



On Top of the World: Until The Bell Chimes

David Lamb

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This novel is a look at what's left when fickle, fleeting fame fades away.

David Lamb's *On Top of the World* takes readers into the music industry's underworld as beautiful, smart, classy Belle, who had always liked rescue projects, helps the nerdy boy she fell in love with in college rise to the top, only to find she had created a monster—a man “driven by an ego so large it had to have its own zip code and so fragile it needed intensive care.”

After reigning as the music industry's “power couple,” Belle and Scrooje (the name is predictive both of the man's character and of the events that transpire in his life) have a falling-out that seems beyond remedy unless a surprising chain of events, including a series of powerful visions, can bring the lovers back together.

Stream-of-consciousness writing, at times litting and playful, at times intense and tormented, takes readers into the thoughts and feelings of each character as Scrooje betrays, uses, and abuses his loyal friends for his own benefit. Lamb skillfully reveals how each character is dealing with his or her own personal wounds and, as a result, is vulnerable to both Scrooje's charms and his deceptions.

Scrooje himself, despite his cool, calculating, unfeeling public persona, suffers from nightmares of his past life back in the 'hood; in these dreams, he is broke and dirty, begging people for spare change and being ignored. “I may have been King of the World to the public,” Scrooje says, “but Belle knew that I never stopped being the frightened little boy wearing hand-me-downs that were too big and made me feel too small.”

The text features realistic and pointed dialogue, smooth pacing that leads to a satisfying resolution, and rich characterization. The front cover art is inviting and sexy, and the interior design makes reading a pleasure. An engaging prologue, written in Belle's voice, clearly sets the stage for what is to come.

David Lamb's *On Top of the World* is a fast and fun read that shifts between realism and fantasy while managing to hit some important and timely topics, including how childhood loss, trauma, and bullying can have effects reaching into adulthood; that fame is fickle and fleeting; that even the most unlikely child can have extraordinary abilities just waiting to be nurtured and encouraged; and that love and friendship have the power to heal and give meaning to our lives.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September 8, 2016)

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