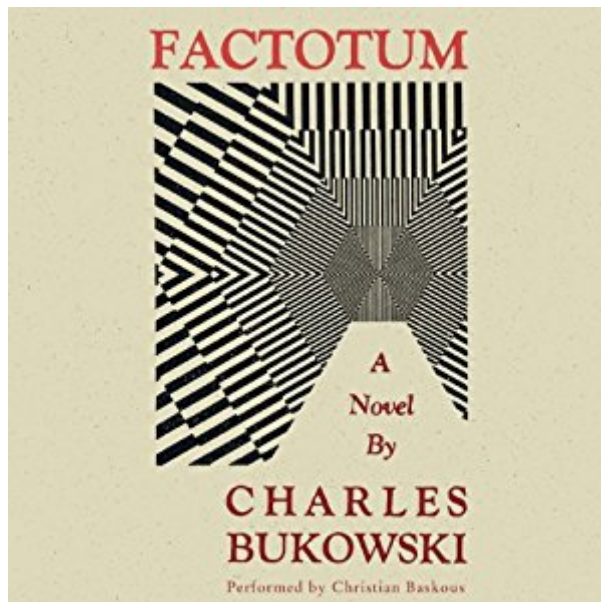


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Factotum



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

Audible Audio Edition

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#9640 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature

Customer Reviews

This is the third book of Bukowski's that i have read (the first two were "Post Office" and "Hollywood") and thus far it is my favorite. This book is composed of a series of short passages, 87 total. This book is mostly about Henry Chinaski (meaning, for the most part, Charles Bukowski) drinking, having sex with women who drink, and moving from job to job. I dont know how many jobs Chinaski has in this book, but he often holds them only long enough for a single one-page section. If there is any unity in terms of story and plot in this book, it is found in the women, such as Jan and Laura, who manage to stay in Chinaski's life for a few jobs; the women serve to string together the sections. More significant than any plot are the various interwoven themes that Bukowski deals with, such as futility, solitary existence, and death (all themes that might lead us to link Bukowski with

existentialist philosophy). These ideas (among others) are all related, and also related to the ways in which they are expressed, namely, through alcohol, cheap sex, disgust towards humanity, and peacefulness in the strangest situations-- and of course, Henry Chinaski's inability to hold a job or even have any desire to do so. On one hand, this book is a quick and light read; on the other hand, a close read that keeps in mind the interplay between the different themes involved truly exposes the genius of Bukowski. Overall, this is a book that for the most part ends where it begins (it begins with Chinaki arriving in New Orleans and "looking for the poor section" and ends in a go-go bar, with Chinaski holding his last 38 cents), but this circularity, i find, is intimate to the theme of futility: why go anywhere? why do anything?

World War II, America and Henry Chinaski. This is Factotum. Charles Bukowski brings his alter ego, Henry Chinaski, back to life in this phenomenal work and with it, he puts himself and society on trial. A lot, perhaps too much, has been said about Bukowski and his work. While I truly enjoy his short stories the most, Factotum, along with post Office, are among my favorite books written by American authors. Bukowski's writing is simple and straight-to-the-point, and Factotum is no exception. Filled with short, sometimes paragraph-like chapters, the writing flows smoothly, gently sneaking under your skin, and before you know it you start to care and you start to see the world through Chinaski's eyes. A world, which, for the most part, has not improved over the past sixty years. Perhaps his truths are universal. One thing hit me in particular: Chinaski goes to the American Cancer Society, only to be given an appointment three weeks later. He mentions that all his life he has been told to catch cancer early, but when it comes to it, he is told to wait three weeks. Last year I went through pretty much the same thing, only to have to wait for an appointment for over four months. Fortunately, it was not cancer, but if it was...what is the point. Anyway, back to Factotum. Chinaski, being a "4-F" as he states, was exempt from the draft which left him behind, free to look for a job and settle down. Only the restless soul is incapable of settling down. A struggling writer, (writing several short stories by hand each week, which shows great inspiration and capability) he does not have much else to live for. Submerged in booze, smoking, and having sex, he kills time between odd jobs, while waiting to be discovered. However, this is not the point of the story.

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Factotum

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