



Pobby and Dingan

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This enchanting tale is at once a beautifully rendered narrative of childhood loss and a powerfully simple fable about the necessity of imagination.

Pobby and Dingan are Kellyanne Williamson's best friends, maybe her only friends, and only she can see them. Kellyanne's brother, Ashmol, can't see them and doesn't believe they exist anywhere but in Kellyanne's immature imagination. Only when Pobby and Dingan disappear and Kellyanne becomes heartsick over their loss does Ashmol realize that not only must he believe in Pobby and Dingan, he must convince others to believe in them, too.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Pobby and Dingan Details

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Author : Ben Rice

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From Reader Review Pobby and Dingan for online ebook

Norrin2 says

“Pobby and Dingan” is only 94 pages long, and it feels like it’s filled me with more than 100 pages of things I want to say about this amazing book. Let me start by saying it is easily the best book I’ve read this decade. Goodreads won’t let you rank something 6 stars so I guess I’m going to have to go back to all the previous books I gave five stars too and dock them at least one star. I want to buy every copy of this book I can find and give them out to people saying “You have to read this. Just trust me.” like I did with “The Time Traveler’s Wife.”

During these 94 pages I laughed, I cried, I thought a lot – and I’m still thinking – about what is real and what’s not, about how much the unseen – whether it’s imaginary friends, lost loved ones, or opals -- affects all of our lives, even – maybe especially – nonbelievers (AKA “froot loops who don’t know what it is to believe is something which is hard to see, or to keep looking for something which is totally hard to find.”). If that makes it sound like a religious work it’s not; it’s very down to earth. In fact a lot of it takes place underground in an Australian opal mine.

This book, Ben Rice’s first novel, was written in 2000 and he hasn’t written anything other than a couple of short stories since then. He’ll probably never write another novel because he knows it won’t be as good as his debut. Which reminds me of another author who only wrote one book – but what a book! – Harper Lee. It’s been a while since I’ve read “To Kill a Mockingbird” so I’ll override my instincts and refrain from saying “Pobby and Dingan” is better than “To Kill a Mockingbird” but it’s as good – and that is high praise indeed.

Jonathan Manheim says

Gem. Beautiful and sad. Unique voice. What happened to Ben Rice??

Andreea Obreja says

The book was kind of cute, very detailed and full of imagination. I only have a problem with the way it was written. It reminds me of Nicholas Spark’s novels: great story-line ideas (ideal for movies) but no talent for actually writing them. This wasn’t so bad. It was understandable somehow: the narrator is a young boy, maybe at the beginning of his teens - you cannot ask for so much depth... (It could also be the translation; maybe I’ll try reading it in English next time)

Still, I believe this story deserved more.

The ending was the one that made me give that third star. Finally some feelings! This story is rather tragic but you don’t feel that way reading it. There are very few and short passages that kind of tickle your insides. But just a little.

Mamey says

I am not a big fan of short stories as I am always wanting more, so for me to say anything about this book probably isn't fair. It was a beautiful story but I have many questions which leaves me feeling cheated out of a longer book....Heartbreaking but in a very good way!!

Lavinia says

I just couldn't relate to it, though I know that behind (finding) a child's imaginary friends there's an entire life philosophy - if it's hard to see smth, it doesn't mean that thing doesn't exist or if you don't find smth it doesn't mean you should stop looking for it. OK, so the story is simple, innocent, childish a.s.o. Anyone can spare an hour or so to read it.

P.S. Dear author, Ashmol tries too hard to sound like Holden.

SD says

When was the last time that you read a book in a single evening and kept thinking about the characters for weeks afterwards?

April Klasen says

Pobby and Dingan by Ben Rice... yeah, I read it. I think the only reason why I even finished this story was the length, 90 pages, big print; I started it and felt like I could force myself to finish it if I just shut up and pushed on. Not that I regret it, just that I don't like it.

Set in opal mining country (Lightning Ridge) we follow Ashmol's account of how his little sister, Kellyanne, loses her two imaginary friends, Pobby and Dingan, which sets off some very real life issues. The only way that Ashmol can figure out how to fix things is to find the pair for her. But no-one can see them other than Kellyanne.

It sounded cute. Not to mention I misread the blurb and thought it had said that Kellyanne had gone missing with her imaginary friends and they would help lead Ashmol to her (I was tired and in the middle of the book fair which requires fast decision making). That's my fault for not reading properly. However, Rice has a lot to explain.

Like how old is Ashmol? Seriously, nothing is really mentioned about him. I first thought he was a teenager and then questioned that later in the story. There were no real concrete details given about this kid, I just don't know who he is, how he sounds, whether he's shorter than I am or taller. That bothered me, not knowing if he was a little kid or older (not the height).

The language, grrr. Oh my god, can we please step away from the over the top Aussie slang, please? No-one speaks like that. No bogans speak like that. I have yet met anyone who uses half of the vocabulary that was used here and I am Australian and live in the country. It was annoying. Borderline insulting.

The one thing I didn't hate was the oddness, which of course was what initially drew me to the book. Imaginary friends and a little girl who refuses to disbelieve and somehow forces her brother to believe

through a very big and dangerous situation. That was appealing. And though I was annoyed for most of it, I liked how things turned and changed and then ended. It's not like a lot of other books that have to have a happy ending *spoiler in a way* or that it was easy to predict what was going to next. That was something different and fun.

And now I'm a little afraid to upload this review as so many people have left glowing responses. Don't hate on this little reader, though, I tried my best to like it and yet couldn't. Of course, the only way to know if this is for you is to read it, and I have a copy if anyone is interested.

Courtney says

Pobby and Dingan are just Kellyanne's imaginary friends. It's kind of annoying how everyone humors her, but whatever. Or so thinks Ashmol, Kellyanne's older brother, at the outset of this short and charming novel.

Set in an Australian outback mining town, "Pobby and Dingan" takes a dark turn when the children's dad pretends to take the imaginary friends down into his opal mine one day. He forgets to bring them back, and Kellyanne becomes frantic, stops eating, grows ill and begins to fade away.

Ashmol may think his sister is annoying, but he also loves her, and for the rest of the book he narrates his efforts to restore her health -- even if he first must suspend a disbelief he desperately clings to.

I don't want to say much more, because this book's beauty is in the small moments and sad surprises. I read this in less than two hours, but it will stick with me forever.

Deb says

This book was recommended by a friend. I had never heard of this book and decided to go ahead and read it. What I found was a heartbreaking story of a brother and sister. Of a town in search of the brilliant opals. Of imagination and believing in the unseen. Bringing the town together in a belief of a young girl. And a brother fighting for his sister's life by finally believing in her imaginary friends. The ending brought me to tears and I will never forget Kellyanne, Ashmol, Pobby and Dingan.

Laura Hoffman Brauman says

3.5 stars . Pobby and Dingan is a touching novella about a boy that has to set aside his disbelief in his sister's imaginary friends and find a way to get others to help find them when they go missing. Sweet without being overwrought.

Amy says

What an utterly delightful little book. I had an imaginary friend as a child. His name was Rudi and he was my husband. I was 3. He only showed up when I was in the bathtub. My brothers used to tease me.

Now I have an imaginary friend. I'm 53. Her name is Ruthe (or bumma). She's my mom and she's still teaching me how to live a good life.

Nia says

3.5 Stars for Pobby & Dingan.

4 Stars for Specks in the Sky.

Dana says

Kellyanne has two imaginary friends, Pobby and Dingnan. Ashmol, Kellanne's brother, thinks she should just grow up and forget about her friends. One day Kellyanne's father takes her friends to work in his opal mine with him. When he returns home, she asks where they are. Horrors!! They are lost and presumed dead.

Kellyanne starts to wither away from heart sickness and worry. Ashmol concerned for his sister rounds up the whole town to look and try to find his sister's imaginary friends. Ashmol turns his whole attitude around and believes in Pobby and Dingan. Imagine a whole town searching for two imaginary friends :)

A charming story

Nurture Waratah says

This is a charming and heartbreaking story set in the opal fields of Lightning Ridge. The author uses words with skill. We feel the hot, dusty air in our lungs, we experience the ostracism and community of spirit of small town Australia and our hearts tear in two for the unhappy little girl who has lost her friends. This book may be short, but it is potent. I highly recommend it.

There is another short story included at the end of the book entitled *Specks in the Sky*. It is strange and confusing and worth skipping over.

Katrina says

I would never have heard of this book if I hadn't gone to a fancy pants lunch at The Ivy's sister restaurant Sheekey's in 2001 with author David Lodge, a literary agent, a PR guy and a website guy :) It was my prize for winning a 'First Chapter' competition judged by the brilliant author David Lodge (although I hadn't heard of him before, so as my friend pointed out when I was nervous beforehand, he liked me before I heard of him ergo I win)...quite a surreal experience but the literary agent (from Curtis Brown if memory serves) told us about this little book, Pobby & Dingan, and how it was technically too short to be published as a novel; however it was so completely perfect as it was, that they did :) It is a beautiful sweet story...very moving...recommend it to anyone.

Nora says

In the opal-mining region of Australia, little Kellyanne lives with her dad, her big brother Ashmol, and her imaginary friends, Pobby and Dingan. Ashmol is constantly teasing his little sister about how Pobby and Dingan aren't real and telling her to grow up. He is convinced that his sister is just being a baby who refuses to grow out of her imaginary friend stage. However one day, when Ashmol and Kellyanne's father is suspected of a crime that he didn't commit, and Pobby and Dingan go missing, Ashmol has no choice but to learn to believe in his sister's invisible friends so he can find them before Kellyanne wastes away from grief and clear his father's name.

This is one of the saddest, sweetest, most heartbreaking books I have ever read. As a child, I didn't have imaginary friends. Kellyanne's relationship with Pobby and Dingan made me really wish that I had. This girl is just the cutest thing. She has these adorable conversations with them and plays games with them. She constantly tries to convince Ashmol to join her, but he always brushes her off and makes fun of her. He cannot understand how his sister is so convinced that Pobby and Dingan are real, and at first I wasn't convinced that they were real either. But when the two imaginary friends disappear, little Kellyanne is devastated and falls ill. Her condition gets progressively worse each day that they remain missing. By this point, Ashmol will do anything to save his sister--even believe in what he can't see. As Ashmol slowly realizes that Pobby and Dingan are real because Kellyanne believes that they are, so did I. By the end of the novella, I wholeheartedly believed in Pobby and Dingan.

I have to warn you, the ending is not a particularly happy one. It left me dangerously close to tears. But I have absolutely no regrets. Seeing Ashmol begin to believe reminded me of Peter Pan. The mantra that I kept hearing in my head was "I do believe in imaginary friends, I do, I do." I loved seeing him become less cynical and more open minded, and was reminded of the wise words of one of my favorite wizards: "Of course it is happening inside your head...but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?"

My three-year-old brother has an imaginary friend he calls Michael, and, needless to say, I will never again belittle his friendship with him. All in all, this was a beautiful gem of a book, and I recommend it to absolutely everyone.

Ryan says

Friends, please read this novella.

Kellyanne has two imaginary friends who live with her family in rural Australia. One day Pobby and Dingan go missing and her brother Ashmol goes to find them which sets in motion the events of the story.

I purchased this book a few months ago at Russell's recommendation but I haven't gotten around to it yet. I read this in practically one sitting. This is one of the sweetest, most charming readable books that I have encountered in a long time. The book has an air of mystery but the innocence of children and the drama of a family in the middle of Australia. I thought this book was a bit predictable and a bit saccharine in the way it pulled at the heartstrings. However, the prose is excellent and the story is compelling. I think this will appeal to a lot of readers of all ages. In fact, this would make an excellent film if anyone wants to make it.

It's rare that a book like this comes a long that is so surprisingly delightful. This is one of the reasons I read: to find these gems, an opal if you will, in the rough.

Philip says

This was more novella than novel, and really more a long short story than a novella. But it was a VERY good long short story, and it reminded me (and at least one other reviewer) a lot of a Down Under **To Kill A Mockingbird**, with both Scout and Jem characters (although in reversed roles), and a more dissolute Atticus; it even ends with a trial. From the very first line - *Kellyanne opened the car door and crawled into my bedroom* - Rice really conveys the sound, feel and overall oddness of outback Australia without going into descriptive detail - very nicely done, and well worth the hour or two needed to read the whole thing.

In 2006, Australia made a low-budget film version of **P&D**, retitled "Opal Dream." Not bad; lacks the punch of the narrator Ashmol's unique voice, but then adds other scenes and characters that nicely fill out the rather sparse plot of the book. In particular, the trial scene is extended and rather nicely done, rather than being merely sketched out by Ashmol who didn't actually attend. (SPOILER ALERT!) And the ending of the film is different from the story, made more upbeat in order to pass as "feel-good family fare." But all in all, not a bad adaptation.

Diane S ? says

Came across this book on a list, I think it was on Kirkus, detailing the small books one should not miss. I loved this little story, about a 8 yr. old girl who lives with her family in New South Wales, Australia. Her father was digging for opals and the little girl had two imaginary friends called Pobby and Dingan. Reminded me of the saying that if a tree falls and no one is near does it still make a sound. If not everyone can see the imaginary friends does this mean they do not exist? This is a story of a town that pulled together to help save a little girl. It is also about what being family means, not just someone saying brother or sister, but going above and beyond, even if it means suspending one's belief. As her brother says, "Because they are all just fruit loops who don't know what it is to believe in something which is hard to see, or to keep looking for something which is totally hard to find." Wonderful little story.

Jen says

A novella with imagination, set in the opal-mining country of Australia. A young girl has two imaginary friends, and everyone around her supports her, except her brother. When her father is accused of "ratting," or poaching someone else's land, she can't find her friends anymore and becomes very very ill. Her brother decides to help her find her "friends" even though he thinks she's crazy. Poignant and authentic; I am happy I found this lying on the shelves in the library.
