



# Pulp

*Charles Bukowski*

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# Pulp

*Charles Bukowski*

## 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)

ISBN : 9780876859261

Author : Charles Bukowski

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Literature, American

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## From Reader Review Pulp for online ebook

**Marzieh Torabi says**

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## **Narges Aliyari says**

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## David Schaafsma says

Pulp is Charles Bukowski's last book. So you get curious about that, a dying man's last words. Is it the foxhole confession at last for a life-long unapologetic vulgarian? Nah. True to his stolid commitment to self-deprecation, satire of pretentiousness and constant drunkenness, Bukowski, knowing he has little time left, pens his first non-Henry Chinaski fiction, and dedicates it to "bad writing." His target here is noir fiction, ala Mickey Spillane, with Bukowski's version named Nicky Belane. It's a wild often hilarious mishmash of satire of pseudo-existentialist crime fiction--"We are all born to die. We are all born to live"--where Bellane searches for a Red Sparrow (as in Maltese Falcon) and avoids Lady Death. The idea, as it is so many detective stories, is that the detective is searching for clues to a mystery as he searches for the mystery of his own existence.

This mystery idea always has had some interesting thematic potential. It actually describes some of the work of Nobel Prize winning writer Patric Modiano (i.e., Missing Person), who uses this theme with serious intent, and successfully. Bukowski, isn't disinterested in the relationship between his work as a writer and his

mortality, but he mostly plays the theme for laughs here through detective Belane.

“It wasn’t my day. My week. My month. My year. My life. God damn it.”

“I’m not dead yet, just in a state of rapid decay, who isn’t?”

“I gave him my code name. 'This is Mr. Slow Death.'”

There are literary tributes to his favorite writers, Celine and Fante, and plenty of booze and broads and bad jokes, natch. And space aliens instead of angels.

This should not be the first or only Bukowski you read, and it is not his best work, but my basic three star rating of this book adds a star because of the laugh-out load humor he faces death with. I like and admire that.

There's a bunch of good reviews, but I like this one a lot, from Arthur. I was going to just cut and paste some of what he quotes from the book, but wth, here's the review:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

**FeReSHte says**

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**Foad says**

## Ahmad Sharabiani says

## Pulp (novel), Charles Bukowski

Pulp is the last completed novel by Los Angeles poet and writer Charles Bukowski. It was published in 1994, shortly before Bukowski's death.

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### **Maryam Shahriari says**

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### **Gypsy says**

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### Soheil says

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### Giss Golabetoon says

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### Arthur Graham says

For newcomers to the world of Charles Bukowski, be forewarned: *Pulp* is probably not the best place to start.

I say this, not because it doesn't rank right up there with his other books, or because greener readers will fail to grasp the allusions to earlier work it contains, but rather because as his ultimate novel (completed months before his death) *Pulp* can easily be seen as Bukowski's final farewell. In it, the aged author takes his readers on one last foray into familiar territories of sex, madness, and death, while at the same time expanding on those themes in brilliant and often unexpected ways. Drawing on science fiction and hardboiled noir elements as well, the end result is a bizarre send-up of genre fiction that is just as hilarious and insightful as anything else he wrote.

In any case, "farewell" hardly seems the proper way to begin one's relationship with a writer who spent the better part of five decades compiling such an impressive body of work. Should readers feel obligated to start with Bukowski's vast catalogue of poems, novels, and short stories if they expect to enjoy *Pulp*? Certainly not. But since they'd be missing out on some of the best American literature ever written in bypassing these altogether, astute readers would do well to check out a few of his other books as well.

But this is supposed to be a review of *Pulp*, now isn't it?

The plot follows the convoluted capers of one Nick Belane, a down on his luck private eye who somehow manages to stumble upon the case of the century. Well, more like a handful of cases – each of them equally obtuse, and none of them leading anywhere but ever deeper into a darkly comic existential nightmare. Initially retained by Lady Death (a literal femme fatale) to track down the presumably long-dead French novelist, Céline, the plot thickens as Belane is also hired by a husband who suspects his wife of cheating, a mortician in search of a body-snatching space alien, and yet another client who asks him to find someone or something known only as the "Red Sparrow."

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:

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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!

I began breathing heavily. I unzipped. Then the earthquake hit. I dropped the photo and ducked under the desk. It was a good one. Around a 6. Felt like it lasted a couple of minutes. Then it stopped. I crawled out from under the desk, still unzipped. I found the photo again, put it back in my wallet, zipped up. Sex was a trap, a snare. It was for animals. I had too much sense for that kind of crap. I put the phone back on the hook, opened the door, stepped out, locked it and walked down to the elevator. I had work to do. I was the best dick in L.A. and Hollywood. I hit the button and waited for the fucking elevator to come on up.

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A bit juvenile for the writing of a 73-year-old man? Perhaps. But what Bukowski is up to in this book is not very different from what he's been up to in all the rest – painting an unapologetic portrait of people as they are (often at their worst), their absurd and futile lives rendered in full view with frank realism and, usually, great humor. Bukowski laughs at the ineffectual, masturbating detective because he really does deserve to be laughed at. And yet Belane is allowed to continue with some semblance of decency, because if there's one thing we could all use more of, it's probably that.

*Pulp* is a book that will make fans of sci-fi and detective genre writing wonder what might have been, had Bukowski decided to produce more in those veins (satirical or otherwise). Still, as evidenced by two previously uncollected stories in the recent *Portions from a Wine-Stained Notebook* – “The Other” and “The Way it Happened” – Bukowski was never quite so two-dimensional in style and subject matter as his critics would have us believe. *Pulp* is not exactly his first trip into the realm of private eyes and the paranormal, so it should come as no surprise how readily these seemingly foreign elements are assimilated into his more standard tale of bars, broads, and brawls.

Bukowski's earliest novels, *Post Office* and *Factotum*, did much to solidify his reputation as a writer of the streets, his own life closely reflecting that of his tenderhearted tough guy alter ego, Henry Chinaski. Later efforts like *Women* and *Ham on Rye* continued this literary development, while at the same time nurturing an increasingly effective autobiographical honesty. With *Pulp*, we are given the impression that Bukowski could've continued writing forever about anything, had Lady Death not finally saw fit to extricate him and his typer from this world for good.

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### **Steven Godin says**

*Pulp* is the only one of Charles Bukowski's novels that's not written from the perspective of Bukowski's alter ego, Henry Chinaski. After all the agonized and hilarious autobiographical accounts of pain, frustration, poor health and madness of his earlier novels, the great man had at last come to a subject too enormous and painful to deal with directly. This was Bukowski's last novel, published in 1994, the same year he died of leukemia at the age of 73. As he was writing this book, he knew his days were numbered, which saddens me, as would loved to have seen him go out in blaze of filthy glory with something similar to 'Women' or 'Factotum'. Just with a vulgar and laugh-out-nature that goes into overdrive, one final swansong that says 'fuck you'. After all this was what he will always be remembered for. Not for trying to be Chandler.

Bukowski's final novel is written as an allegory. It's a parody of the hard-boiled detective genre, with Bukowski's hero/narrator named “Nicky Belane.” Belane spends most of the book looking for a mysterious “Red Sparrow,” a thinly-veiled reference to Dashiell Hammett's *Maltese Falcon*, but also a shout-out to his publisher, Black Sparrow Press, which saved him from his hated job at the Post Office and first financed his writing full-time. Belane's first client, Lady Death, hires him to find the long-deceased novelist Celine, one

of Bukowski's role models as a writer.

Although many moments in Pulp are pretty damn funny, the fact there is no Hank just left me feeling a bit empty. The characters we encounter could have been taken from any of the old classic detective novels, so there is nothing really new here. Belane's innermost thoughts, recurring throughout the novel, are focused on Bukowski's feelings about his own imminent death, and his struggle to make sense of the inevitable, this was hard going for me, and I admit to shedding a tear, feeling sad about Bukowski distracted me from the plot.

But fear not!, Second reading things clicked better, and I just went with it, that's what Charlie would have wanted.(reading partly in a bar helped!).

Bukowski is probably up there now, drunk, in a slumber, and urinating over the world below, hope the lord can forgive him, if not, bollocks then!

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### **kian says**

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### **Amira Mahmoud says**

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### **Ahmed Ibrahim says**

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## **Mohammad says**

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**Jacob says**

I used to have a poster of this hanging in my hallway. It was a color reproduction of the cover. A girlfriend bought it for me. This was years ago. I was much younger and more serious. I would go for long walks in the town I lived in. I would try to write books. I would read Bukowski and I would order books on the internet and wander around and try to write books and look at my Charles Bukowski poster and sit at my typewriter and go to work and ride my bike and not really get anything done.