

HE ENDS WAR

Doctors Without Borders were not currently recruiting celebrity journalists. I was hurt, but I noticed on their website a list headed 'Professions MSF Does Not Currently Recruit'. Second down was aromatherapists. I didn't know what international incident led to this ruling, but it made me feel better.

MSF does NOT currently recruit the following:

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|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Acupuncturists | • EMTs | • Paramedics |
| • Aromatherapists | • Licensed Practical Nurses | • Physician Assistants |
| • Body Workers | • Massage Therapists | • Podiatrists |
| • Chiropractors | • Naturopaths (ND) | • Reiki Specialists |
| • Dentists | • Neurosurgeons | • Veterinarians |
| • Dieticians | • Occupational Therapists | |
| • Electrologists | • Ophthalmologists | |

The internet was stacked with job vacancies for Useful People: Amnesty International, the United Nations, even a refugee camp for children kicked out of their villages for witchcraft. I could see myself in an African dawn, banging the breakfast gong: 'Right! Which one of you little shits curdled the milk?' However, the world of selflessness was highly competitive; I sent twenty CVs and got one reply, from Save the Children, asking what skills I had. I told them. That was the last I heard. Apparently paediatric surgery ranks higher than a Radio 4 sketch about a magazine called *The Wrong 'Un*, for the

man who likes it where he shouldn't.¹² Well, that was it. I was useless. I could die tomorrow and no one would suffer, apart from Topshop's knicker department and my mum.

I lay in bed going insane in a puddle of chocolate-covered raisins. *Let me defect. I'll do anything. Reality's almost gone here now.* It was the run-up to the 2004 American general election and experts were predicting George Bush would win again. Once again, they explained, he would fix the election results, but this time in Ohio, not Florida; once again, no one was doing anything to stop it. I got up briefly to let some jokes out, producing political sketches for a local radio station with Kal Penn out of *House*. Then the election came, the president fixed the election results,¹³ but this time in Ohio; once again, nobody did anything to stop it. My God, the jokes hadn't worked. I called my friend Laurence in London for light relief. Laurence told me that a US university had contacted his father, an archaeologist. The US government wanted to enquire of his father how Baghdad's art treasures came to be looted when America invaded Iraq and to tell them how to prevent it happening again if they invaded Iran. We were all going to hell, and my contribution to society was the procurement of chocolate-covered fruit.

I was still in bed, flipping through an obscure political journal – I think it was *Vanity Fair* – when I came across a photo of

12. Special supplement: *The Wrong 'Un Pour Femme*, for the girl who didn't know she had it in her.

13. This is author's opinion based on circumstantial evidence and personal prejudice. But look, I haven't got time for this, here are some other people who did more work:

www.rollingstone.com/news/story/10432334/was_the_2004_election_stolen

makethemaccountable.com/articles/Ohio_s_Odd_Numbers.htm

www.harpers.org/archive/2005/08/0080696

www.michaelmoore.com/words/latestnews/index.php?id=600

a man. He was looking at me from a page called 'Hall of Fame', profiling people who were trying to end a war in Africa. That's him on the right. I tore out the page, got up from bed and showed it to my friend Pauline, a journalist for the *New York Times* with wide, innocent blue eyes.

'This is it, Pauline,' I said. 'This bloke's day job is to end war. In Africa.' He was John Prendergast, forty-one, a hero. A renegade White House Director of African Affairs under Clinton, he was one of the world's most respected 'conflict resolution experts'.

HALL OF FAME



WILLIAMS (LEFT) AND GARDNER (RIGHT) WERE PHOTOGRAPHED FOR THE COVER OF THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE IN 1998. GARDNER (LEFT) AND WILLIAMS (RIGHT) WERE PHOTOGRAPHED FOR THE COVER OF THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE IN 1998.

GARDNER TAKES HOMEWORK

WILLIAMS MOBILIZES

Before the global financial crisis, there was a lot of money being made in the investment industry. It was a boom time for hedge funds, private equity, and other alternative investment vehicles. The industry was growing rapidly, and many people were making a lot of money. This was a time when the industry was still relatively new, and many people were still trying to figure out how to make money in this industry. It was a time of great opportunity, and many people were taking advantage of it. They were investing in the industry, and they were making a lot of money. This was a time when the industry was still relatively new, and many people were still trying to figure out how to make money in this industry. It was a time of great opportunity, and many people were taking advantage of it. They were investing in the industry, and they were making a lot of money.

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Photograph by Mark Schaffel, text by Jacques Mounss, © Corbis Out Publications

It had occurred to me he was also extremely attractive. For purely journalistic reasons, I spent about forty-eight hours straight Googling him, cursing John Prendergast Wedding Photographer of Liverpool for clogging my search results.

The real John was a mystery. Where he came from? How he ended up in Africa? If he was single? All terrible unknowns. The fanciest newspapers published John's editorials about foreign-policy fuck-ups, but angry as his words were, they revealed nothing about the man writing them. But when I found him on CNN and heard him talk, I knew I was on to something. I read transcripts (women are horribly thorough). He was the wild card at every pompous debate, and I could understand what he was talking about.

This man had boiled war into a simple argument: while old-fashioned poverty and injustice set the scene, war is bad guys committing classic bad-guy crimes like murder, theft and rape, and we let them get away with it by pretending it's more complicated than it is. Staggeringly, he said these problems actually have solutions.

Over 800,000 got filleted in Rwanda and 4 million died in the Congo while the superpowers sat on their hands. More than that, the superpowers deliberately belittled these crimes as ancient tribal/sectarian/ethnic squabbles too complex for us to get involved in. Imagine if the boot was on the other foot and Europe had been colonized by Africans who couldn't be shagged to get involved in that tricky tribal squabble between Hitler and the Jews. Damn, I had to meet John Prendergast. He wasn't just hot; he was wise. I wondered how wrong it would be to sit on his knee during the interview.

But the obstacles were massive. John specialized in conflict resolution. I'm English middle class; we specialize in conflict avoidance. My parents didn't speak to each other between 1976 and 1990 because they were trying to avoid a scene. So how could I persuade a man who used to work at the White

House to let me, who still freelanced for *Glamour* magazine, follow him round Africa? I knew I was an A-level failure from Muswell Hill Adjacent; there was no way I'd ever get to meet a former White House director. Until, from nowhere, the highly prestigious *Independent* newspaper called.

'We wondered if you'd like to write something for us!' *Me? Christ!*

'I'd love to!' *Be politics. Please be politics.*

'Now don't take this the wrong way,' said the *Independent*. 'But we think you'd be perfect to write a story about dating out of your league.'

Pause.

Before you read the next sentence, bear in mind that I have no sense of irony.

'There's this guy in Washington,' I said. 'I'd like to interview him instead.'

'What does he do?'

'He ends war!'

'Is he attractive?'

Jesus fucking Christ. 'Well, yeah, I mean classically . . . but his day job is to put an end to war!'

'I'm not sure he's right for the Indy . . .'

'He's perfect for the Indy. He's on a one-man mission to save the world, but he's normal . . .'

'Right . . .'

'Imagine if Bob Geldof wasn't a ██████. OK, never mind. Imagine if there was someone who gave a shit about the rest of humanity, but who wasn't an eighties pop star.'

'Dating out of your league . . . do you know anyone that could do it?'

Yeah. Lisa Snowdon. How the shite she did George Clooney I'll never know. Maybe he thought she was a waitress. But the Indy was the only chance I'd get; John wouldn't meet me for

THE WORST DATE EVER

In Style. The *Independent* was about to hang up when I remembered that truth had got me nowhere.

'You have to run it – John's a celebrity!'

They told me to get on a plane to meet John immediately.