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**Utterly Monkey**

Nick Laird

Harper Perennial, £7.99

This 5-day caper story has as chief caperer Geordie Wilson, erstwhile resident of Northern Ireland, who has fled with some Loyalist swag to the temporary safety of his childhood friend Danny's home in London. The Troubles background interchanges with the more cleverly explored predicament of distraction and boredom that Danny suffers in his legal job – Laird's delectation of the humdrum workplace in parts rivals *The Office*. Geordie and Danny become embroiled in Loyalist plans in London, and the frantic action chases towards potential mayhem at the end. The determinedly populist remit of this format from Harper is directly in keeping with the thrust of the novel itself: in a "P.S." section at the end, we learn about Laird in a "Q and A", in a "Life at a Glance" and in "A Writing Life", and we can study the "Top Ten Most Played Songs (by different artists) on Nick Laird's iTunes as at 10.52 a.m. on 4th July 2005".

**John Kenny**