



Spud: Exit, Pursued by a Bear

John van de Ruit

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After an unexpected and diabolical farewell breakfast conversation with his father, Spud Milton returns to boarding school for his 1993 Matric year, his last as a schoolboy. Armed with a prefects' tie and a raging libido, Spud soon discovers that being a large(ish) fish in a small pond has its fair share of challenges. He finds himself embroiled in fighting for his own room, directing a house play where both lead actors refuse to learn their lines, and assisting in Vern Blackadder's dramatic return from the dead with nothing more than a drip cord and a pair of oven gloves.

Amidst mounting pressure in the classroom and on the cricket field, Spud prepares to face down the most feared and dreaded challenge of them all – finding a date for the Matric dance.

In this hilarious final instalment of the Spud series John van de Ruit brings to a close his savagely funny blow by blow account of the agonies of growing up. The embarrassments, the thrills, the defeats, and the sheer absurdity of daily life are wittily recorded in Spud's unique voice as he prepares to make his own exit, pursued by a bear.

Spud: Exit, Pursued by a Bear Details

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From Reader Review Spud: Exit, Pursued by a Bear for online ebook

Nisarg says

I am feeling nostalgic already. Spud series came to an end for me as I shall turn its last page and always remember the unforgettable experience. It has given me a surreal presentation of life, not only as a student of a boarding school but also served me as a friend to guide me through the strange complexities of teenage transition. It is a work of fiction, but the story is as real as 'Hogwarts' for me, which is to say, so much more real and alive than anything else.

We all love happy endings.

The protagonist then sailed merrily with his hand clenched around his lover as the giant ocean engulfed their ride.

But humans are complex animals. They also hate endings. When a good book ends on a happy note, It is a bitter-sweet moment of so many thoughts buzzing in your brain. Exactly what happened when I ended Spud. Good stories are like a ride down the road with all your friends, an unforgettable journey. Spud has been like drugs for me (I am a good boy and take an oath on momma's life that I have never indulged in drugs). You constantly want more. I am already on a verge of a breakdown and I simply want more 'Crazy 8" adventures and Lunatic ravings.

No matter how horrible the school was we all want to be a part of it. That exactly is human nature. The characters were complete and utter bastards but we all fell for their individual character traits. Each and every character is special for me, from the loony Rain-Man to the high headed, Boggo. The characters are not likeable but the 'crazy 8' as a whole pumps adrenaline in your body, making you feel rebellious. Half the teachers are raving mad and absolute nuts or deranged psychopaths who deserve to be jailed. ASAP! Then there is Eve, the chic and possibly the only female staff. She simply is not and can not remain sane. As fire drives out fire, so insanity insanity. Then there is his family. Needless to say, absolute grade-A crack addict level insane. Like any normal teenage boy, Spuddy gets girls(I am so not normal).

Considering how spud is surrounded by absolute nutty madness, it comes as a shock on how he manages to find his sanity.

The book is in the form of a diary. Needless to say, his life is so much more better than mine. The setting of a boarding school is amazing and I look forward to loose myself in a hostel for a few years. Live in a hostel, go night swimming, pick up chicks (never happening).

Above all, It is John van de Ruit's writing which makes the series so funny and remarkable.

Prompt: He ran rather awkward.

John Ruit: He ran limping like a deranged crack addict monkey chasing a banana.

Not even close, but I tried.

I will end this review(?) on this note.

'The crazy 8' went out with a bang, not a whimper.

EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR!

Star Kachisa says

A fantastic conclusion to a much loved character. I think I can safely say that I enjoyed this final installment almost as much as the debut. Sad to see it all come to an end, but what an entertaining read.

Nicole says

I'm feeling so sad that this series is done - my goodness, I'm going to miss Spud, the Guv, Rain Man and others. I am amazed by how van de Ruit manages to make such comical relationships feel so sincere. And also by how he's managed to age Spud realistically. I've got a real soft spot for this series.

Sonja Arlow says

I absolutely adored this entire series and it kept on reminding me of stories I heard (by accident) of my dad in boarding school (raiding the school pantry and trying to give each other home-made tattoos with everyone ending up with only a black dot cos it was too sore).

I must say Vern was a clear favourite this time round with all his Side Guy comments. It's a bit sad to say goodbye to all the characters but I am looking forward to new work from this Author.

Rebecca Carlsen says

With great sadness, I have finished the 4th and final book in John van de Ruit's "Spud" series, "Exit, Pursued By A Bear". This South African author has had huge success with this series which is based on his years at Michaelhouse, a beautiful old private boarding school in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Midlands - the first book was made into a movie starring John Cleese as "The Guv" but I didn't really enjoy the movie much. The books are written in the form of the diary of John "Spud" Milton and really capture the atmosphere in this country at the time (1989 - 1993) as well as what school life was like for boys in a private boarding school. It is absolutely hilarious, as well as tragic, sad, cringe-making, poignant and sometimes downright revolting! It is a real reflection of the good and bad parts of an all-boys school and a glimpse inside the mind of a teenaged boy. Although the setting is in South Africa, and obviously a lot of the slang is unique to this country, I think that anyone who has ever been to school, or known a teenaged boy, would be able to relate to it. The 4 books are consistently brilliant and I can't recommend them highly enough. Here is my last, cryptic, word on the matter. In the words of Vern (now you'll have to read them!): "Sideguy"!!

Kyle says

Going into this book, you have a sense of loss. You know this is the last adventure with the Crazy 8 and it adds to the introspective overtone of this book.

Spud returns to do his final year of school, and you can see the immediate pressure he's under. Diary entries are not as regular as previous ones but do not fret! The madness continues. This has just as many laugh out loud moments as the others and its great to see the members of the Crazy 8 mature.

Overall, its a sad book and I know I will miss Spud Milton and his gang of cretins.

Tania says

As I also matriculated in 1993, this was a wonderful trip down memory lane. A bit of a slow start, but a brilliant ending to a stunning series. I thought the author did really well maturing everyone's voices whilst keeping them in character. I look forward to reading more from him

Megz says

Finally done! This book took me forever to read (not because it's boring, but because school has been keeping me too busy).

I really enjoyed this book, it was definitely on par with the rest of the series. Van de Ruit has a gift for portraying the soul of the young boy - I even got annoyed with the way they ostracised poor Garlic, considering his kindness. It's amazing how Spud grows and develops, and I got goosebumps at the end of the book. Definitely a book I recommend. Now I need to find Van de Ruit somewhere so he can sign my copies!

Wanda Hartzenberg says

The end of a series and the end of an era for me.

As a South African I feel it imperative to say upfront that I do not really support our own artists and authors. Painters, I love, we can capture feeling on canvass like few others. Writing, in my opinion, at least until a few years back, struggled. We tend to overdo things, go emo in 3 seconds. Then I read my first Spud novel. I was shocked. Here I found a novel that kept me captive, up late at night and making past-midnight hour calls to friends saying, asking and not waiting for a response -- have you read this? You must.....

So with the last book in the series the love I have found for South African authors came crashing down on me. The shame, the self berating is constant. Finding a single author that changed my mind pertaining to an entire countries ability to entertain -- astounding. So here is to an author, one who made children who would never have dreamed of reading an entire book, begging their parents for the next in the series, here is to grownups, getting the finer nuances of pain and growing up, we all faced it! We all look back with shock and nostalgia.

Here is to a country who has gems that is unexplored. That has citizens like me that pass them up for the next New York bestseller. Here is to me, for coming to my senses and realizing that being home grown is a good thing. A great thing. Taking a journey down streets you actually know is a journey worth taking.

A 5 * rating. I would if I could have given it 10 *. In my heart of hearts I give it a 100 * review rating and my appreciation for changing, very literally, my life.

WaAr

Verna Dewar says

Anyone who has been a boarder would relate to this fabulous series. The maturing of the boys is portrayed so realistically. The angst that one goes thru at that stage of your life homes across so clearly. I totally enjoyed this humorous and entertaining book. Definitely read it!

Nerine Dorman says

While schoolboy antics might not be everyone's cup of tea, the doings of John "Spud" Milton, or Spud, as he's affectionately become known, have found a way to creep into many readers' hearts. Mine included. Book four brings the series to a close, and rightfully so, on a high note.

John van de Ruit's writing offered numerous quiet sniggers and sometimes even downright nasty giggles – and I'm a notoriously tough nut to crack when it comes to humour in the written word. But the weird looks from fellow commuters were worth it. Van de Ruit has created a world that seems as though it must be real, but with a twist of the absurd. Perhaps it's because he manages to hold on to that sense of reality that had me gobbling up the pages.

He has triumphed in much the same way that I feel authors such as JK Rowling have successfully engaged readers, by creating a vast cast of three-dimensional characters. Everyone has their favourite, be it cheering for the demented Vern, or the Guv's comically morose statements or even Garlic's eternal obsession about Lake Malawi. And, while some of us who grew up reading the Adrian Mole books can draw parallels between Sue Townsend and Van de Ruit, Spud as a character comes off more optimistic in his naiveté than the somewhat depressing Adrian Mole.

Writing in journal format also poses a challenge, especially with standard expectations of narrative structure, but Van de Ruit balances the various aspects of his protagonist's life well. Each story arc, be it Spud's cricket and academic careers, his love life or the misadventures of the Crazy Eight, is balanced. While satirical elements are present, the outcomes never feel contrived. Cricket matches get rained out. There are no miraculous turnarounds for bad maths marks. The ephemeral nature of young romantic entanglements rings true, and the Crazy Eight behave much like boys we remember from our teenage years.

While the temptation to beg the author to write another Spud book is strong, I agree with Van de Ruit's decision that this is the last in the series. The ending made me smile and recall the last weeks of my own matric and that sense of an infinitely pliable universe, almost two decades ago.

To push for more would kill Spud's spirit. And here's the catch. You cannot go back to those mad, wild times of standing on the cusp of adulthood, but you can relive them vicariously through the experiences of others. Thank you, Spud, you're forever young.

Marco says

Not the best book in the series, that honour would go to Spud: learning to fly. It is however an awesome, gripping and fascinating read. I love how John Van de Ruit has been able to capture the spirit of growing up and maturing without changing the character. I'm saddened by the thought that this is the last book in the series, however I'm sure that like many other fans out there, we'd love for the author to publish The Guv's memoirs, now that would be classic!

Saturday's Child says

This one I consider to be my surprise read as I thought I had tracked down a library copy of a young adult novel with a very similar title. What a surprise I got when I was handed this one and realised that I had not checked the author as well as the title. Never mind, I still found this one entertaining despite the fact that I have not read the first three in the series.

Gauri says

This series, I think, will always be my *Harry Potter*. It's simply that I was disappointed now more than ever in the series, because the camaraderie and friendship the boys had together thinned as they grew up. It's not the same without some of the original characters. Also, some of the jokes went over the line, and I really don't think the final book was very much like the first and second that I really enjoyed. However, I'm glad to have gone on one last ride with the characters.

Amanda Patterson says

Spud Milton has matriculated and vanished into his future.

Matric, with its agonies: maths, strange school rituals, The Glock, Mermaid; and its ecstasies: drama, cricket, The Guv, Mermaid; has ended. The Crazy Eight have grown up. Spud has changed over the four books - in a good way.

I enjoyed reading the fourth novel as much as any of the others. Once again, I was struck by the simple fact that the series has been so successful because the books are just about a boy dealing with the difficulties of growing up. For South Africans, that pleasure is rare. We usually have to trudge through a political mess of meaning if we want to read a local author.

Van de Ruit is also a very good writer. His comedic timing and talent is as brilliant as ever. He has polished his style, and his writing has improved with each book.

South African fiction was given a second chance when Spud was published. I am grateful that Spud Milton enriched the reading lives of so many young South Africans.

4.5/5

