

# Tasteless, inappropriate and hilarious

## The Worst Date Ever

Jane Bussman

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"In Britain, we have three release valves," Jane Bussmann writes, "booze, blasphemy and bad-taste jokes." *The Worst Date Ever*, the memoir of a British celebrity reporter turned foreign correspondent, is full of the latter. By turns extraordinarily amusing and gruesomely inappropriate, it is a messy tale of Hollywood vacuity, Ugandan corruption, child kidnapping, poverty and torture. The book perpetually straddles the divide between wry and wrong.

The story starts with Bussmann trying to make it in L.A., first as a screenwriter and then an unctuous amanuensis to celebrities like Ashton Kutcher, before realising that Hollywood "is boiling hot and full of cunts". After her career nosedives, she develops a crush on dapper US aid worker John Prendergast. She acknowledges the comparative futility of her life, then resolves both to snare Prendergast and emulate him.

So begins a colourful and fearless journey around Uganda, where Prendergast is about to attempt conflict resolution with Joseph Kony, leader of Christian militia the Lord's Resistance Army and, arguably, "the most evil man in the world" (over the past 20 years, he has kidnapped and maintained a 10,000-strong army of child soldiers and sex slaves). Prendergast doesn't turn up for weeks and it is left to Bussmann to investigate Kony's atrocities.

Bussmann deserves credit both for her bravery and for relaying the more disturbing details without mawkishness. However, she sometimes tips into tastelessness. Her Ugandan narrative

places comedy where there can only be horror, as when she describes her visits to camps for women who have been abducted and raped: "I had not seen such a depressing sight as these camps since I caught my ex-boyfriend crying and wanking at the same time."

These misdeployments of humour make for a slightly uncomfortable read. Still, Bussmann perfectly skewers the lunacy of Hollywood, proving a

likably weary narrator. Despite the subject matter and misjudged one-liners, she has mostly succeeded in creating that rarest of books: a comedy that is truly funny.

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