

And finally...



JANE BUSSMANN'S BEDSIDE TABLE

THE TABLE

It's a chrome-and-glass table that is aspiring to be richer than I am; it's a rip-off of a 70s table which is meant to look like I live in some Playboy mansion – but I definitely don't. It's got a water carafe and a pile of biscuit crumbs on it, and a dead contact lens from when I woke at four in the morning, drunk, and flicked it out of my eye. Also a load of books and a couple of scripts. There's no alarm clock – if my alarm clock was on my bedside table, I would never get up. It has to be a minimum of six feet away from where I'm sleeping.

THE METHOD

I read in bed sitting under a large gold Chinese dragon that I got in Laos – it's probably terrible feng shui. And I would be wearing a black kimono, and these days I'd be reading a treatise on the failure of aid in Africa. I read when I can't sleep: sometimes it goes the whole night if I really can't sleep. I have a duvet and what I think is supposed to be a carpet from IKEA: it's a red bed cover or throw, but I think it's meant to be on the floor, it's so heavy. I tend to read novels about Britain or scripts in bed.



PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

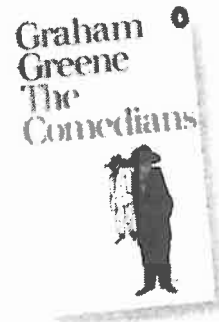
THE BOOKS

Reading at the moment

I love books about Britain, contemporary ones trying to make sense of British society, like *What a Carve Up!* by Jonathan Coe or *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith.

Just now I'm reading *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* by David Rieff which is about the failure of aid in Africa, and *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* by Fiona Terry, which is also about that. I'm writing a TV comedy about a corrupt charity, so this is background material.

I'm also reading *The Comedians* by Graham Greene. I really like Greene and I also recently got into John le Carré. He's brilliant. I like the fact that their stories are set in exotic countries, and that they cover big, big ideas and politics. I'm also reading Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy. It's great. The characters aren't perfect – they're grubby, which I like. And it's not pious. I also love Jon Ronson's stuff: I just reread *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, and I've read the screenplay too – it's terrific. I like his characters: they are fun and they are real, which always makes it more hilarious. He writes excellent dialogue.



Couldn't put down

White Teeth. I couldn't believe it. It was so hyped that I thought, 'I'm not going to touch it!' I picked it up one day, and just kept missing the bus stop. It was *that* good. I loved the fact that it was about London – a London that I knew. I loved the way it unfolded. And she got



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durrants

the voices of young idiots brilliantly down.

Gathering dust

Scribbling the Cat by Alexandra Fuller. It's a library book as well. I've really tried hard. It just feels like getting trapped on a plane with someone who keeps hanging on about the noble savages. It's a terrible thing to say because Fuller genuinely loves Africa. But it's just – and I'm guilty of this as well – that you don't get a chance to form your own opinion, because she just keeps telling you exactly what everything is like. There's no sort of breathing room. I've had four cracks at it; it's overdue now. I'm going to have to take it back to the library.

Secret indulgence

Books about 'my life with rock bands,' like *I'm With the Band* by Pamela Des Barres. Also, I'm really into the description of Paris flats on property websites. I've become obsessed with them, and I translated them from French into English and back to French, and they just get more and more funny and wonderful. I just imagine myself sharing this *pied-à-terre* with my friend. It will be in the 3rd *arrondissement* and you have to go through a courtyard to get to it and it's on the 5th floor but there's no lift. But there are amazing Velux windows in the roof and exposed beams and – I've read so many descriptions of funny, light-filled attics with unobstructed views. Then I go out and meet some lovely ambassador who sweeps me off my feet. It's all part of the fantasy.

Jane Bussmann started writing a *Guardian* column at the tender age of 19; by the grand old age of 22 she had moved into sketch work for the BBC, and has had her hand in comedy, sitcoms and travel journalism ever since. She's worked on TV's *Smack the Pony*, *The Fast Show*, *Brass Eye*, *The Sundays* and *So Graham Norton*, as well as turning her hand to screenplays and performing on radio shows such as *Loose Ends* and *The Now Show*. Her new book, *The Worst Date Ever* (Macmillan) is based on her live comedy show, *Bussmann's Holiday*. She is working on its screen adaptation as we speak.