



Clarion Review ★★★★☆

The Famous Frog Fiasco

Robert Trenchard

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"[Y]ou don't notice that the team isn't the same you just miss a few players each year and life goes on. Lose someone and he's replaced with a new player." That's how cowboy mafioso and professional bank robber Lynn Dale Bradshaw of *The Famous Frog Fiasco* compares football and life which are synonymous in Texas.

To the relief of several oil companies attorney Robert Trenchard has taken a little time out of suing them to write a damn fine comic novel populated by a highly distinctive melange of losers rednecks schemers roughnecks killers early-peakers serial marriers and small-town stalwarts. These are the inhabitants of Farkel a modest county seat close to the Midland-Odessa "petroplex" which happens to share a name with a muppet-like entertainment icon. The media conglomerate behind the lucrative frog franchise kicks off a national promotion campaign with a televised visit to the sleepy town and the locals are determined to milk it for all they can.

Farkel the frog performs jingoistic anthems to a cheering crowd at a televised half-time show right after downtown is engulfed in the flames of a thousand exploding Harley-Davidsons. Though town is a complete insurance write-off at least the home team squeezes out a victory. Cleve the lazy tow truck driver makes a glorious year's income in one industrious weekend as everyone else Monday morning quarterbacks the wisdom of giving out free beer at the gun and knife show. FEMA mobilizes.

Trenchard has a natural gift for locating laughable idiosyncrasies in all kinds of people framing them with a wry wink. He's eminently quotable especially when putting words into the mouths of the washed up. A used car salesman who was a pitcher in baseball's minor leagues thirty years back waxes nostalgic: "What I miss is believing in something that wasn't true in the first place." Of a woman in her twenties Trenchard quips: "...Tiffany was still young enough that she knew more about most things than her mother." An aimless trio who's been playing pool more than working since their all-conference football glory days "...divided the kilo into one ounce lids coming to a total of forty-two lids using the traditional dealer weighing method of shorting the customer."

Though the book is already target-wealthy without the addition of public figures the author digs at George Bush one of the very few area oil men to lose money during the '70s boom. Dick Cheney fares worse by briefly appearing in the story after the freak catastrophe gets the town declared a national disaster area. A man enticing Cheney to a hunting trip points out the bag limit on lawyers has been raised to two.

The reading public needs more of this fiction—funny cathartic rich in screwball characterization. If Trenchard can keep sticking it to an industry which enrages the entire country and still follow up with another madcap novel he'll deserve a special citation. *The Famous Frog Fiasco* despite its questionable title drills relentless holes into a crude way of life yielding black gold paying dividends.

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