He needed the health benefits.
 - (B) He wanted to open a restaurant.
 - (C) He still believed in Santa.
 - (D) He needed the money.
 - (E) He thought it the most ridiculous job in the world.
4. According to the passage, why was he chosen to be an elf by management?
- (A) He was honest.
 - (B) He loved Christmas.
 - (C) He passed the drug test.
 - (D) He was the right physical type.
 - (E) He had the shoes already.
5. All of the following are elf positions at Macy's EXCEPT
- (A) Escalator Elf
 - (B) Emergency-Exit Elf
 - (C) Watercooler Elf
 - (D) Cash Register Elf
 - (E) Train Elf
6. The job the author received was
- (A) Magic-Window Elf
 - (B) Santa Elf
 - (C) Maze Elf
 - (D) Island Elf
 - (E) Pointer Elf

7. The author's knickers were
- (A) forest green
 - (B) velvet yellow
 - (C) velvet green
 - (D) red and green
 - (E) spangled green
8. The author can best be described as
- (A) a spunky elf
 - (B) a low-key elf
 - (C) an enthusiastic elf
 - (D) an unenthusiastic elf
 - (E) a frightened elf
9. Why did the woman next to the author at his second interview want to be an elf?
- (A) She loved children.
 - (B) She loved Christmas.
 - (C) She was a flake.
 - (D) She was fired from her restaurant.
 - (E) She never really answered the question.
10. This piece would most likely be found in
- (A) a diary
 - (B) a newspaper article
 - (C) a textbook
 - (D) a gossip column
 - (E) a novel