



[Dog Day Dimp](#) by Peter Clayfield

Reviewed by [Yvonne Cawley](#) April 2011

I'd just finished reading yet another 'crime' novel (my favourite genre) and was ready to play detective again, when I spotted a couple of interesting books by Peter Clayfield on Simon's (my husband's) desk. I picked up 'Dog Day Dimp' as I was intrigued by the cover, I know, I know don't judge a book and all that, but the book itself looked smaller than a normal sized paperback – I only mention this because I said to Simon that the size felt great for me having small hands and the book felt really easy to handle. It was only then that I read the 'sleeve/description/synopsis' and realised that it was about a Dwarf and the thought crossed my mind that this was a deliberate ploy – you know a book for little people. However in fact it is the same size as normal paperbacks, just an optical illusion and one I'm not sure was intended. So basically I snatched this book, before it was passed on to one of the other reviewers around the Salon to do a proper formal review – but here are my ramblings and thoughts and hope you will forgive such an apolitical review!

Basically this book is set in and around East Manchester and tells the tale of one David Ignatious Montgomery Parker (or DIMP for short); a one-armed, Manc United Fan, who is a Dwarf who happens to play goalie for the Beswick Reds pub football team – and a pretty good one he is too. We see DIMP meandering through life somewhat oblivious to what others see as his shortcomings – the hand that life has dealt him, and it is only the ‘one hand’ as the other was bitten off by a dog! As I progressed through the book you see how other people see DIMP, as having disabilities and this gives them license to either take advantage or make allowances as they see fit. This doesn’t seem to bother DIMP and as long as he has his beer and fags he seems pretty happy with his lot. He is even subjected to a bit of ‘Dwarf Throwing’ and apart from a couple of bruises, he himself doesn’t appear too bothered as he gets some free drinks and a bit of money from it, so he’s happy!

The Prologue sets the scene beautifully and adds a helpful list of ‘Mancspeak’ - words for those living in Wilmslow, Chelmsford, or Tunbridge Wells etc. to help them understand the text! Originating from Salford myself, I giggled at most of the words especially as I can actually hear myself saying them! Simon is from Leeds and he is for ever taking the mick! For example I always say “SKUWELL” (School for you posh beggars out there) and ‘ARF’ (Half) as in ‘ARF JOB HARRY’ (I normally use this one when he produces a cup of tea which is half empty – or full, depending on your outlook!).

I really enjoyed this book, which had me chuckling all the way through and I loved the way in which it explored the relationships between the different characters and the descriptions of the hilarious scrapes that DIMP found himself in. The array of ‘characters’ that intermingle with his daily life are colourful and alive to say the least. There is Zelda, an ex-prostitute, who is his girlfriend, come mother, come employer. She appears to have a rather complex relationship with DIMP and although she loves him she treats him more like a child, shouting at him for the majority of the time and giving him ‘spends’. She is always giving DIMP hell, but is fiercely protective of him but then sometimes is happy to use him whilst keeping her hand in by ‘entertaining’ one special client, Arthur Smith; a would-be Doctor. In order to earn beer and fag money, DIMP joins in the role playing as the rather reluctant patient and is subjected to various examinations and a bit of pill popping (normally smarties but on one occasion something a little more ‘up lifting’ – but I won’t spoil it for you). The relationship she has with DIMP seems complex and I think he is perhaps the son she never had.

She is very protective on one hand but also exploits him too. When DIMP is subject to a bit of media interest she is the one who negotiates the fees and speaks on his behalf, making sure she gets the best deal but then at the same time she wants DIMP to be aware that with all this media attention he may become a laughing stock. He is happy to just go ahead and get on the 'Dick & Trudy Show', but Zelda obviously doesn't have the faith in DIMP to make his own impression with the viewers and automatically fears the worst, giving the impression that this is how she sees him too! Her protective nature comes to the fore when she negotiates a part in a porn movie for him, where she makes sure he's treated fairly, although earlier in the book she is powerless to do anything about the 'Dwarf Tossing' that DIMP is subjected to by a few of the local gangsters. Zelda is a little more concerned, but as the 'Throwing' is being undertaken by her boss and a couple of local gangsters, her intervention is non-existent although a few free drinks for him afterwards seem to make it a little more palatable. DIMP then gets roped into a bit of drug running (although he is blissfully unaware of this at the time) which all ends with hilarious consequences. Money is important to Zelda and although DIMP's new found fame is a potential 'gravy train' she appears to be genuinely concerned for his well-being and what fame could bring along with it not wanting him to become a laughing stock – ever the protective mother.

DIMP teases and taunts his friend 'Daft Ernie', a hulking guy who is a 'bit soft in the head', about past indiscretions with young girls, and you get the feeling that this is the natural 'pecking' order as Ernie is an easy target for DIMP, making him feel like the big man for once. You also have local gangsters and Father James, a KAFFLIC priest who is having a crisis of faith and unbeknown to DIMP, something which he helps sort out after the priest confesses to having lustful feelings for his housekeeper. I got the impression that under normal circumstances Father James would not bare his soul to anyone other than a fellow priest, but wonder if he views our DIMP as a childlike figure, not seeing him as an adult or equal who is ready to judge him, which makes the confession so easy. Oh and not to forget a constipated python and a drugged up leopard.

Now I don't know whether to mention this or not, as it is only my take on it, and I don't want to influence others before they read it, and I don't know if it is because our main character DIMP is a dwarf, BUT throughout the whole book I couldn't get the image of LIKKUL BILLY BRADSHAW (he of the radio family THE BRADSHAWES) out of my head! So reading the book, I was sometimes at odds as I had a vision of the man 'DIMP' and the boy 'Billy Bradshaw'.

Throughout the book DIMP seems to be treated as a LIKKUL BOY due to his size and I must admit at times I had to remind myself that this is a grown man and not a child where I get drawn into feeling sorry for the LIKKUL chap - is it his size or the fact that he himself just gets on with life – yeah he is aware of others looking at him, but you never get the impression that this is a real issue – he has ambition to be the best five foot (his estimate of his own height!) one-armed professional goalie.

I loved this book and it was a great fun read. For me it was the added bonus of the setting being in Manchester, mentioning places I know or have heard about and little bits of nostalgia like the 'green painted rotting benches' – I remember them as a kid, picking at the rotting wood. Well, we never had computers or 'Facebook' in them days! Nice one our kid!

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