



## **A Dying Breed**

*Peter Hanington*

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Kabul, Afghanistan. William Carver, a veteran but unpredictable BBC hack, is thrown into the unknown when a bomb goes off killing a local official. Warned off the story from every direction, Carver won't give in until he finds the truth.

Patrick, a young producer, is sent out on his first foreign assignment to control the wayward Carver, but as the story unravels it looks like the real story lies between the shadowy corridors of the BBC, the perilous streets of Kabul and the dark chambers of Whitehall.

Set in a shadowy le-Carré-esque world, A Dying Breed is a gripping novel about journalism in a time of war, about the struggle to tell the stories that need to be told - even if it is much easier not to.

## **A Dying Breed Details**

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Author : Peter Hanington

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# From Reader Review A Dying Breed for online ebook

## Midwest Geek says

This is a good debut mystery, quite suspenseful albeit unevenly told. It concerns a seasoned, flawed British reporter, William Carver, and a bombing in Kabul that is blamed on the Taliban. Carver suspects there is more to the story than a terrorist attack and pursues the truth at considerable personal and professional risk. The clods at the BBC back in London, for whom he works, are rather stereotypical, but Carver himself is rather complex. It is an interesting mystery although sometimes slow; it could easily be shortened with little loss. The denouement is a bit clumsily handled and is a bit of a let-down, but all in all, I'd say this is an exceptionally good debut novel. I definitely would read another by Hanington.

The reader, Jonathan Keeble, is exceptionally good and adds much to the enjoyment of listening.

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## Jit says

great story with lots of character and intrigue

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## Mikki says

Fun thriller, but why is it that the only women in the book with a name or any lines were unhappy wives, mistresses, a school teacher, cranky doctor, a maid, a beautiful daughter of the warlord (of course she's beautiful), or a field producer who was in the story only to quit her job to get away from our protagonist? Are women really that stereotypical or is the author?

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## Nick Simpson says

Essentially a kidnap-in-Afghanistan-meets-media-spy-novel type mash-up.

Peter Hanington writes decent dialogue, and some of his characters come vividly to life (particularly the veteran producer, who must surely be based on Rod Liddle, and the grouchy hack Carver, a part made for Roger Allam). The scenes at the BBC have all the vividness and believability you would expect from someone who works there. There are some nicely observed peripheral scenes which suggest a real writer at work.

Unfortunately the media aspect of the novel, pervasive at the beginning, fades as it proceeds, and the Afghan insurgency / military scenes which dominate the second half of the book aren't as plausible or convincing. There are plot holes aplenty, and some of the writing is clunking. The half-hearted religious theme which pops up occasionally is unnecessary to the plot and reads like watered-down Greene.

It won't surprise those familiar with the type that in a novel by a North London media person the bad guys are mostly on our side. And it's curious that in a 400+ page novel set in the world of Islamist insurgency

Islam is mentioned - how many times? Ten? Twenty? Thirty? Answer: none. Zero. Zilch.

It's a bit like reading a copy of Moby Dick which doesn't mention the whale.

My copy of the book came garlanded with quotes by Hanington's BBC celebrity contacts. Handy friends to have. Apparently it's been optioned for TV. Who said a writer's life was hard?!

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### **Patriciagoodwin says**

I enjoyed every single page! Excellently written.

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### **Diane Dickson says**

Absolutely excellent. This was one of those stories that we just could not wait to get to in the evening. My husband and I listen together and it's quite tricky finding things that we both enjoy equally but no problem at all with this.

for a start it was interesting and the author obviously knew what he was talking about both in the world of journalism and the world of foreign conflict.

It was gripping, and exciting. It was brutal and sad, as is war. At times it was poignant as it witnessed ordinary people in the grip of conflict living their lives. Idealistic youngsters trying to make a difference and twisted old guerrilla fighters with tragedy on their shoulders. Bloodthirsty at times and in parts rather shocking when one realised what pawns we all are in the machine.

There were a couple of surprises that made us both say "Well, I didn't see that coming."

The characters were very real with hateful opportunists, naive and hopeful youngsters and world weary, tainted old war horses just wondering when it will all be over.

I highly recommend this.

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### **HM says**

I enjoyed this book so much that I've emailed the author and asked him to please write another one. I listened to the audio version and it was brilliantly narrated. It has a terrific pace, an intricate and superbly constructed plot and the writing itself is wonderful - the vivid descriptions of Afghanistan were particularly impressive. From the beginning, you feel you're in safe hands with a very accomplished storyteller. A real treat.

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### **Don says**

What a pleasant surprise. William Carver is a hard-drinking world-weary reporter who in investigating a

recent bombing begins to investigate a story that reveals much more than he bargained for. The reviews I read, while generally great, didn't really convince me, but this book held me from the get go, with well-drawn characters, great dialogue, and a mystery/thriller written with a sure hand by someone who clearly knows his way around the BBC and Afghanistan. A really great read from beginning to end.

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### **Barbara says**

The author clearly knows his subject, and one of his subjects is of course human nature with all its flaws and weaknesses, described with compassion, humour, and anger at what is done to them. The background to these flawed human beings covers Afghanistan, the BBC, and the truly awful things done in the name of "state security". As well as the sympathetic people (who are in fact most of them), this novel also contains one of the most unlikeable characters I have ever come across in fiction, or in real life either for that matter. This is a first novel, and although he's not (yet) le Carre, I am looking forward to his next one. And the one after that.

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### **Roman Clodia says**

With a le Carre-esque feel to the plot, this is a fast-moving story of investigative journalists, shady soldiers and the realities of how capitalist interests rule diplomacy and strategic foreign policy.

Hanington clearly knows what he's talking about but, oddly, some of the least interesting and less powerful scenes are those set in the BBC where the story can get a bit bogged down in office and corporation politics and in delineating the personal lives of characters which detract from the political story that is the central interest of the book.

Once the padding is out of the way, the story is gritty and clear-sighted about how money rules the corridors of power. The scenes set in Afghanistan feel authentic and insightful, from the soldiers - Afghan, British and US - doing their jobs to the locals living with the chaos of war and its aftermath. The characterisation is both subtle and a bit familiar: the semi-alcoholic old skool journalist who follows the story, no matter what; the British Ambassador with his unorthodox personal life and deliberate blindness to the realities of government policies; the shadowy mercenary/special ops soldier who operates off the grid..

Despite some seen-it-before moments and a plot outcome that the cynics amongst us can see coming way before the characters in the book (especially, as noted before, le Carre fans), this remains gripping to the end. A few little blips make this 4.5 stars from me but overall this is a compelling story of realpolitik in today's world.

ARC from Netgalley

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### **Sita McIntosh says**

Peter Hanington is a local author and being perfectly honest, that the only reason that I read this book as it wouldn't normally be my type of "pick". I've never read John Le Carre or authors of that ilk, so can't make any genuine comparisons but what I can say is that I found it immensely gripping and thoroughly readable.

The question that I have asked people when I've recommended this to them is, "Did you enjoy Homeland?". If the answer is "yes" then I have had no hesitation in suggesting this to them. I loved the detail about subjects that mere mortals such as I would never normally be privy to and it genuinely enriched my enjoyment of the book. I have just bought my fourth copy for another friend's birthday as I know they will enjoy it as much as I did. Highly recommended.

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### **Andrew Harris says**

Just finished it - excellent book, highly recommended!! For a first novel Hanington really hits the mark in what turns out to be an electrifying read. I loved his character development and the pace that he sets, building to an unexpectedly gruesome finale. Most of all I loved the fact that he mourns the passing of investigative journalism. Nowadays the truth has become an optional extra and very often is dispensed with in the search for commercially acceptable news stories, pap media and the convenience of Hollywood endings. His roots in the BBC obviously extend deep into a bedrock of honest reporting and finding out what really happened. I sensed his frustration and despair in Rob and particularly William who now feel like relics from a distant - and politically incorrect - era. I look forward to his next novels with anticipation

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### **James says**

Peter Hanington is a former radio producer for the Today programme, latterly rising to be its Assistant Editor. Taking on board the old adage to write what you know, he's set his debut novel in the world of the foreign correspondent and the political machinations inside the BBC. We have William Carver, a gifted but deeply flawed veteran correspondent, an inveterate drunk who the hierarchy are trying to force into early retirement; Rob Mariscal, the editor of Today, an embittered man who strikes fear into those under him; and Patrick Reid, a young whippersnapper of a producer, still very green and idealistic.

Patrick is dispatched by Mariscal to Afghanistan, his first foreign posting, with orders to reign Carver in. The foreign correspondent is onto something with a story concerning a recent bombing, in which a prominent Afghan businessman and politician was murdered. Unfortunately, there are people who don't want this story told. At risk of giving away too great a spoiler, they have their claws in Rob and get him to try to put a stop to it. What plays out is a conspiracy thriller set against a realistic portrayal of radio journalism and foreign correspondence in the 21st century.

There are aspects of this novel that I liked and others that I didn't. Having been a current affairs journalist myself, and having worked for the BBC - albeit for only a short time and not on Today - I was impressed by his no pulling punches approach to writing about the corporation. While this is no hatchet job on the BBC, and BBC journalists are shown doing a good and thorough job, the stultifying bureaucracy which so too often stifles them is ably demonstrated, particularly in the earlier sections. So too is a reporter's life in Afghanistan, that sense of surrealism and privilege that representatives of a first world media organisation can't fail to demonstrate when operating in what is in essence a third world country. Finally, Carver's relationship with his fixer, Karim, is well drawn. Hanington does a service to fixers everywhere with his portrayal of Karim, for as in this novel, they are often as gifted journalists, sometimes more so, than the apparent star.

There is one other aspect I should mention, something that might only appeal to fellow journalists. I might be

imagining this, but to me both Rob Mariscal, and a minor character, the pompous news correspondent John Brandon, appear to be mischievously based on real people. Mariscal made me think of a certain former Today editor who now makes a living as an outspoken columnist. Brandon meanwhile brought to mind someone who once liberated Kabul on his lonesome. Of course, as I say, I could be imagining this.

Some aspects of the novel weren't so satisfying, however. The book is very male. Early on, Carter has a producer whose role is also to reign him in, but he wears her down and she flies back to Blighty. This leaves a gap for Patrick and hence he comes. While there is nothing wrong with this per se, and I'm certainly not suggesting the author needed to shoe-horn in a female character out of some politically correct notion of box ticking, it did feel a bit like, "Well, now the women are safely out of the way, we can get on with the job of real journalism." Another issue I had is while I enjoyed this book immensely, it was a bit of a slow burner; there were times when I put it down and had to actively remind myself to return to it.

That all said, *A Dying Breed* is certainly a compelling thriller, and if you have any interest in the news business at all it is well worth a read.

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## **Rodrigo Acuna says**

Politically incorrect, historically simplistic.

"In a time of universal deceit - telling the truth is a revolutionary act." George Orwell

A book about a country that is 99.8% islamic and has grown some of the most violent islamist groups, was involved and is involved on the global islamist struggle, but without a single mention of Islam, has to be a kind of achievement. The taliban is but a mention, a book that mentions every invasion but the most significant one in the seventh century the Rashidun Caliphate Arabs that propagated the islamic religion that rules the afghanistan today. This book has all the marks of BBC approved tale where were the words islam or islamist are taboo if not a complete crime thought.

Let's start with the character in this book all the english or western men are morally weak if not totally devoid of morality, militaristic buffoons, drug dependant if not addicted or devoid of humanity, the only westerners with some redemption are two old reporter that drink too much and are ready to commit suicide, for their past sins. On the other hand the afghan men are loyal, wise, good nature, peace loving warriors forced into conflict by evil westerners. The western women fair a little better because they are powerless hoes, frigid wives, or devout girlfriends, now the afghan women span the spectrum from beautiful to handsome, loyal, good cooks, even creators of beautiful english gardens, or managers of businesses; no mention is made of the inequities between the sexes in this society, if anything this women are as free western women. The worst character of the afghanistan men is the general he sells heroin by the tons to the decadent west but justifiably so. He loved his wife and some taliban men not connected to the larger organisation raped and killed her, we know this because he tells a westerner he castrated them and burned them alive but they never gave up the larger org, and so the taliban is not guilty; but even this brutal crime is justified by his love of a woman that was beautiful and saintly good, and the drug trafficking is justified because it is good business and it creates jobs among the poor peasants; no mention is made of the practice of warlords to enslave peasants or their children to produce the opiate or the larger problem it brings to the entire region.

This is a world where the west is inherently evil and the other people are good; no intelligent discussions of

politics can be had because the reason for the west presence are presented without a realistic history background or geopolitical realities and complex motivations that exist in the region, this is because of the Voldemort rule (never mention islam or islamist) that eliminates the possibility of creating a complex rich story, where people not caricatures can develop.

The only reason I have given this review the length it has is because it is being reviewed as a good book, when in reality it is entertaining propaganda that in some cases I felt was verging on racist. I say this without being a member of any of the ethnic groups in the book, but based on the world I inhabit and the history I have witnessed and the one we share in books with all its imperfections. This is not a fair representation or a realistic representation of our world but a skewed Regressive Left point of view.

“The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.”  
? George Orwell

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## **David Kenvyn says**

I am always wary of reviewing books by people I know, because of the difficulty of maintaining objectivity. But this book is special. When a book has recommendations on its blurb from John Humphreys, Melvyn Bragg, William Boyd and AL Kennedy, you know that you have something unusual in your hands. And this is a first novel that simply will not disappoint.

The Peter Hanington that I came to know was a young anti-apartheid activist of huge commitment, making his considerable skills available to benefit the cause of freedom in South Africa. From there, he went to work for BBC Radio eventually becoming a producer on the Today Programme. And he uses that knowledge as the basis for a thriller about two Today Programme journalists, William Carver and Patrick Reid, working to uncover why an Afghan politician, Fazil Jabar, was murdered in a bomb explosion.

It is a carefully constructed story, leading the reader through the murky depths of international involvement in Afghanistan, the horrors of the war in that country, and the sheer unprincipled cynicism of the promotion of UK PLC I do not think that there are any heroes in this story, certainly not of the Jack Reacher kind. But there are undoubtedly people that you can sympathise with, and care about. There is William Carver, a veteran journalist, whose reputation has been besmirched by letting himself be conned over the invasion of Iraq, and who has become a hard-drinking curmudgeon, difficult to work with. There is Patrick Reid, a young journalist determined to prove himself in his first overseas assignment. There is Karim Mumtaz, an Afghan translator who aspires to a career in journalism. There is Noor, who wishes to go to Harvard, and Lucia Mariscal, trapped in a failing marriage to Rob, a BBC editor. And there is Baba who runs a wedding business in Kabul, which is where the story starts, when a bomb goes off in a tailor's shop across the road.

These are all people that the reader can understand. They have ordinary aspirations. They want to do well at their job, to improve their lives or even to do something quite noble – to tell the world the truth, and to help make a difference. The Jack Reacher characters on the other hand are actually very unpleasant – amoral and murderous and, in one case, over-confident and not very efficient. This is also a fundamental part of the story. It gives nothing away to say that, if Richard Roydon reads at all, which is unlikely, he sees himself as a James Bond figure, not a George Smiley, and he does not have the talent for either role. Roydon is the kind of man that Craig Williamson, the apartheid spy chief, would have recruited. He is the kind of man who would have had no difficulty in the company of Eugene de Kock, the apartheid mass killer. To call him



unpleasant is like saying Genghis Khan was warlike.

One of the underlying themes of the book is the sheer resilience and courage of people trying to live ordinary lives in the disaster that has been Afghanistan since the Russian invasion of 1979. And when I say disaster, I do not mean that its previous history was actually quiet and peaceful. One of the points that General Doushki, the story's Afghan Warlord, makes is that Afghanistan has been invaded throughout its history – "Alexander the Great, the Byzantines, Mongol Khans, Queen Victoria's brave, stupid soldiers. All of them were here..." [NB I think he means the Macedonians, not the Byzantines, but the point is generally right.] And as Doushki adds, there is more killing to come. And it is in these circumstances that Noor, Mrs Ansari, Baba, Karim and Mr. Savi, the tailor, are trying to live ordinary lives. I, because I know him, am not in the least surprised that Peter Hanington should recognise one of the great problems of history – that people have to live through it, which is why it is best not to live in interesting times. There are many historians who fail to recognise this simple truth.

Hanington is an author who has compassion, sensitivity and humanity. Those qualities shine through this book. These are the qualities that make you want to find out what happens next. These are the qualities which will touch you to the core of your being.

You really will not want to put this book down.

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