



## Tell-All

*Chuck Palahniuk*

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**Tell-All** Chuck Palahniuk

**The hyperactive love child of *Page Six* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* caught in a tawdry love triangle with *The Fan*. Even **Kitty Kelly** will blush.**

Soaked, nay, marinated in the world of vintage Hollywood, *Tell-All* is a *Sunset Boulevard*-inflected homage to Old Hollywood when **Bette Davis** and **Joan Crawford** ruled the roost; a veritable Tourette's syndrome of rat-tat-tat name-dropping, from the A-list to the Z-list; and a merciless send-up of **Lillian Hellman**'s habit of butchering the truth that will have **Mary McCarthy** cheering from the beyond.

Our **Thelma Ritter**-ish narrator is **Hazie Coogan**, who for decades has tended to the outsized needs of **Katherine "Miss Kathie" Kenton**—veteran of multiple marriages, career comebacks, and cosmetic surgeries. But danger arrives with gentleman caller **Webster Carlton Westward III**, who worms his way into Miss Kathie's heart (and boudoir). Hazie discovers that this bouncer has already written a celebrity tell-all memoir foretelling Miss Kathie's death in a forthcoming **Lillian Hellman**-penned musical extravaganza; as the body count mounts, Hazie must execute a plan to save **Katherine Kenton** for her fans—and for posterity.

*Tell-All* is funny, subversive, and fascinatingly clever. It's wild, it's wicked, it's **boldfaced**—it's vintage **Chuck**.

## Tell-All Details

Date : Published May 4th 2010 by Doubleday

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Author : Chuck Palahniuk

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## From Reader Review Tell-All for online ebook

### Peter Derk says

Okay, not my favorite Chuck Palahniuk book. I'm a pretty big fan, read ALL of his books and have seen him speak twice, which is a blast if you ever get the chance.

Like always, he delivers in terms of a quick read, some social commentary, and a little bit of humor thrown in the mix (see: anything attributed to Walter Winchell in this book).

That said, the story is so-so. The book really hits its stride about a hundred pages in, which is over halfway.

If you're going to read this book, here are some things that might help you enjoy it more:

1. Feel free to completely ignore anything in boldface. These will be brand names and names of celebrities. Chuck Palahniuk does this sort of thing in books, for example, the inclusion of esoteric medical terms in *Choke*, to slow readers down and make them pay attention to what's going on. So, don't get caught up in the names is all I'm saying, don't let that ruin it for you the way it seems to for so many others. Take the boldface as a sign saying, "You do not need to remember this person."

2. Accept that this is not *Fight Club*. Everybody wants Chuck Palahniuk to rewrite *Fight Club*. Say what you will about his use of formula, but Palahniuk is a writer who is constantly trying new things, sometimes with great success (for example, in the much-underrated *Rant*) and sometimes with less success. But if you love *Fight Club* for its testosterone, snappy angry youth one-liners, or ready-for-the-screen action, look to another book.

3. A book being short does not mean that you are being ripped off. His books tend to be short, faster reads. I like that. I don't see this as a laziness on the author's part or a disadvantage. He is a rabid revisionist, and edits each line over and over rather than stuffing a book with crap.

His last couple of books haven't been my favorite, but the amount of work that goes into them is evident and appreciated.

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### Robb says

Note: NO SPOILERS

I was slightly wary of reading Palahniuk's latest. The premise centered around an aging starlet and the troubles she endured seemed slightly cliché and too simple for one of Palahniuk's protagonists. However, within the first 20 pages of this book I was engrossed in the life of Miss Kathie (a character I immediately drew similarities to another violet-eyed starlet) and realized that that sordid life of a Hollywood actress is definitely Palahniuk material. This is by no means a long book, I read it within a few hours, but it is an incredibly interesting story that takes you into the private world of a public face where you see all of their intimate details. His over-use of literary and cinematic name dropping as descriptors painted a perfect image of what one should be seeing if in the shoes of Miss Kathie or through the narration of her friend/maid/caretaker, Hazie Coogan. In typical Palahniuk fashion, there is obviously a twist ending. Even though I had figured out the ending about half way through the story, I was still doubting my logic right up to the last two scenes. Another interesting part of this book is the style in which he wrote it. Rather than

typical chapters, this book is narrated as if the entire story was a movie. Split into Acts and Scenes.

As far as Palahniuk books go, this one made it to my top five. I recommend it to anyone who is a fan of old movies, Palahniuk, or just a clever tale.

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### **bethanne says**

Chuck does it again! This book is fiction, but it sounds like something out of old Hollywood. Words alone cannot describe how AWESOME this book is. Don't listen to the naysayers when they say this book is weak, it is amazing and deserves to be read.

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### **Eric Hendrixson says**

What I like about CP is how he is willing to experiment with different ways of telling a story. Rant is an example of a successful experiment. Tell All is an example of an unsuccessful experiment.

One major problem with the book is voice. The first person protagonist is just not fun to read. It is possible to write unlikable people as good narrators, and CP has done it before; he did this especially well in Choke. In this case, the voice was annoying, grating, nearly unreadable for the first half of the book. If his name had not been on the cover, I would not have read that far.

I say for the first half of the book because that is about when the author first introduced a plot. The plot was fun, but anyone who has read CP before knows by then what the plot twist will be, so there is no surprise, and when he spends a chapter explaining the plot twist after the fact, the reader is left wondering how stupid he thinks we are. Everybody saw this coming, and no explanation is necessary.

There is a point in the career of a successful author at which his editors stop editing, trusting in the innate brilliance and market power of the artist. This is a dangerous time, since very bad books can be published during this time. Since he has published both Pygmy (a stylistic success with a failed plot) and Tell All (a failure both in plot and style), I think it has become clear that it is time for his editors to start working again.

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### **Mark says**

This book only has 179 pages and yet i see that 13 of my magnetic clips ( thank you waterstones) cling to, self-evidently, 13 of the pages. They normally serve to mark things that I find particularly insightful or dates and details to remember but in this case they mark, to a large extent, places in this short book in which i have gasped in a none too controlled way over something particularly outrageous but funny.

Do not fear gentle reader, I have no intention of quoting them all but they do point out to me the fact that this is a book littered/graced with great one liners and more then its fair share of clever paragraphs.

It is a reflection on celebrity, fame and talent or lack of and centres around a Hollywood star, Katherine Kenton and her maid of all works and general dogsbody, Hazie Coogan, as they strain and struggle to maintain her postion as a star which is, if not rising, at least still glowing. She has made famous such ground-breaking roles as Mrs Caesar Augustus, Mrs Leonardo da Vinci, Mrs Pope Innocent VI, Mrs Gunga Din, Mrs

Hunchback of Notre Dame, Mrs Man in the Iron Mask and my particular favourite Mrs Last of the Mohicans but is now moving into the roles such as mother of Captain Ahab or maiden aunt to John the Baptist. She has waded her way through a goodly number of husbands and has a tendency to launch herself at any prospective mound of flesh in which a pulse and a willy coincide. Hazie protects her from herself by pointing out

'erections are less likely a compliment than they are the result of some medical breakthrough'.

Suddenly on the horizon appears the handsome, fit and oxymoronically innocently-predatory Webster Carlton Westward III who seeks to endear himself into her affections and bed but Hazie is mightily suspicious of his intentions and so the scene is set for her uncovering of his plot to write a kiss and tell biography which would be bad enough except each draft which she uncovers hidden in his luggage under his pants...which are needed to contain his regularly praised magnificently enormous manhood, contains a last chapter in which he records how she is going to die. His plan, it seems, is to murder her so as to ensure his entry into the role of grieving young widow with a handy book ready typed and hot for publication. This info happens within a few pages and the rest of the book is the crossing back and forth, the flash backs to and fro across the troubled drug and face lifted history of a crumbling film star.

Palahniuk, why is that man's name so difficult to remember how to spell, writes a bizarre but clever reflection on fame, friendship and the confusion or otherwise of outward appearances. He points out how truth, if we are not careful, can so easily be twisted into something violently different or how by just moving or shading a few details a whole scene can be subtly but totally changed. A long running image is that of the Dorian Gray like mirror in the crypt upon which Hazie grooves and marks, with Katherine's serially employed diamond engagement ring, the lines wrinkles and blemishes which should reside on Katherine's face but which she regularly has removed and hidden.

The blind traipsing after celebrity fad and fancy is dissected

'If Miss Kathie chose to wear a coat of red ermine or a hat trimmed in pelican feathers, no ermine or seabird was safe. One photo of her arriving at an awards dinner or premiers was enough to put most most animals onto the endangered species list.'

And linked to that is the emptiness of awards and half hearted professional pats on back when he points out the horror of

'every compliment you've ever received, made manifest, etched into metal or stone and filling your home'.

or even more dismissively

'earning applause, not for any performance, but for simply not dying.'

The most clever and insightful thought though is the one towards the end of the whole melee

'These tawdry, soft, sordid fictions would petrify and fossilize to become diamond-hard, carved-stone facts for all perpetuity. A salacious lie will always trump a noble truth.'

The book is mightily humourous but has a serious point in amidst its jokes and vicious slices of wit. What constitutes truth and how can it be protected and preserved ?

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## Kemper says

Say what you will about Chuck Palahniuk, no one can claim that he's scared of experimenting with different ways to tell a story.

In *Rant*, we got multiple character viewpoints as though they were reminiscences for a documentary. *Haunted* had a variety of characters telling fictional sort stories. *Pygmy* was written completely in the mutated broken English of the main character. And now in *Tell-All* Palahniuk is again playing with how the story is told. It's like a hybrid between a screenplay and a gossip column with the narrator describing fade-ins and flashbacks while littered with bold-faced celebrity name-dropping.

Set in 1940s-60s Hollywood, Hazie Coogan is the assistant/secretary/maid/cook to aging movie star Katherine Kenton. Hazie thinks of Katherine as her life's work, but she has to be on guard against Katherine's tendency to collect unsuitable husbands. The latest candidate is young and handsome Webster Carlton Westward III. When Katherine falls for him, Hazie is pushed to the background, and she worries that Westward is just courting Katherine so that he can release a tell-all biography after her death.

While Palahniuk, has been playing with structure, he still sticks to a lot of his old themes. Here, we get another harsh indictment of celebrity culture, and the ways people will degrade themselves for fame. He still likes to pepper the main story with a series of flashbacks that eventually become plot twists.

Short, but a lot better than the horrible *Snuff*, this one is a decent read but doesn't rank up there with my favorite Chuck P. books. My favorite parts are the hilarious twisted versions of Lillian Hellman screenplays that feature her as single-handedly winning World War II, inventing the atomic bomb, and saving the space program,

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## Brandon Tietz says

You can think of this as a vintage Hollywood version of "Glamorama" by Bret Easton Ellis. It's a constant barrage of celebrity name-dropping (and in bold print, no less) with a slew of camera directions and editing room speak. Instead of Christian Bale we get Mickey Rooney. Kate Moss is replaced with women like Monroe, Garbo, and Joan Crawford. So if you enjoyed that aspect of machine gun pop-culture in "Glamorama," then "Tell All" delivers the same thing in a nostalgic, grainy reel.

As if to build upon the old-timey setting, Palahniuk crafts a more traditional literary story. More subtlety. Less shock. Don't get me wrong, he's still using his same go-to methods: the choruses and clever-isms.

Someone who was your husband: a "was-band" (love it!!)

What he's not doing is going for the throat as seen in the "Guts" short story and "Snuff." I don't feel like the guy is trying to one-up himself anymore in regards to how far he can push the envelope. "Tell All" could very well be his most mature work yet. I say mature, not because we're lacking all things grotesque and filthy--but the use of subtlety regarding the theme of perceptions when applied to these characters. If "Fight Club" is about hitting bottom, "Tell All" would be its inverse, a story of ascent and how important the opinions of those surrounding us matter.

The drawback, as far as I can see, is "Tell All" isn't going to be for everybody. I'm 27, so I only recognized about 15% of the names. Personally, this didn't take away from the story, but the younger demographics might feel differently. The celeb aspect is either going to come off as exclusive or well-researched,

depending on the reader. And even though the novel is well-crafted and beautifully written, it's a tad on the short side at only 179 pages.

After reading it, it's clear to me that Palahniuk is still experimenting, still trying new things regarding style, structure and format--and it was a breath of fresh air with this one. So don't expect another "Fight Club" or "Choke," and don't expect it to be "Glamorama" exactly, either. You're going to see some parallels, but "Tell All" takes a more traditional turn with the writing. It's a different kind of Palahniuk...so different that you may just be shocked. The guy can really lay down the beautiful prose when he wants to.

Still funny.

Still clever.

Just different.

Altogether, an enjoyable read. Much thanks to The Cult for throwing one my way and I hope you guys like the new direction he takes with this one.

-Brandon Tietz

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## **Misha says**

I found Tell-All to be a fine return to form for Palahniuk. Being Palahniuk, the book is, of course, gimmicky. He is Palahniuk, and gimmicky pastiche is the literary niche he's come to fill. But Tell-All is gimmicky with heart, soul and humanity – something I've found lacking in his previous two novels Snuff and Pygmy. I recall commenting to a friend that Snuff read like it had been written during a weekend-long cocaine binge, while Palahniuk seemed to have blown his wad on the pidgin patois in Pygmy, but I felt the patois detracted from the work rather than adding to it.

In Tell-All, there are a couple of voice gimmicks at work. First the boldface for names, which evokes the kind of typeface used in gossip columns. Second, the animal noises, which are intended to denote how shallow and meaningless conversation is among the two-dimensional people populating Katherine Kenton's world. The former worked well and melded into the text quickly. The latter was more obtrusive and perhaps repeated a bit too often. I'd venture that most of Palahniuk's readers are smart people and don't need to be hit over the head with the metaphor. He can be a bit heavy-handed, our Chuck.

Stylistic gimmicks aside, Palahniuk is doing some really interesting things in this book. On the surface, it's a commentary on old Hollywood, but it just as easily could be read as commentary on the celebrity-obsessed, vampiric, TMZ culture we're all soaking in today, where no one with even the smallest iota of fame escapes the lenses of the paparazzi or the acid-tongued snark of the bloggers who have replaced the Walter Winchells and Hedda Hoppers of old. In some ways, I think the book is nostalgic for the days when film stars were surrounded by a certain glamour and mystique, with the truth never being fully revealed until after their deaths. I'd argue movies held more magic in the days when we didn't know the intimate details of Angelina Jolie's ovulation cycle or when Megan Fox gets a bikini wax.

While the book certainly is a black comedy, it's also elegaic and rather ethereal, at least in the first half. There's a strong element of tragedy in the life of Katherine Kenton, a beautiful sadness in the cobwebs and the Dorian Gray-style mirror where narrator Hazie Coogan preserves the march of time on Kenton's face – ravages no other human will ever be allowed to see.

The second half drifts more into a very dark form of slapstick, with Kenton trying to dodge the increasingly

ridiculous attempts on her life by her lover. The shifting tone of the book mirrors the change in Kenton's own life, as she morphs from ghostly has-been to a woman re-energized by the fear of death. The narrative itself is energized along with Kenton in the latter half. Definitely some smart writing going on here.

But perhaps the smartest writing lies in the layer of the book that's a sharp satire on the way humans metaphorically cannibalize each other, with notorious fabulist Lillian Hellman as the cannibal-in-chief. This thread works as an interesting piece of metanarrative, as Palahniuk does to Hellman that which Hellman is accused of doing by the characters in the book. The characters often pray to outlive Hellman so they never become fodder for her stories. Perhaps we should all pray to outlive Palahniuk.

Where the book works best – and works in a way Snuff and Pygmy didn't – is that it made me feel something for its characters: for poor, doomed, beautiful Katherine who so badly craved love; for homely, invisible Hazie who wanted to amount to something and was willing to kill; even for the idiot Webster, all root-beer brown eyes and slavish devotion to his idol. This ability to evoke feeling, to find something gorgeous and human in the midst of vanity, ugliness and decay, is why I fell in love with Palahniuk, why I continue to read his books. In this one, he doesn't disappoint.

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## **P42 says**

**Rewelacyjnego Fight Clubu NIC nie przebije :/  
Wi?cej na kanale ju? wkrótce.**

- + wyj?ciowy pomys? na fabu??
- + opisywanie historii w formie scenariusza filmowego
- + rewelacyjny, obsceniczny humor Palahniuka
- styl jednocze?nie jest bardzo m?cz?cy i nieprzejrzysty co utrudnia lektur?
- imitowanie syndromu Tourette'a narracj? wyczerpuje czytelnika
- pierwsza po?owa ksi??ki niewiele wnosi i ma s?abe tempo

*Ciekawy jestem po jak? ksi??k? tego autora si?gn? w nast?pnej kolejno?ci! :)*

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## **Greg says**

This guy wrote a review of this book that is wrong.

This is not a good novel. I don't even know where to start on it.

I imagine this conversation happening between CP and his editor:

*CP: Did you get my new novel?*

*ED: Novel? I got your short story.*

CP: *Oh, you kidder. Seriously, what do you think?*

ED: *Chuck, you can't release this as a novel. It's 150 pages, but the plot only takes up about 15 of those pages. This is a short story.*

CP: *My fans are retards though, they will think it's edgy. I can do anything!!!!*

ED: *Your probably right. I've got an idea why don't you namedrop another 30 pages of semi-obscure golden age Hollywood stars into the text. I think we can work with it then.*

CP: *Consider it done, my man!*

For about the first 105 pages of the book there is nothing that happens that is really necessary to the plot. For a good portion of the pages after that there is nothing necessary to the plot. And actually the plot isn't really all that different from *Diary*.

As a short story this would have been vaguely entertaining with a pretty transparent ironic twist.

Which brings me to the name dropping. It is pointless. Somewhere along the line CP thought it would be cute to throw in excessive extraneous garbage into his books. It's a weird verbal tick of sorts. And it makes his books seem weirder than they really are. Actually they are sort of a crutch that lets him automatically create the obsessive characters he is known for without having to do much work. Which is good for him, since he chugs out a book a year. In *Fight Club* it was the "I am Jacks (x)", which was fine. In *Survivor* it was the endless cleaning tips, which were quirky and worked well in the novel, but I think became the crutch at this point. In *Diary* it was the endless cribbings from *Grey's Anatomy*. Here it is the nonstop name dropping (and putting those names in **BOLD**), as if he were just running down a list off of Wikipedia for 1940's and 50's stars.

But isn't this a seething critique of celebrity culture and our obsession with the gossip rags? No. Unless you are 12 and haven't realized that the whole celebrity thing is vulturistic, then there is nothing really going on here. If anything it is just adding even more to the cult of celebrity. Ironically gushing over celebrities is still gushing.

All of this is fine to say, but really the big problem with the book is that it is BORING! It is tedious and BORING! BORING, as in nothing really happens. BORING, as in I enjoyed reading the nutritional information off of the bag of pretzels I ate at lunch today more than reading anything in this book. BORING, as in it wasn't even bad enough to warrant one star it was just this BORING, BLAH, MEDIOCRE thing of BLANDNESS; sort of like most of the celebrities out there today.

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### ♥Emm♥ says

A great mystery and satire marred by its patience-trying experimental writing style. I like classic Hollywood as much as anyone, but the sheer amount of references crammed into this tiny novel, all in **bold print** for your eyeballs' inconvenience, is perplexing. Somewhat hypocritical, as I toy around with writing styles as well, but it can be something more fitting to poetry or short stories than a full novel.

However, it says something that the plotline is good enough to survive through it - being a simple yet twisting and engaging mystery revolving around an aging celebrity, her calculating housekeeper, and the actress's young lover. Underneath there is good characterization and insight. If its ideas had been toned down - that celebrity is no more than connections (and constant name-dropping) this could've been in the ranks of some of the author's previous books, like *Invisible Monsters*, which was experimental but in a much less... severe way, and was the better for it.

Story - 4/5

Characterization - 3.5/5

Writing - Ranges from 2/5 to 4/5

General - 3/5

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## Arvy says

I am disappointed. Father Palahniuk, this is **trash**. You had me at *Fight Club* but this one is just depressing.

**disappointment #1:** The plot was good. But it wasn't good enough. Predictable and boring. Miss Kathie's shit-filled Hollywood life is engagingly exxxagerated andbutso bitch, I give zero fucks.

**disappointment #2:** The Tourette Syndrome of infinite name-dropping killed me. Jesus I swear, it felt like I was being fucked by a thousand merciless rabbits the whole motherfucking time (bdsm - submissive: me, dominant: rabbits.) The name references were too deeply anchored to fathom. An oceanful list of Wikipedia names from 1940 to 1950. Goodness, my biological father was just a flippant sperm in some lousy balls that time. Well, A+ for Palahniuk's efforts of digging up a bajillion of obituaries. But no, most names weren't accessible.

**disappointment #3:** The writing felt like Thelma Ritter was holding a Lomo Cam narrating live cameos while at the same time, writing a letter expressing magnetic erections to her Casanova. It was all wrong. It was a mixture and collision of first and third person commentaries so really, I don't give a flying fuck whether I get shit or not.

**disappointment #4:** Onomatopoeia. Hazie's mind is a copulating zebra and anaconda but Kathie's mind is a zoo orgy. It had all sorts of annoying sounds from A to Z. Kathie all weird praying *barks* and *hisses*. Phony. I know Father could be all peculiar and creative but I had enough of shitty narration and bold name-dropping bullshit to have this tolerated.

**disappointment #5:** Chuck Palahniuk being the author.

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## Bradley says

I added an extra star considering this isn't written in the same exact style of every other Palahniuk book prior to *Rant* with the exception of *Snuff*. This weakness of his was most prevalent in *Haunted*, which included great stories and the wonderful gimmick that each story was written by a different character who was each trapped in the writing retreat from hell. Unfortunately, every story was written in the same exact way and obviously by the same exact character: Chuck Palahniuk. It's really not such a good thing when nearly all of your books are written in first person and all of your protagonists sound exactly the same. But this came to an end with *Rant*, which was a really great book. Then he went back to doing the same old thing with *Snuff*,

which is his worst book. Then he used a radically different voice in *Pygmy*, which I had mixed feelings about. And now another different voice for this book, although it's not a good book. Nevertheless, I appreciate his attempts to get away from "the voice" and look forward to his next novel, *Damned*.

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### **Tina Rae says**

Oh man. I am in love. I know I say this with almost every Palahniuk book I read but I definitely mean it this time: THIS is my favorite Chuck book. No doubt about it. It is literally everything that I want from a book. It has the best characters I've ever read (Chuck wasn't kidding when he said in an interview that he loves Hазie. I know she's my favorite character. She seems like she's the good one and she's only doing things to help others but she's really not. She's cunning and devious and so far from perfect. And yet, she's a lot like all of us. And you don't quite realize it until it's too late.) I love how this book is a book of movies. It's a name dropping Tourette's syndrome. It's utterly fabulous and so very true. My favorite part is the genius Dorian Gray reference. That is one of the coolest and most genius things ever put on paper. Honestly, I can't dote on this book enough. It's beautiful and wonderful and Chuck's absolute best ever work. I know as soon as this book is released in paperback, I'm snapping it off the shelf, buying it and it's coming home to live with me. FOREVER. With that ending, how could I not fall utterly and totally in love with it? So if you're even the least bit of a Chuck fan, read this book. It's worth it. Most definitely.

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### **Jason Pettus says**

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted illegally.)

Less a finished novel and more a writing-workshop dare grown out of control, Chuck Palahniuk's latest is almost too slight to deserve a write-up at all, although I suppose I'll try: it's essentially a fake kiss-and-tell biography of a 20th-century Hollywood starlet as told by her longtime put-upon assistant, actually written as a book-length Walter-Wintchell-style corny gossip column, complete with boldfaced type every time a person of note is mentioned (which is hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of times). As such, then, Palahniuk's attempt here at campy *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* fun clashes badly with the usual Palahniukian touches present in all his books -- from the transgressive exaggeration of sex and violence to his ever-increasingly annoying habit of picking a random phrase and then repeating it thousands of times throughout a manuscript -- resulting in scenes that typically start in a promising retro Hollywood style, but then always get interrupted by a jarringly out-of-place reference to Viagra overdoses or bloody dildos, then will segue into an outrageously fake reminiscence of some Lillian Hellman script that never in a million years would exist in the real world (Joan Crawford invents the atomic bomb! Then has a torrid affair with Albert Einstein!), teetering drunkenly between realistic drama and gonzo fairytale in a clumsy, ugly way sure to offend fans of either. Shame on you, Chuck, for releasing this nearly unreadable piece of garbage just so you could stick to your book-a-year schedule, when I suspect that you actually knew much better than to do so but did it anyway. We'll see if this holds true, but this might possibly be the book to change my policy of automatically reading every new novel that Palahniuk publishes.

Out of 10: **1.3**

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## Ana says

It seems to me as if Chuck Palahniuk had every novel or text ever written by him liquified on a blender, then poured into a tall glass cup: a non-sugary, not-even-sour, nothing-flavored story: Tell-All.

This is a really lousy book. It has a hollow plot, it has poor/close-to-none character development, it's a nightmare. What was I thinking, seriously.

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## Imogen says

Sigh. Oh Chuck. You're just convinced that you've found the magic formula, and you can churn out a book every year or two indefinitely, aren't you? I mean, this isn't as bad as Pygmy, or even Snuff, but it's on the same level as them. Ugh. First, it is barely a book; if we acknowledge that every new chapter has half a blank page to mark it, this is like a 150-page book. Second, why is the repetetive verbal tick in this book (they are in all of your books, Chuck) some random three-animal-noise blurt followed by a celebrity's name? That's stupid.

Third: this was your chance, Chuck. As the gay dude who represents straight dude masculinity in his books- and the one who I think still sells well enough that maybe you keep churning 'em out in an effort to keep the publishing industry afloat?- writing about a woman, from another woman's point of view, in the style of the gossip column- that famous, old-timey domain of ladies and gay men- you could have really made a point. Any fucking point! Something about camp and old-timey Hollywood glamour, or something about queeniness, or... I don't know, anything! But in every one of your last few books, I totally root for you to do something smart and awesome (because you did in Rant, which still fucking stands up, I read the synopsis on Wikipedia and get totally pumped), and then you don't really do anything.

Bummer, Chuck! Bummer.

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## Edward Lorn says

There was a time that I bought Chuck Palahniuk books on release day and tore through them in less than a 24-hour period. I can still one-shot his insanely short novels (novellas by anyone else's standards) but I've long since stopped rushing out to buy them. What happened? Where did it all go wrong? Let's discuss, shall we?

Rant was a punch in the face when it first came out. I will be the first to admit that I didn't understand it because I was young and dumb. I think the format threw me. I've never been a fan of books written in the style of interviews. Anyway, I just didn't get the book. But that's my bad. I have since reread Rant and found it to be among the best of Palahniuk's output. I was hoping for the same magic again, which is why we're here. But, first, a little more history.

Next was Snuff, a little more streamlined and understandable than Rant, but not very good. Still, I was hoping for an upswing with the next book. Every author has their bad period (no one knows this better than a Stephen King fan), and I imagined the next book would be Palahniuk back to his stellar ways. Oh, what a hopeful summer-child was I...

If Rant was a punch to the face, the next book to touchdown, Pygmy, was a nuclear bomb up the ol' Hershey Highway. I remember opening that yellow-binded bastard and reading the first paragraph and blinking uncontrollably. I flipped through the book, reading the beginnings of every chapter (something I don't think I've ever done, nor have I done since), trying to see if the entire book was actually written in such a confusing style. After a while, I dropped into a rhythm and managed to finish the book, but again, it just wasn't any good. What was I missing? Mind you, this was before I joined Goodreads, therefore, I had no idea I was in the vast majority when it came to raging over Pygmy.

And then Tell-All came out, a 179-page "novel" that I paid full price for in hardcover. I can't remember how much, but I know it was easily over twenty bucks. For 179 pages. Surely this book would be the succinct, miracle-return of one of my favorite authors. I finished the book in two sittings. Not because it was good but because the font was huge and there's more gibberish than there is story, meaning the "novel" is padded with italic bullshit of the *cluck, whinny, bark...* variety. Add to that all the name-dropping, which is, admittedly, true to character, but annoying as fuck. If you're going to read this, everything in bold can be skipped. It's actors names and conditions and products. Maybe some of the names dropped are funny, given context, but more often than not they are superfluous. When reading a 179-page "novel", one should not feel the need to skip text, but good on the author for putting that shit in bold and making it easier to pass over.

The first time I read this, the twist aggravated me because I saw it coming at the midway point. It's so goddamn forgettable that I couldn't remember what happened at the end. I didn't mind the twist so much this time around, but something else annoyed me in its place.

I've never known Chuck Palaniuk to hold a reader's hand. I think that's one of the reasons I loved Rant so much the second time around. Palahniuk hid the twist so damn well and never comes right out to tell the reader what they might have missed. Here, in Tell-All, Palahniuk spends a considerable amount of time assuming you, the reader, are denser than a bucket of cement. He spells out every little detail, making sure you see how clever he was, thoroughly destroying any sense of accomplishment the reader might have felt by figuring it out on their own. Stephen King once said, "Description should start in the author's mind and end in the reader's." I like that quote. Maybe I should email it to Chucky-boy.

In summation: This wasn't near as bad as my first experience with this book, but it was still a hard pill to swallow. I would say that later Palaniuk deserves a reread, especially if you loathed these books the first time. Had I been a member of GR back when this came out, it would have easily garnered a one-star from me. Not much better than now, but there was a little improvement. I plan to reread all of the ones I hated simply because Rant was so much better the second time around. This one proved not to be so bad, but I think that's more because I'm not reading it directly after Pygmy, because this "novel" surely is no return to form for my one-time hero.

**Final Judgment: Better than the first time reading but that's not saying much.**

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## Jacob says

March 2010, before: What's this? A fictional biography of a real-life celebrity (Lillian Hellman), reimagining her as a larger-than-life/legendary character? And it's by Chuck Palahniuk? *And* it's the length of an average novel? Oh, my! What could go wrong?

Oh, hell, I think I just jinxed it.

May 2010, after: But wait! It's really just a tired, by-the-numbers Palahniuk novel, starring a bunch of tired,

by-the-numbers Stock Palahniuk Characters, and lazily disguised as The Ultimate Hollywood Novel By Chuck Palahniuk? And it's by Chuck Palahniuk? And it's really just a bloated short story padded out to barely-acceptable novel length thanks to the same tired jokes and gimmicks repeated a hundred times throughout? Oh, my! Did anything go right?

Yeah, I don't think you can blame me for this one.

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## Sonia says

Leyendo contraportadas, sinopsis y críticas, sospechaba que *Chuck Palahniuk* no iba a ser un autor de mi agrado pero tenía que probarlo. Por un lado porque, siendo tan popular, quizás me estaba perdiendo a un autor brillante y, por otro, porque me gustó la película *El club de la lucha*. Sin embargo *Al desnudo* ha confirmado mis sospechas y definitivamente no volveré a leer nada de este señor.

El libro me ha parecido tedioso en su estructura y narrativa y la escritura profundamente desagradable y cansina. Empecemos por esto último. *Chuck Palahniuk* es de esos autores que gustan de soltar palabras de contenido sexual o corporal, especialmente femenino, con absoluta suciedad y desprecio. Imagino que así se sienten transgresores o modernos pero la verdad es que resultan provincianos y fuera de época. El sexo es natural, ya no da miedo, la sociedad no tiene tantos prejuicios y tabús, las mujeres hablamos de sexo abiertamente. Supéralo. Por otra parte el libro está plagado de nombres, de citas de artistas de Hollywood, y cuando digo plagado me refiero a que en un párrafo pueden aparecer 20 nombres. No aportan nada a la trama, ni son interesantes, ni divertidos. Del 90% de ellos ya no se acuerda nadie. Sólo sirven para hacer la narración tediosa, cansina, hartante.

Pasemos a la trama. El hilo principal, lo que queda cuando quitas todo lo innecesario, es interesante, contiene intriga y se desarrolla llevándote a un final hasta cierto punto inesperado. Sin embargo tengo que dar la razón a aquellos que apuntan que esta historia no da para más que un relato y el autor la ha querido alargar a base de paja hasta poder venderlo como novela. Así con tanto absurdo fuera de la trama, con historietas sin pies ni cabeza, con el relleno a base de citas y nombres, acabas aburrido y perdiendo el interés en esa historia o misterio principal.

Creo que este libro no le gusta ni a los fans del autor. No pierdas el tiempo con él.

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