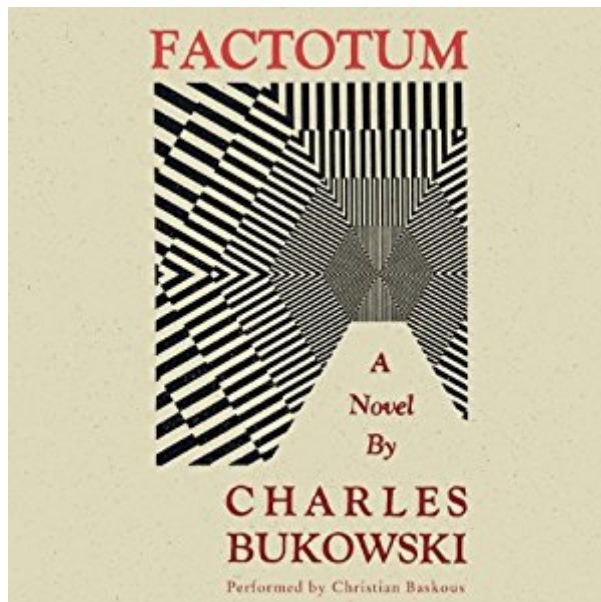


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Factotum



Synopsis

One of Charles Bukowski's best, this beer-soaked, deliciously degenerate novel follows the wanderings of aspiring writer Henry Chinaski across World War II-era America. Deferred from military service, Chinaski travels from city to city, moving listlessly from one odd job to another, always needing money but never badly enough to keep a job. His day-to-day existence spirals into an endless litany of pathetic whores, sordid rooms, dreary embraces, and drunken brawls, as he makes his bitter, brilliant way from one drink to the next. Charles Bukowski's posthumous legend continues to grow. *Factotum* is a masterfully vivid evocation of slow-paced, low-life urbanity and alcoholism, and an excellent introduction to the fictional world of Charles Bukowski.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bukowski is one of my all-time favorites. I read the Chinaski stories in chronological order, which is (I think) more rewarding than reading them in the order in which they were actually written. *Factotum* is the second in the series, and probably one of the weaker ones. That's just a testament to how great the others are, because this book is still fantastic. *Factotum* tends to get overlooked in the saga because it doesn't necessarily advance Chinaski's story very much, but it is still a great read packed with outlandish moments. If you're going to read *Ham on Rye*, *Post Office*, *Women*, etc. don't overlook *Factotum*. It's an interesting, if not altogether necessary, addition to the story.

Bukowski. You either can go there or you can't. It is by no means "high-brow" but it is not unlike the

down-and-out former industrial cities dotting the East Coast rivers - they seem dirty, unsafe, scary and then you turn a corner and see beauty you never imagined there. Somehow, that path gives greater impact to those beautiful moments. I love his unflinching embrace of his own flaws and the moments we would all run from where he finds solace and moments of peace. Great stuff.

Extolled author Charles Bukowski wrote 'Factotum' in 1975, but with all the references to World War II in it, the tale seems to be about an earlier time, just after the war (though this is more my opinion than fact). Henry "Hank" Chinaski is an alcoholic. One step above skid row (and at times even closer than that) Hank's main concern in life is maintaining a job long enough to feed his addiction. However, because of his addiction and his impulsive tendencies, Hank is never able to keep employment for any length of time. Bukowski takes us with thought and feeling through Hank's life, wandering from job to job and woman to woman. New Orleans, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Miami; wherever he goes, his addiction never allows any type of fresh start. He walks off one job clearly stating he needed a drink, highlighting his careless outlook about employment in general. 'Factotum' takes us step by step through a portion of Hank's life, most of it looking for work, and portraying his dysfunction at work and tapping into his inner reflections about the job and how much he can put up with before folding and getting that next drink. Life slips by Hank as he contemplates his situations. His is an hour-by-hour existence, without much thought to either past or future. His closest female companion of the line-up he wades through with offhand affection is Jan, a woman with a hot temper and a lusty personality. But Hank eventually loses everything he touches, and accepts it with an unrealistic serenity not usually found in human nature. This isn't to say that Hank isn't at times violent, but his attitude about it lacks any firm conviction of it. Bukowski has written an intensely emotional novel in a quietly reflective tone. His prose is almost poetry. Who else could capture the reader so powerfully over the subject of a born loser and a personality normally avoided? The book grabbed me from the beginning and kept me reading until I was finished. They made a movie of the book in 2005, called 'Factotum' after the book, that was very good. The movie reconstructs the order of Hank's life events, and updates the time from '75 to a more modern era. Some interesting quotes from the book are "Slow-paced, low-life urbanity and alcoholism" from the back flap, and "When you drank the world was still out there, but for the moment it didn't have you by the throat" from the content. I loved this excerpt from page 188; "I bought an eight year old automobile and stayed on the job until December. Then came the Christmas party. That was December 24th. There were to be drinks, food, music, and dancing. I didn't like parties. I didn't know how to dance and people frightened me, especially people at parties.

They attempted to be sexy and gay and witty and although they hoped they were good at it, they weren't. They were bad at it. Their trying so hard only made it worse."I highly recommend both book and movie. Enjoy!

Don't expect any timeless wisdom in this one, yet you might be surprised about what you do find. Main character Chianski is a young rebel and introvert(perhaps early 20's) as the story begins. We follow him through a journey in which he remains on the same destructive path time and time again. He doesn't give a damn about anyone, including himself. Only a searching reader could assert that he offers much if any introspection on his path through minimum wage, alcoholic, urban America. We must then try to see what we can gain from his tale. Chianski is deeply bitten by the bug of nihilism and thus only aspires to be a sometimes clever man in a world of American misfits. Tale after tale brings us no new insight nor growth that we might expect of a reasonable man. Chianski will, however, give us some worthy perspectives to chew on as an anti-authority detached observer of systems. Ultimately, the tone is powerful and distinct, giving us a strong modern novel that will leave it's own mark.

there is only one Charles a star totally unique tells his story however entertaining for the reader the life sounded horrible congrats to him for rising above it, even though it was of his own making

If you're looking for a novel with a linear story, A to B plot, and a fulfilling resolution, look elsewhere. Bukowski flourishes in his decadent and depraved journey, wandering between jobs and drinking himself into oblivion. His alter ego, Henry Chinaski, seeks to satisfy his primal urges with women and drinking, while putting as little effort into empty part-time jobs he picks up. This isn't a story of love or overcoming difficulty, and the protagonist doesn't end up in any different circumstance than the one he began in. His visceral writing and unforgiving description of his debauchery, ranging from getting crabs to sleeping with multiple women on a boat, is actually very vulnerable and shows that Bukowski has no fear of self-deprecation.

Bukowski was an amazing writer . Please read his books!

It's Bukowski at his finest. He writes things that many think but don't have the clarity or courage to speak let alone write.

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