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First Comes Love, Then Comes Malaria: How A Peace Corps Poster Boy Won My Heart And A Third World Adventure Changed My Life



Synopsis

In this laugh-out-loud funny memoir, a pampered city girl falls head over little-black-heels in love with a Peace Corps poster boy and follows him—literally—to the ends of the earth. Eve Brown always thought she would join the Peace Corps someday, although she secretly worried about life without sushi, frothy coffee drinks, and air conditioning. But with college diploma in hand, it was time to put up or shut up. So with some ambivalence she arrives at the Peace Corps office—sporting her best safari chic attire—to casually look into the steps one might take if one were to become a global humanitarian, à la Angelina Jolie. But when Eve meets John, her dashing young Peace Corps recruiter, all her ambivalence flies out the window. She absolutely must join the Peace Corps—and win John's heart in the process. Off to Ecuador she goes and—after a year in the jungle—back to the States she runs, vowing to stay within easy reach of a decaf cappuccino for the rest of her days. But life had other plans. Just as she's getting reacquainted with the joys of toilet paper, John gets a job with CARE, and Eve must decide if she's up for life in another third-world outpost. Before you can say, "pass the malaria prophylaxis," the couple heads off to Uganda, and the fun really begins—if one can call having rats in your toilet fun. Fortunately, in Eve's case one certainly can, because, to her, every experience is an adventure to be embraced, and these pages come alive with all of the alternatively poignant and uproarious details. With wit and candor, *First Comes Love, Then Comes Malaria* chronicles Eve's misadventures as an aspiring do-gooder. From intestinal parasites to getting caught in a civil war, culture clashes to unexpected friendships, here is an honest and laugh-out-loud funny look at the search for love and purpose—from a woman who finds both in the last place she expected to find them.

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Customer Reviews

I thought this book, *FIRST COMES LOVE, THEN COMES MALARIA*, was okay. Not great. Not terrible. But okay. I don't plan to go into detail about why I didn't like this book too much. All of the two-star reviews for this book already point out its weaknesses. In a few words, however, here are the reasons I didn't like this book much: 1) This book, despite its title, does not have much insight about the Peace Corps. The author dropped out of the Peace Corps early (for fair reasons), and moved on with her life. I only mention this as a con, for due to the book's title, I expected it to have more to do with the Peace Corps. 2) The book read as a run-on memoir. There didn't seem to be "a point" to the book; it was just a continuous account, with no climax or epiphany or edification: for the author, or for the reader. 3) The author tries very hard to be witty. Sometimes she is. Other times, she's not. Other times still, it's distracting and banal. 4) The author's voice in the book was whiny. I felt like I was reading a privileged princess's memoir. It was mildly annoying after a while. 5) The author writes some offensive things. Her incessant talk about how Ugandans are smelly was a turn-off as I read. She wrote other things which made me shake my head and roll my eyes. 6) The book was shallow. There wasn't really a greater purpose for it than the author wanted to write, and so she wrote. Clearly this book has roots, and I have no doubt that the author pained over writing it. For that, the author deserves respect. I just didn't find any deeper meaning in it. I don't greet the book as violently as others, who lived as a Peace Corps member and were offended. I just didn't think the book was very good, or very well-constructed.

This book is in the same vein as Maarten Troost's *"Sex Lives of Cannibals"* and *"Getting Stoned with Savages."* The book follows Eve from her post-college Peace Corp experience in South America, to Uganda with her husband and eventually baby via CARE. To me, it just didn't live up the standards of Troost's books. I never really felt like I understood what day to day living was like there. People and situations seem to pop in and out throughout the book with the sense that they've been

there all along but you haven't been hearing about them. For example, we didn't get a sense of what the wildlife around them was like until about 150 pages in, and even then it's only mentioned once, there's a whole chapter on bringing the cats to Uganda from the US and then they're only mentioned a couple more times throughout the book, and at the end when she's saying goodbye to everyone there were several people whose names I knew I'd seen but I couldn't remember exactly who they were, what role they'd played in her life, and why she was so distraught over leaving them. Now I'm not saying I'd want to read 100+ pages on housecats in Uganda, but a little bit of flow and continuity would have been nice. Sometimes it just felt like she forgot that we couldn't see through her eyes and know what was going on from day to day. I just never quite felt immersed in the experience. It always felt like I was listening to someone TELL me about what had happened, rather than being able to picture it myself. This was a perfectly fun book with some definite laugh out loud moments. But like I said, I read Troost's books first, and his just feel more effortlessly informative, immersive, and funny.

Anyone who lives for any length of time in a developing country brings something home: native handicrafts, an exotic partner, a recurring infection of malaria. In Eve Brown-Waite's case, she brought funny, poignant stories. It took her fifteen years, but she finally published them in her debut, *First Comes Love, Then Comes Malaria: How a Peace Corps Poster Boy Won my Heart and a Third-World Adventure Changed my Life*. The paperback has just been released. Brown-Waite's book is a two-fer. It not only traces her Peace Corps stint in Ecuador, but also her life as an accompanying spouse with CARE in Uganda. Both of the foreign sojourns she chronicles are strangely accessible. Unlike reality TV, where we strain to relate to Type-A celebrity seekers, Brown-Waite drops us quietly off the grid - no fanfare, no cash prize, no risk of being voted off the island. We ride along with her as she searches for her opportunity to save the world, as well as when she's just looking for an ice cold beer. Brown-Waite begins her story with a confession: Someday she wants to join the Peace Corps. We meet her on "someday," the day of her Peace Corps interview. This is also the day she meets her recruiter, the "Peace Corps Poster Boy" of the subtitle. It's our first glimpse of Brown-Waite's ability to make us laugh out loud -- before she even leaves the country. The magic of Brown-Waite's memoir is how she manages to turn her mundane stories into adventures, whether she's rationing tampons, ironing "everything" to get rid of mango fly eggs or bartering her pink trousers away at the market. They're believable in the way the stories from our own days are believable, yet she still transports us out of our everyday lives. There's the romance with "Saint John" (including one of the best come-on lines ever). There's the foreign

intrigue, complete with AK-47s. We live through the anguish of a [supposedly] failed Peace Corps assignment. And we watch Brown-Waite's transformation to motherhood (including sonograms in a Ugandan hospital). Mixed in is one cultural surprise after another, as when Brown-Waite, an AIDS educator by profession, learns at a local clinic: "Here in Uganda we have two kinds of AIDS. There is the one you can get from sex...But there is also the kind that you get from being cursed." It's at the end of each chapter, however, where Brown-Waite shares a letter she's written to friends or family back home, when we get the most personal, in-the-moment perspective: "Sometimes I think what I want is to be able to say 'I lived in (fill in the exotic location here) and did (fill in the bold adventure here).' But I'm not sure I'm really prepared for actually having to deal with the hardships of living in the exotic locations or the discomfort of dealing with the bold adventure." Oregon has sent more than 5,500 volunteers into the Peace Corps. Washington has sent even more [8,244]. Our region is home to international aid agencies such as Mercy Corps and World Vision. To many of us, Brown-Waite's experiences will feel familiar. If we're lucky, they'll prompt us to remember and think about what we brought back from our own adventures - whether handicrafts, life partners or just good stories. The author continues to donate 10% of royalties from her book to CARE, specifically for fighting malaria in Africa.

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