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**Opening Extract from...**

# Bonkers

## My Life in Laughs

Written by Jennifer Saunders

Published by Viking

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# BONKERS

## MY LIFE IN LAUGHS

JENNIFER SAUNDERS

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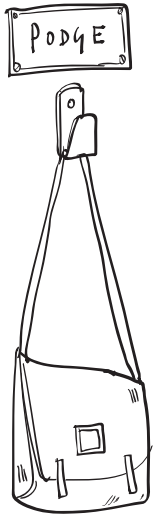



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For my father, who taught me the
importance of laughter

# Dear Reader




I have been told that publishers these days like a particular type of memoir. They like a little bit of misery. They like a 'mis mem'.

Well, I'm afraid I have had very little 'mis' in my life, and nowadays I have even less 'mem'. So we can knock that one on the head.

In fact my brain is a bit soupy overall re the past. Sometimes it's hard to know what is an actual memory and what is simply a memory of a photograph.

Was I really called 'Podge' as a child? Answer: yes.

Was I really surly, apathetic and introverted at school? Apparently not. That is simply an image I invent for myself.

The truth is, I was fairly friendly, sometimes hard-working, and quite good at things.

My mother has kept all my school reports. I imagined these would be a rich source of hilarity and irony, but they turn out to be decidedly average. She has also stashed a good selection of my schoolbooks, clay models, posters from my teenage bedroom wall, a few *Fab 208* magazines and a selection of diaries: the Pony Club diary, the *Honey* diary, a diary with a small elf on the cover that was a present from my friend Karen.

All these diaries are written in remarkable detail for the first couple of weeks of January. Then nothing. So a lot of the incidents that I will write about in this book may all have occurred in January. I have scant info re summers and autumns.

One of the teenage diaries contained a code so I could write really important secrets. Each letter of the alphabet was represented by a shape taken from the capital letter A. Quite complicated, but luckily I had written the code down in the diary itself. I'm no fool! It is just about decipherable, so I could now read my deepest, darkest teenage desires.

This was thrilling in anticipation, but sadly not in practice. I knew it was going to be disappointing when the result of the first code-crack read: 'I really want a velvet hacking jacket.'

Memory is a liquid and strange thing. Researching my own life, I realize that there are major events I have totally forgotten, people I don't remember meeting, shows I don't remember being in and places I don't remember going. And that can leave you vulnerable.

Quite a few years ago, my agent Maureen rang me at home. Her normal voice said, 'Hello, love, a couple of things to go through vis-à-vis availabilities and dates and so on.'

We talked these things over and then she said, not in her normal voice, 'Love, just wanted to check.' Nervous laugh. 'Have you ever been in a porn film?'

Me. Not normal voice. 'Pardon?'

Maureen coughs. 'Have you ever been, do you think, in a porn film? I'll tell you why, love. The papers have been on to me to say they've seen your name on the credits of one such film and it looks like you in it.'

My heart is now beating fast. I think, *I know I have never been in a porn film*, but something is making me doubt myself.

'I don't know, love, I mean, I just thought I'd run it past you. I thought perhaps when you were in Italy?'

I spent seven months in Italy after I'd left school. Maureen knew this.

Now I'm seriously considering the possibility. Was I in a porn film? My memory soup is working overtime. Was I drugged by some boyfriend? How could this have happened? I eventually resolved that the best thing was to say, 'No.'

Maureen, relieved voice. 'No. I didn't think so, love. I suspect they're just fishing.'

This happens quite a lot, apparently. The press go fishing and cast out into the celebrity pool with outrageous bait, just hoping to touch a nerve and get a nibble.

I can honestly say to you, dear reader, that I have never been in such a film. However, there might well be a porn star out there with my name. Most people calculate their porn name by using the name of their first pet and their mother's maiden name. That would make mine Suki Duminy. Just so there's no confusion.

Another time my memory was severely questioned was when my husband, Ade, and I were living in Richmond and our three daughters were very little. One morning, Ade got up before me and went upstairs to get the older girls out of bed and down for breakfast, and then I got up a few moments later to get the baby.

I went into the tiny nursery and couldn't see her. The cot was empty. Empty cot. I stared at it a while. No baby. Heart skipped a beat. I went back to our bedroom and looked about. No baby.

It occurred to me that Ade had picked up the baby and taken her downstairs with the others.

I went downstairs. I was now having palpitations.

The other two were happily having breakfast with Ade. No baby.

I didn't say anything.

I went back upstairs. Still empty cot. I'm now not just looking for the baby, but looking for evidence that we've even had a baby. Perhaps there simply was no baby, and if I asked Ade where the baby was, he would look at me the way they looked at Ingrid Bergman in *Gaslight*.

I went back to our bedroom and sat on the bed. As I did so, I put my hand on the duvet at the very end of the bed and felt a small lump. I pulled the duvet away and there she was. Freya. Asleep. Perfectly alive and happy and asleep.

I had been breastfeeding her the night before, and must have fallen asleep with her still in the bed. She had gradually kicked her way down to where our feet were.

DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME.
I KNOW!

Please, Mumsnet, I realize that this is not recommended practice, but all was well. It wasn't funny or clever, but Freya lives to this day. She has never given me any other reason to doubt her existence.

So, dear reader, I will tell you all I remember, and embellish all that I don't. For my publisher's sake I shall name-drop regularly and mention royalty as much as possible. Press on.