



## Number 10

*Sue Townsend*

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## **Number 10** Sue Townsend

Edward Clare, PM of England, doesn't know the price of a liter of milk. Worse, he's admitted it on national television. The public that ushered him to a landslide election has turned against him.

Edward decides the only way to get closer to the men and women on the street is to travel the country dressed in drag. Leaving his high-powered, ambitious wife to attend to things in his absence, he sets out.

In this comic romp Sue Townsend sends up, roasts, hoists and generally petards the once and future prime ministers as only she can.

## **Number 10 Details**

Date : Published November 1st 2004 by Soho Press (first published 2002)

ISBN : 9781569473757

Author : Sue Townsend

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# From Reader Review Number 10 for online ebook

## Dark-Draco says

I ended up being a bit disappointed with this - I missed the humour from 'The Queen and I' and found the characters a bit too one-dimensional. I don't...more I ended up being a bit disappointed with this - I missed the humour from 'The Queen and I' and found the characters a bit too one-dimensional. I don't really understand why Edward chooses the disguise he did and, conversely, why that didn't lead to a lot more humour. The blurb about the book states that the Prime Minister finds out about life in the real world, but I'm not sure that is really reflected in the story. I also hated the ending and what happened to Pete - no need for that :( So overall, a vaguely entertaining read for a couple of days, but one that I wouldn't bother returning too in the future.

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## Eddie Owens says

As always with Sue Townsend, it is very well observed. Although in this instance, the book is more clever than funny.

The author addresses many social issues: the state of the NHS: public transport: politicians with no knowledge of Socialism: inner city deprivation, the benefit system and the problem of crack cocaine.

Trying to be satirical about so many things, means that ultimately no subject is covered in any detail.

The characters are stereotypes, used to explore the issues, so again, no real connection is ever made with them.

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## Deb Sharp says

This has to be one of the best books I have read in ages, I laughed so much my sides hurt! OMG! I just read the other reviews for this book and it seems not many liked it? I guess some people just do not have a sense of humor!

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## Bhavya says

2.5 stars

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## T4bsF (Call me Flo) says

Number 10: a novel

This book is so funny - obviously based on a Prime Minister from our very close past. He decided to go

around to meet 'his people' incognito - in drag. Hilarious. Sue Townsend is an excellent story teller

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### **Lenka says**

Skvela politicka satira. u me ale v tomto zanru i madale vede Jiste, pane ministre ?

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### **Esther Arrindell says**

I know Sue Townsend mainly for her books on Adrian Mole (should re-read those!) and for her more recent book 'The woman who stayed in bed for a year'. In Number 10 she does what she is good at: writing a mesmerizing story that takes you with it into the lives of somewhat disturbed (inwardly, never on the outside!) people. In the case of Number ten those people are Edward, the Prime Minister who's fallen out of touch with his people, and Jack, the policeman that is guarding the door the day Edward decides to rediscover Britain / England. Together they embark on a trip down memory lane (for Edward, that is). Because Edward cannot travel as himself - that would defeat the purpose of the trip - he joyously dresses himself in his wife's clothes, and Jack and 'Edwina' take the tube 'n train (aka public transport) to visit several places in England that Edward hopes will give him the answers he so desperately needs.

Right from the start they took me into their lives. I was fascinated by the way they looked at the world around them, each coloured by their personal history. In a week that wasn't my best they helped me escape my own life and enter the (not so) fictional world of England with its privileges and outcasts. Humorous, with a sharp tone. Just the way Townsend gives life to her ideas.

Recommended!

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### **Caela Harrison says**

What a load of old toss.

Townsend upset me on page two, when she revealed her dire knowledge of a city she was setting part of a story in. I'm quite baffled as to why she bothered to write this book - I can't even be bothered writing a review, it was that awful.

I persevered for loyalty to my sister, who believes that Townsend is the best thing since Roger Hargreaves. I love my sister a lot, but she has bad bad judgement. (She fancies Jack in EastEnders, that should've given me a wee clue.)

Unbelievably poor. Don't waste your time. And don't think it'll redeem itself - it won't.

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### **Henri Moreaux says**

A quirky and unusual novel about an unloved British Prime Minister who decides to dress in drag and tour

the country to get an idea of the realities the common man faces.

It's a weird storyline full of weird characters, odd situations and strange sub plots but somehow it all works and is quite an interesting book (maybe because it is so weird), unfortunately the overall enjoyment is somewhat tarnished by the rather abrupt ending.

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### **Ensiform says**

Just as she did with royalty in *The Queen and I* (which I only vaguely remember), Townsend now turns her satiric pen to the Prime Minister. Edward Clare, obviously meant to represent Tony Blair, is a well-intentioned but ineffective PM, accused by his critics of having no particular politics and far removed from the average British citizen. So he goes on a week's adventure: dressed in his wife's clothes, accompanied by PC Jack Sprat, he goes on a road trip and is introduced to the joys of public transport, public health care, poverty, library closings, single mothers, and crack addiction.

Townsend is obviously very clever, and most of the time the book is highly amusing, full of absurdity, ready wit and subtle jibes. It also gets serious on at least two occasions: dealing with the lack of opportunities for poor working parents and the epidemic of crack addiction. There are also interesting subplots involving the PM's rapidly socialist-leaning son and his psychotic wife. I was disappointed, then, when the book ended rather abruptly, leaving many questions about the PM's family unanswered. Well, I suppose that's a slice of life for you.

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### **Cassandra says**

Edward Clare ist der Premierminister von Großbritannien. Verheiratet mit der intelligentesten Frau des Landes und Vater von drei Kindern, macht er sich viele Gedanken über die politischen Zustände in Afrika. Leider hat er überhaupt keine Ahnung was seine Bürger bewegt oder wie sie leben, seine Ratgeber sind ja in einer ähnlich privilegierten Stellung wie er selber. Als Edward sich auf einer Pressekonferenz lächerlich macht, beschließt er eine Woche abzutauchen und durch England zu reisen. Er bedient sich aus dem Kleiderschrank seiner Gemahlin und verlässt so unerkannt seinen Amtssitz in Begleitung des Polizisten Jack Sprat.

In dieser Satire wird der englischen Gesellschaft ein Spiegel vorgehalten. Die Idee, ist sicher nicht neu aber von Sue Townsend clever und witzig umgesetzt. Welcher Politiker benutzt schon regelmäßig die öffentlichen Verkehrsbetriebe, oder muss sich mit dem Gesundheitssystem am eigenen Leib ohne den Status des Privatpatienten auseinandersetzen? Kann es sein, dass es schwieriger ist 10 Pfund zu organisieren als Millionen? Natürlich wurde hier böse überspitzt und mancher wird denken „Ach, das ist typisch England“, aber vielleicht bleibt dem einen oder anderen Leser auch einmal das Lachen ein klein wenig im Hals sitzen. Dem fiktiven Premier Edward wird nichts erspart und so wird er mit Gewalt, Crack, Krankheit, sozialen Abgründen und seiner eigenen Familiengeschichte konfrontiert. Sein Begleiter Jack Sprat ist ein Polizist, der aus einer kriminellen Familie stammt und Edward bzw. ‚Edwina‘ durch seine Abenteuer führt.

Nach der Lektüre des Buches wünscht man sich, unsere Spitzenpolitiker würden die Idee aufgreifen und ihren Urlaub einmal sinnvoll verbringen. Sue Townsend konnte mich schon mit den Tagebüchern des Adrian Mole und ihrer Reihe um das abgesetzte britische Königshaus begeistern und hat mich auch diesmal nicht

enttäuscht.

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## Pavel says

*"Myslím, že je úžasné, jak to se svým zrakovým postižením zvládáte, Rosemary."*

*"Ale prosím vás, řekněte tomu slepota," skočila jí do řeči Rosemary. "Co vážně nesnáším, je ta vyhýbavá politická korektnost. Jsem slepá, pro Krista Pána! Jsem slepá!"*

(...)

*A baronesa Hollyoaksová, pamětlivá skutečnosti, že Rosemary nemá ráda politickou korektnost, se otázala: "Slyšela jsem, Rosemary, že jste se podruhé vdala, tentokrát za Jihoafričana. Není to negr?"*

Britský premiér Edward Clare to myslí dobře, ale dost narazí, když v jedné politické debatě bez přemýšlení odpoví, že samozřejmě jezdí vlakem, že jedním jel zrovna minulý týden, ale nedojde mu, že na jeho novináři vyšetřují, že vlakem v poslední době jel jenom s mašinkou ??-?? s dětmi na pouti. Před posměchem se premiér rozhodne dočasně utéct do ústraní. V převleku za přestárlou ženou se vydává se svým překvapivě bystrým bodyguardem na tajnou cestu po Anglii, aby zjistil, jak si obyčejný anglický lid žije.

Sue Towsendová, slavná autorka tajných deníků Adriana Molea, napsala na počátku tisíciletí tuhle satirickou věc. Stejně jako Adrian Mole je i tohle dobrá bžunda, akorát tady samozřejmě poádně tepe do společenských a dalších problémů Británie. Zaměruje se na "obyčejné lidi", konkrétně tedy na chudší vrstvy, a aťkoliv ukazuje i tu divočejší část s lupiči a drogovými dealery, je jasné, že je autorka politicky hodně nalevo. Celou knížku vlastně britský premiér dostává sežrat, co všechno způsobil (i když těžko říct, jestli je to jeho vina), a hlavním tématem je vlastně to, jak jsou politici odtrženi od obyčejných starostí pracujícího lidu. To mi tolik nevadilo, i když v podání Towsendové teda vypadá Velká Británie jako depresivnější místo než bratislavský nádraží.

Spíš mi vadilo, že knize chybí poádná katarze či povedenější finále. Je to spíše sled vtipných situací, z nichž některé už jsou zatraceně absurdní (například manželka premiéra si stojí za tím, že se musí s velkou parádou pohřbit amputovaná noha syna její služebné, protože si myslí, že se tím zavede obyčejnému lidu). Ale Towsendová píše skvěle, takže je to nakonec velmi dobrá zábava.

Sedm transvestických premiérů z deseti.

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## Iona Stewart says

This book tells about Edward Clare and Jack Sprat, beginning with their childhood days. Edward's mother dies when he's only a boy. Jack Sprat comes from an extremely poor and disreputable family.

Edward becomes Prime Minister while Jack Sprat becomes a constable who works at 10. Downing Street, guarding him.

Edward's wife, Adele, is highly intelligent and easily recognizable by her extraordinarily large nose. Edward

is captivated by Adele's "magnificent" nose. Unfortunately, she hears voices, on which psychotropic drugs have no effect.

Jack's father and step-father were criminal and his brother Stuart had died of drugs.

Edward, as P.M., lives an upper-class life, while Jack's Mum lives in a mess and neglects the poor budgie, Pete. Jack engages a young man, James, to take care of his mother and clean the house.

Edward decides he needs a break and he and Jack go off together to "see Britain in a week", travelling by public transport. Jack acts as Edward's escort. Since Edward's face is so recognizable, he dresses as a woman, borrowing his wife Adele's clothes and her wig; he is now Edwina. Edward applies "Pan stik", whatever that is, lipstick and eye make-up to his face, so even Adele would not have recognized him.

We shift between following Edward and Jack on their tour of Britain, and Jack's Mum, Norma, and her home help, James. Norma and James are now smoking marijuana, and James is flipping out.

Jack was so bright and precocious that when he was a child Norma couldn't understand a word of the conversation between him and his brainy friends. She sometimes wondered if Jack was "quite right in the head".

The PM buys a Marilyn Monroe wig and becomes a dishy blonde, though his disguise is not as convincing when the bristles on his face begin to appear.

Meanwhile, at home Adele stops taking her medicine. A man called Barry's leg is being amputated and she is preoccupied with seeing to it that it gets an appropriate funeral. She also believes that warts are "holy" and should be accorded the same respect.

On his trip the PM gets to talk with the common people and sees the deplorable state the nation is in. At one point Edward has cause to be admitted to the casualty department of a hospital suspected of having a heart attack (with alarming symptoms he often has). There he gets the chance to see how ordinary Brits having acute health crises are treated. They need a trolley for Edward but none of the staff can find one, but Jack dons a white coat and soon finds two.

During the trip Edward visits Edinburgh, where he lived as a child, visits his sister and makes new discoveries about himself and who his real father is. Things are happening at Ten Downing Street too.

At one point Edward and Jack visit Jack's Mum, Norma, and James.

"James said, 'Where were you educated?'

'At Cambridge,' said the Prime Minister, lowering his eyes modestly.

'Well, it ain't done you much good, has it?' said James. 'Look at the state you're in. You ain't a man, you ain't a woman, you ain't no class, what are you?'

The Prime Minister adjusted his wig and ran a hand over his bristly chin.'"

Like Sue Townsend's other works, this is a hilarious book, critically appraising the British and their country. I didn't quite understand the point of the ending – perhaps it meant that freedom is dangerous.

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## Jane Hornsby says

I read this book quite a while ago but I found it very funny at the time and I found that she touched very close to describing certain politicians of the time. I could picture exactly who she was talking about and it was so true especially as she managed to rip off their characters and make them look so comical. Very well executed...

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## Helen says

I was sadly disappointed with this and didn't even finish it. Fortunately it was a freebie, a neighbour was moving and put a pile of books out for people to help themselves. :)

I loved the Adrian Mole series, or at least the earlier ones. I have to admit that I didn't read the later ones where Adrian has grown up. I also rather liked *The Queen and I*. But this novel didn't really seem to know what it was trying to say. Britain in 2003 wasn't such an awful place, not as far as I can remember, yet Sue Townsend seems determined to portray it at its worst. And I don't know what she was intending with Edward Clare's cross dressing. The idea of a ruler going out in disguise to see how things are in his kingdom is an old one and sending Blair, sorry Clare, on a tour of the country to reacquaint himself with how ordinary people live had a lot of potential for comedy and satire, but for me the book completely missed the mark. In particular I felt that the "comedy" arising from the fact that the PM is dressed as a woman and starting to enjoy wearing feminine clothes and makeup introduced some very problematical aspects. Another thing I particularly didn't like was Townsend's treatment of the Prime Minister's wife. Again Townsend was mocking things that, to me, aren't funny, namely things like mental illness and the problems of being an intelligent woman with confidence issues.

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