



## Pulp

*Charles Bukowski*

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## **Pulp** Charles Bukowski

Opening with the exotic Lady Death entering the gumshoe-writer's seedy office in pursuit of a writer named Celine, this novel demonstrates Bukowski's own brand of humour and realism, opening up a landscape of seamy Los Angeles.

## **Pulp Details**

Date : Published May 31st 2002 by Ecco (first published 1994)

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Author : Charles Bukowski

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Plot-wise that's about all you really need to know about *Pulp*, but if plot and character development are what you're after in a book, then this one probably isn't for you. Many times throughout his career Bukowski was quoted as saying "genius might be the ability to say a profound thing in a simple way." This austere philosophy of writing is perhaps most succinctly put by the pithy epitaph adorning his tombstone: DON'T TRY. Whether Bukowski was a genius himself, or whether his final piece of advice should apply to all writers – these are subjects for another time. The point here is that, like Hemingway at his best, Bukowski managed to provoke a breadth and depth of intellectual and emotional responses in his work using only a sparse economy of words and dialogue, and *Pulp* is no exception.

A large portion of Bukowski's writing had a satirical bent to it, and though it would be a simplification to label him a satirist outright, there can be no denying that much of his fiction contains a strong element of lampoon. Whether denigrating himself or poking fun at such sacrosanct notions as god, country, and anything else associated with the American herd mentality, one cannot read Bukowski and come away without noticing the inordinate amount of tongue in his cheek. In *Pulp*, Bukowski sets his sights on writing itself – specifically, the more contrived conventions of genre writing.

It is no coincidence, after all, that *Pulp* is called what it's called (the title being a reference to tawdry dime novels of times past) or that the book itself is dedicated "to bad writing." Still, if there is any writer capable of taking something bad and making it so much worse that it ends up being good, it is Bukowski. Consider the following excerpt from chapter nine:

\*\*\*

I had to straighten out the Celine matter and find the Red Sparrow and here was this flabby ball of flesh worried because his wife was screwing somebody.

Then he spoke. "I just want to find out. I just want to find out for myself."

"I don't come cheap."

"How much"?

"6 bucks an hour."

"That doesn't seem like much money."

"Does to me. You got a photo of your wife?"

He dug into his wallet, come up with one, handed it to me.

I looked at it.

"Oh my! Does she really look like this?"

"Yes."

"I'm getting a hard-on just looking at this."

"Hey, don't be a wise guy!"

"Oh, sorry... But I'll have to keep the photo. I'll return it when I'm finished."

I put it in my wallet.

“Is she still living with you?”

“Yes.”

“And you go to work?”

“Yes.”

“And then, sometimes, she...”

“Yes.”

“And what makes you think she...”

“Tips, phone calls, voices in my head, her changed behavior, any number of things.”

I pushed a notepad toward him.

“Put down your address, home and business, phone, home and business. I’ll take it from here. I’ll nail her ass to the wall. I’ll uncover the whole thing.”

“What?”

“I am accepting this case, Mr. Bass. Upon its fruition you will be informed.”

“‘Fruition’?” he asked. “Listen, are you alright?”

“I’m straight. How about you?”

“Oh yeah, I’m alright.”

“Then don’t worry, I’m your man, I’ll nail her ass!”

Bass rose slowly from his chair. He moved toward the door, then turned.

“Barton recommended you.”

“There you go then! Good afternoon, Mr. Bass.”

The door closed and he was gone. Good old Barton.

I took her photo out of my wallet and sat there looking at it.

You bitch, I thought, you bitch.

I got up and locked the door, then took the phone off the hook. I sat behind my desk looking at the photo.

You bitch, I thought, I’ll nail your ass! Against the wall! No mercy for you! I’ll catch you in the act! I’ll catch you at it! You whore, you bitch, you whore!

















