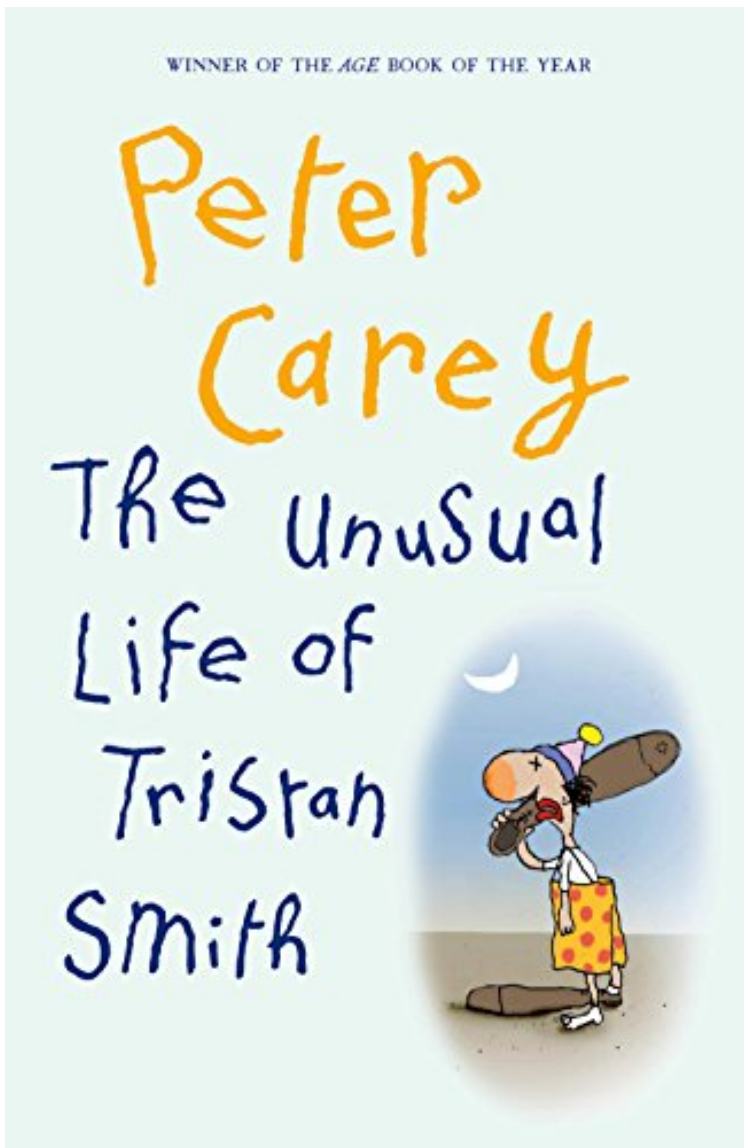


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# The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith



*Par Peter Carey*  
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**Par Peter Carey : The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith:

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**Description :** Description du produitThe Booker Prize-winning author of Oscar and Lucinda and The Tax Inspector now gives readers a hero, the malformed but ferociously wilful Tristan Smith, who becomes the object of the world's byzantine political intrigues, even as he attains stardom in a bizarre Sirkus that is part passion play and part Mortal Kombat.

Prsentation de l'diteurSeverely afflicted, doomed never to be taller than three foot six, Tristan Smith faces death and danger from the first moment of his energetic and ambitious life. Here, for the first time, is the truth about him, from his birth in the Republic of Efica in the year 371 to the present day. When he goes on trial for multiple offences in Voorstand, a nation of rampaging global dominance, Tristan must plead his case to the very culture that has done for his own. Peter Carey's piercing allegory of imperialism is

unmatched for originality and inventiveness. From Publishers Weekly Carey, known for his quirkily skewed re-creations of Australian culture (*Oscar and Lucinda*; *The Tax Collector*), has outdone himself in this bizarre, uncannily strange dystopia about the life of a dwarf, who narrates the tale. Tristan Smith, born to an unmarried woman who runs a radical theater in a land called Efficca, suffers from a facial disfigurement so severe that only his mother can look upon him without revulsion. His life as a child is unrelievedly sad until he discovers the various guises that theater can provide, which launches him into the vibrant world of his mother's professional circle. A consistent theme-political, cultural and historical-is the position of Efficca as an "Ootland" state, peripheral to the culture of faraway Voorstand, a kind of Anglo/Dutch hegemony whose world dominance in all things is beyond dispute, though not unchallenged by such underground dissidents as Tristan's mother. And it is this depiction of an entire world culture-futuristic, in some respects fitted out with unfathomable features, such as a kind of mass-audience shadow play involving live actors and holograms, as well as familiar figures like Rimbaud and Baudelaire-that gives this novel its refreshingly improbable authenticity. When Tristan's mother dies tragically, he falls in with a motley crew of her colleagues; together they embark on a secret mission to Voorstand, in search of his father, an Ootlander actor who has become famous by selling his soul to the Voorstand theater. The second half of the book details Tristan's time on the run in Voorstand, where he finds spectacular renown in the guise of a famous folk figure, Bruder Mouse, whose battles with The Hairy Man are somehow central to Voorstander's understanding of themselves. When he at last is, literally, unmasked, Tristan and his mates are charged with all manner of crimes of misrepresentation by the state. Carey's novel approach to the narrative-the entire tale is in the form of Tristan's direct testimony to formal authorities of Voorstand culture-is brilliantly maintained throughout, and the fairy-tale quality of its figuration makes for a surpassingly rich feast of metaphors and mercurial meanings-George Orwell and Lewis Carroll wrapped into one. Author tour. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Carey creates a fully realized parallel universe in this unusual novel set in Efficca, an island nation under the political and cultural domination of the larger Voorstand. Part Bildungsroman, part political allegory, and part meditation on identity, this novel traces the first 23 years of Tristan, its eponymous narrator, a hideously deformed dwarf and son of actress Felicity Smith (the head of a radical theater company and champion of Efficcan culture). In the novel's first half, Tristan tells of his early adventures with the company, culminating with Felicity's fatal foray into politics. In the second, he recounts his later travels in Voorstand in search of Bill Millefleur, an actor he believes to be his father. This inventive, multilayered work should only add to Carey's already considerable reputation. Highly recommended. Lawrence Rungren, Bedford Free P.L., Mass. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.