



# Pitch Dark

*Renata Adler*

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## **Pitch Dark** Renata Adler

"*Pitch Dark* is the story of the end of a love affair—a story that, in Renata Adler's brilliant telling, becomes a richly diffracted, illuminating, investigation of an exceptional woman. After a nine-year affair with Jake, a married man, Kate Ennis decides to escape. She takes off, looking for something beautiful and quiet by the sea, but finds herself in a pitch dark and driving rain on a lonely Irish road. It is only months later that she learns that she may have committed a crime, but by then she is home, once more negotiating with Jake for time, for attention, and for love."

## **Pitch Dark Details**

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Author : Renata Adler

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## From Reader Review Pitch Dark for online ebook

### Ronald Morton says

You can rely too much, my love, on the unspoken things. And the wry smile. I have that smile myself and I've learned the silence, too, over the years. Along with your expressions, like No notion and Of necessity. What happens, though, when it is all unsaid, is that you wake up one morning, no, it's more like late one afternoon, and it's not just unsaid, it's gone. That's all. Just gone.

A fascinating book told in a fragmented start-stop-startover-shift-tellsomethingesle style (at least through the first third), with hints that the Kate of the narrative might be or overlap with the author, yet, at its heart, is about the end of a relationship (or an ended relationship); or, as Greene would put it, the end of the affair.

Broken into three sections, the first and the third are similar in style, being fragmentary in form, and looping back into each other, they build on similar motifs, continue prior conversations, and the third part resolves many open questions and connects many loose ends of the first. The middle part is also fragmentary, but is mostly self-contained, and tends to only loop in on itself; even being fragmentary it is considerably more straightforward than the first section (the third section is, as noted, not exactly straightforward, but it does resolve quite a bit, and as such is in its own way clarifying). The second part is considerably different in tone than the rest of the novel, being much darker; more paranoid - it also contains the biggest mystery of the novel. This, also, is resolved in the third part.

There is also a brief, sad, vignette with a raccoon. It had direct parallels with the Szabò book I just read and greatly enjoyed, which I note mostly for me, as to say more would give too much of that book away.

A conversation with my wife, when I was about 50 pages into the book:

[she walks into the room] "what are you reading?"

[i tell her]

"what's it about?"

"i'm not really sure yet"

"is it good?"

"oh yes"

Okay, that might have only happened in my head. But this is good. Oh yes, it is good.

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### Vincent Scarpa says

“What happens, though, when it is all unsaid, is that you wake up one morning, no, it's more like one afternoon, and it's not just unsaid, it's gone. That's all. Just gone. I remember this word, that look, that small inflection, after all this time. I used to hold them, trust them, read them like a rune. Like a sign that there was a house, a billet, a civilization where we were. I look back and I think I was just there all alone. Collecting wisps and signs. Like a spinster who did know a young man once and who imagines ever since that she lost a

fiancé in the war. Or an old fellow who, having spent months long ago in uniform at some dreary outpost nowhere near any country where there was a front, remembers buddies he never had, dying beside him in battles he was never in.”

I mean, Jesus fuck. One of the best books about longing and the kind of things it can cause you to do, think, be.

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## **Cathie says**

*Was there something I did, you think, or might have done, I ask you that, some thing I did not do, and might have done, that would have kept you with me yet a while?*

In the Afterword, Sparks notes “It seems excessive for a very bright woman still to be in love with Jake.”

This is more than having an affair with a married man. Displaying bits and pieces of excessive paranoia as Kate attempts to separate from her married lover, you begin to see her falling apart, questioning time and again...should I stay or should I go, and will settling be enough.

*How could I know that every time you had a chance to choose you would chose the other thing?*

Told in the style of fragmentary monologue – discontinuous first-person narrative, all three sections seem to circle around one another – you can pick a section of the novel and not feel totally at loss.

If this is the author’s vision of life, it makes perfect sense.

*You are, you know, you were the nearest thing to a real story to happen in my life.*

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## **Ben Winch says**

I read this before *Speedboat* for no particular reason – because it was close at hand – and despite some confusion re its jagged/jump-cut structure I liked it a lot. This is one slick, hard-boiled construction, hand-buffed to perfection but retaining all the risk-taking verve of a first draft, able to lurch wildly across the width and breadth of Adler’s concerns without seeming random, the type of book that makes you question your own comprehension before you question its sense. In between, when grief and paranoia subside, there’s time for this:

Here’s what I think is wrong with boring people to no purpose. It’s not just that it corrupts their attention, makes them less capable, in other words, of being patient with important things that require a tolerance, to some greater purpose, of some boring time. The real danger lies, I think, in this: that boredom has intimately to do with power. One has only to think of hypnosis, of being mesmerized. Monotony, as a literal method of enthrallment. So this claim to find art in boredom, for its own sake or as one of the modes of alienation, is not simply a harmless misunderstanding, which finds it avant garde to stupefy. Deliberate, pointless boredom is a kind of menace, and a disturbing exercise of power. Of course, that is not always our problem here.

That last sentence – “... our problem here” – that’s vintage Adler. I mean, whose problem? And “always”? At one point she mentions a diary she kept in her youth, but which when she’d look at it days later would make absolutely no sense to her; *Pitch Dark*, surely, is a nod to that diary, or contains such nods. But the quality of the prose – every comma considered – and the clarity of her thought ensure it does much more than baffle. Baffle, yes, but thrill, exhilarate, even enlighten.

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## Vipassana says

This is not a book about the end of an affair. It is about a brilliant woman, Kate Ennis, and an affair that she has. We know very little about the man in the affair, Jake, which reinforces my notion that this is not a book about the affair. Even after it ends, Kate seems to still have this affair, she seems to possess it. It seems like she has it in a jar and watches. And is she in the jar? Is she out of it?

*When the clouds shift, for one moment, or for several moments, and there is a possibility for action with absolutely no ingredient of reluctance – any action, shopping, playing tennis, getting out of bed – when there is a sense of the capacity to act, without any equal and dialectical incapacity to act, or desire not to, when the urge to move is, for a moment, some moments, freed of the urge to move another way, or not to move at all, or the drag of a rock, a doubt, a paralysis; then it is as though clouds did part, briefly, in a place where the climate is always and always inimical.*

The mystery in this novella is not about what happened, it is about why it is happening. From the very beginning it is clear that Kate is brilliant, that she can see through the fog that she appears to be lost in, but she doesn't. That she could potentially act, in her best interests, but she doesn't. Is love a prisoner's dilemma?

*That is, the degree to which the creature is able to act, or to permit itself to be seen, reflects such a surface play of the energy, which, in its perfect conflict, has brought to the paralysis an almost convulsive force, that the energy appears active, liberated, even cheerful. Analysis has no access to this condition. It poses very radically, however, the question of what it is to be sincere.*

When I was younger, I didn't quite understand how one could trick one's self. Now I do. It's a question of how may I be wrong. It's this imagination that the opportunities for happiness, satisfaction, love and joy are a zero sum game. If that were the case couldn't it be said of sorrow, pain, suffering and misery? Surely, but to maintain a sense of proportion is hard.

If it was *the nearest thing to a real story to happen in her life*, doesn't it make sense to stay till the end of the tale? And how do you make out where the tale ends when you are the story. In the mind, life doesn't flow linearly. Where would the end of such a story be? The structure of the book suggest that there may be no end, one just has to stop reading.

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## Matthew Wilder says

Renata Adler's mania for the law, and for the hyper specific language and intolerance for blurry thinking implicit in legal training, crashes into this sequel to Adler's earlier, funnier, Resnais-like SPEEDBOAT. Here, fragments of an unhappy affair with an unavailable married man flicker between Adler's usual hyperclose, uptight, insanelly pedantic descriptions of ordinary events--the "bravura set piece" of which is a long, creepy night driving around winding roads in Ireland that builds to a predictable non-climax. Adler's punctilio is on point. But readers looking for fun would do better with the earlier SPEEDBOAT--and NOT her essays.

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## Sean says

Well, this was a pleasant surprise after I failed to connect with Speedboat a few years back. Here, Adler's narrator Kate, a journalist, is in the final throes of a long affair with a married man. The affair is only the bare framework of the novel, though, as Kate is prone to digressions in the telling. Needing some space to think and reflect, she travels to Ireland where paranoia takes hold, lacing her time there with a vague menace that may or may not truly exist outside her mind. Adler writes as if her narrator is having a private conversation with herself and the reader is just listening in. In the hands of less-skilled writers this could quite easily go awry, but it works well here. The novel forces one to pay attention to every word, and pays rewards for the effort, which is more than can be said for much of contemporary published fiction.

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## Abby says

*"How could I know that every time you had a chance to choose you would choose the other thing?"*

This is a book about heartbreak. But it isn't a conventional novel about the end of a years-long affair between a journalist and a married man. Like "Speedboat," Renata Adler's brilliant first novel, it is a story told in fragments, an accumulation of thoughts, incidents, conversations and, most notably, a long (for Adler) nightmarish section describing a pitch dark night in rural Ireland, where Kate Ennis has fled to find the quiet that eludes her and where anxiety bordering on paranoia dogs her.

*"I wonder whether he will ever ask himself, say to himself, Well, she wasn't asking all the earth, why did I let her go?"*

"Pitch Dark" is a more personal book than "Speedboat," more emotionally raw. Neither narrative is linear; both jump around in time. But "Pitch Dark" is more circular, often coming back to the same snippets of memory or thought, building emotional impact through repetition and beautifully precise language. (Oh, those commas!).

*"Did I throw the most important thing perhaps, by accident, away?"*

*"You are, you know, you were the nearest thing to a real story to happen in my life."*

Adler's sentences have burrowed into my brain. I can open "Speedboat" or "Pitch Dark" to any page and

wallow happily in her wit and intellect and her perceptions of how we live. Simply extraordinary.

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### **Daniel Polansky says**

Oooo. Ooo! Wow! What fabulous, fabulous prose. Adler is a tremendously skilled stylist, I can't even say how much I enjoyed this. About a woman in early-middle (?) age reminiscing on a long time affair, and on a misadventure in Ireland, and about many, many other events that have happened to her. It is written in this peculiar, discursive style, with the first and third sections in particular consisting of memories and observations which have no real narrative link, but maintain a certain continuous theme of confusion, error, passion, nostalgia and occasionally a bit of hope. Adler is working without a net here, and to pull off this sort of novel requires the most enormous gifts – no slacking, like you get to do with a plot. Each paragraph and sentence has to be clever on its own merits, indeed, has to be more than usually clever because the reader is always secretly a little annoyed when they have to reset their thinking and grasp some new character, story, or idea. But succeed Adler does, and with high marks. I roared through it in about five hours interspersed with walking, laughing loudly at a coffee shop, on a park bench, and in a quiet bar. I'll be picking up something else by Ms. Adler shortly, and strongly recommend you check this one out.

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### **Jessica says**

*What happens, though, when it is all unsaid, is that you wake up one morning, no, it's more like late afternoon, and it's not just unsaid, it's gone. That's all. Just gone. I remember this word, that look, that small inflection, after all this time. I used to hold them, trust them, read them like a rune. Like a sign that there was a house, a billet, a civilization where we were. I look back and I think I was just there all alone.*

I read that when Renata Adler wrote *Speedboat*, she deliberately omitted important pieces of each story (like, for instance, the ending). This second novel is the same way. That's one of the things that makes Adler's writing so life-like: it's a scramble, a limited point of view, that you swim through collecting snippets and stories, turning your head, squinting at them as they happen or are remembered. Most things are not spoken or told. Although we may look for meaning, rarely, sometimes just with peripheral vision, do we see it. Turn your head and it's gone. Most of the time all you can do is observe these stories and appreciate them for what they are.

*Pitch Dark* has a plot but it's not the point. It's about the main character Kate Ennis and her married lover, but in some ways *he's* beside the point too. (Muriel Spark's great afterword observed that it seemed "excessive for a very bright woman" to remain in love with the "inconsiderate and selfish" Jake). The book is the inside and outside of Kate, observant and scrambled and self-conscious and struggling Kate. It might be the best description of loneliness and longing I've ever encountered. The best story about a raccoon I've ever encountered too.

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## Holly says

Stream of consciousness and thus non-linear w/o a concise plot. Brilliant but lonely woman attempts to escape her 9-yr affair w/ a married man by taking a trip to Ireland; a bizarre set of circumstances involving her rental car provide the backbone of the story, but the central theme is that of seeking to understand the realities of love and life - when did she take a path, and where did it lead her?

Adler nails this writing style - I found myself keeping notes of thoughts that recurred w/in the text, followed by the page number where the story explains said thought, and overall the fragmentation rang true. I don't believe a complete differentiation, for example, between when she was writing her book and when she was talking to Jake and when she was thinking about her past, is necessary to understand Kate - humans are more complex than the linear story of "then she did this, and then that." In fact, this style illuminates the inner workings of a character like no other perspective - and shows Kate to be obsessed about small details that would probably escape most "normal" characters. At least one critic has shown commonalities between Adler and character Kate, hinting at a dark purpose for writing a novel about a disappointing love affair. Others complain that the writing is too "self-conscious...repetitious" and that Kate (whose mind we're in, hello!) is a "neurotic egomaniac" - but isn't that an inevitable result of stream of consciousness writing if it's true to form? (Guess I have to read some classics in this writing style to see what they are complaining about!) A compelling, fragmented spiderweb of thoughtful writing.

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## James Murphy says

We're told by Muriel Spark, who provides an "Afterword" to this edition of *Pitch Dark*, that it's a love story. And it's a portrait of a woman, Kate Ennis, who's in love but on the run. The first two parts of the novel find her traveling to try and forget the relationship she's recently ended with a married lover of eight years. She's fled to Orcas Island in Puget Sound. Then she's in Ireland as guest at the castle of an acquaintance. And then she's back home as she works toward a decision. *Pitch Dark* reads like a meditation. It reads like the interior of Kate Ennis thinking about the complications of her life and relationship, complications piled on complications when she has an accident in Ireland and has to deal with the offhandedness of authority and the castle's servants. She's unsure of herself, she's lonely and stressed. She seems slightly paranoid, and she feels guilt.

What's interesting about all this is that it's not told in a straightforward manner. There's narrative but it's revealed only a bit at a time and in a jumbled sequence. The novel's brief sections set off by line breaks are strokes or snapshots taken of a woman's flight from a relationship. They're like flashes of lightning at night slowly revealing a landscape as a storm passes over. At last we can see detail and make sense of it.

Maybe it's at that time that we realize the writing is more interesting than Kate Ennis. Kate is a journalist, intelligent and insightful about her own past. Yet she lacks self-possession and the ability to approach her problems rationally. She can't be resolute about the present because she can't be sure she did the right thing in her love life. The trip through Ireland is a nightmare of indecision and letting herself be taken advantage of. Her story becomes painful. Adler has given us a challenging, well-written novel which, stretching the boundaries of narrative as it does, gives us an interesting way to look at a character. It's just that who we come to know at last might be someone who doesn't interest us very much.

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## **MJ Nicholls says**

I was zipping along with this novel for a while, appreciating the frenetic felicity of her style, then we lapsed into an extremely long ramble around rural Ireland, and my interest suddenly leapt off a cliff. This being the one novel I poached from Munich's tremendous English-language bookshop The Munich Readery (run by an American with a stock including Barth, Barthelme, Cortazar, et al), I am fairly peeved.

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## **Melanie says**

"Is it always the same story, then? Somebody loves and somebody doesn't, or loves less, or loves someone else. Or someone is a good soul and someone a villain. And there are just these episodes, anecdotes, places, pauses, hailings of cabs, overcomings of obstacles, or instances of being overcome by them, illnesses, accidents, recoveries, wars, desires, welcomings, rebuffs, baskings (rare, not so long), pinings (more frequent, perhaps, and longer), actions, failures to act, hesitations, proliferations, endings of the line, until there is death. Well, no. I have a wonderful, fond memory, about love and trust and *books*."

How could you not fall in love with a book like that?

The blue-est book that I have ever read. Blue in all its variations. The blue of melancholy and the blue(s) of jazz. The ominous blue of dusk and the luminous blue of dawn. The blue of veins which, through a stunning trick of light, hides the sensual, bloody red of life.

How else to tackle heartbreak but sideways? An evocation of grief through the depiction of places, homes, foreign lands, familiar vistas and nightmarish nights that never seem to end on the other side of the world. Landscapes and dislocation as the rugged geographies of the heart.

We all know these frail, elegant, intelligent, sensitive, quick-witted and impossibly neurotic women who simply cannot choose between the ardent life of love and the cold facts of reality. Renata Adler knows them well. And what a superb work of art this is.

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## **Ademption says**

When someone needs an ear rather than problem solving, I listen and don't give advice. Generally, people don't want advice. They want to ventilate their hearts, make their own choices, and have these choices affirmed. Friends and loved ones expect this. Renate Adler asks the reader for a novel-length session of this pose, listening to the narrator feel overwhelmed by tiny problems when she actually wants to spin her wheels about her married-man problem.

I was biased. I set out to like this one more than *Speedboat*, because *Pitch Dark* has a more cohesive narrative, and fuck, everyone is supposed to love Renate Adler right now like it's your job to reinforce everyone's New York literary credentials ("God, what's wrong with you that you do not love her? Do you just not get her ironic, articulate, harried aphorisms? Are you saying you're better than David Foster Wallace? Because he loved these novels! I guess you aren't literary enough"). Scene-ster guilt may keep me up at night.

A journalist flees her long-term affair with a married man, (view spoiler) and reflects on her rich-but-lonely life in page-long aphorisms. Then she returns home and processes her feelings.

Kate Ennis, the journalist of high society wealth and connections (naturally), muddles through her flight, ruminating on her smallest thoughts, floundering because she lacks what passes for common sense. Her distinct lack of common sense allows her to penetrate deeper into her own thought processes and paranoia, and to comment ironically on larger points concerning human interactions, and the underlying brutality, disappointment, and boredom of life. Her advantages and loneliness isolate her, and she is unable to flesh out her personal life in a fulfilling manner.

Adler adequately captures how grief and melancholy can colour daily life until small tasks seems difficult, and paradoxically how fleeing to another country is comparatively easier than the daily grind. The overly-analytical, lovelorn journalist stumbles in each small transaction, and casts about for answers while avoiding meaningful contact.

Kate struggles with tipping servants who dislike her, handling business propositions that crop up in small talk, dealing with cruel and conspiratorial bureaucrats, fretting about rental car insurance, leaving a country under an assumed name (in the early 1980s when no one cared about international transit enough to check passports at some crossings) and the incompetence of phone company billing. The novel focuses on the ceaseless flood of prosaic-but-paranoid problems as Kate tries to sort whether she can cope with continuing her affair or altering the arrangement.

Mostly, I spent my read muttering "Don't tip that housekeeper... She sucks and hates you anyway... Smile over your drink and edge away... Buy a plane ticket and head home.... Complain loudly to the phone company or pay your bill, even though they screwed up the billing. Needlessly seething about it won't come across as a principled protest...God Kate, get it together...I mean, there, there, Kate. Life is hard."

Pitch Dark is less quotable than its predecessor. Some of the best quotes are devastatingly sharp, but veer off at their ends into banality and keenly irrelevant points. The anecdote about the sick animal and the wildlife commissioner is the strongest piece in a collection of anxious rambles (In the 1983 ed, see pages 13-18). That anecdote would have been a powerful short story on its own.

Also, I sense some padding in the last 5 pages where Adler accurately explains the broad features of courts and jurisprudence in plain English. It stretches credulity that Kate the journalist makes an attempt at analogizing her foregoing ruminations to a mini-lesson on the purpose and method of jurisprudence. This portion reads as if Adler, who trained as a lawyer, needed to reach a certain word count and decided to rap about court to get there.

If you want to inhabit the mind of a well-heeled, waspy woman who can't decide where to convalesce in order to worry about her affair, but also can't escape the middle-class anxiety of manners and billing, read Pitch Dark. Or, better yet, go on with your life.

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## Brian says

In her interview with Alice Gregory in the June 2013 edition of *The Believer*, Renata Adler talks about how a critic once wrote about her work: "This person writes so badly that it sets your teeth on edge." Adler found this particular critique of her work to be fair and balanced - the writer gave specific examples of Adler's

writing in her piece. Those examples happened to be Adler's favorite parts, the best she felt she could achieve, so it was clear that it was a case of her work just not being this critic's particular cup of tea. But I'd like to take that sentence, rework it, and make it my own:

*This person writes so beautifully that it sets my teeth on edge.*

Adler's *Pitch Dark* is unique in its structure, profound in its meaning, heartbreaking in its telling. I can open this book at any place and begin reading to the end, start again at the beginning and finish where I randomly began - and the experience would be no different had I began at page one.

The book doesn't have linearity, it has a circumference.

This isn't what is meant by the title, but I'd like to make the meaning of "Pitch Dark" my own: I want to wander through this novel as in a darkened room, barking my shins on the prose and flailing madly to find boundaries. That's how this novel works on me. I need a different literary calculus to compute Adler's maths. I'll reach the end of a section, think that I've got it, discover I'm wrong. I have to work for it, but it doesn't feel like work.

There is a good chance that this novel won't be for you. And I respect that. But give it a chance, listen to Adler's music - because if it resonates, your day, your week will hum like a tuning fork singing your favorite note.

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## **Jonathan says**

A wonderful book, and I defer to the superior skills of the other GR reviewers who have reviewed this already, and so well.

I will, however, as is becoming something of a schtick, look at a short sentence of hers to demonstrate her craft.

Here are five versions of the same sentence:

1. *By accident, did I throw the most important thing away?*
2. *Did I, by accident, throw the most important thing away?*
3. *Did I throw, by accident, the most important thing away?*
4. *Did I throw the most important thing, by accident, away?*
5. *Did I throw the most important thing away by accident?*

Note how the emphasis differs for each, how the focus of the meaning is slightly different in each, and how the music alters. Some are more likely in everyday speech, some are more unusual.

Adler chose number 4. This is both the least usual of the formulations, one that almost trips over the "by accident", and the one that is the most interesting. The accident-ness bleeds over into the thing itself, blurs the nature of its importance and her feelings, has more power over us as we reach it...

That is what craft is as a writer, that is skill. Adler has it, and her work should be treasured.

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## Stephen P says

"We were running flat out. The opening was dazzling. The middle was dazzling. It was like a steeplechase composed entirely of hurdles.

But that would not be a steeplechase at all. It would be more like a steep, steep climb.

They were shouting, Tell it, big momma, tell it. I mean, the child is only six years old.

Do I need to stylize it, then, or can I tell it as it was?"

Seemingly, this opening of Pitch Dark is telling and foretelling about an adult love relationship. However, Adler tucks in the child of six years old. What are we to make of it? She even seems to ask permission if she can slip past her requirements as a writer; a reporter, novelist, as though the form and act of writing distances her from reality. Is it O.K. to tell it as it was?

Speed Boat, her previous novel, which Proustite so rightly suggests to read initially and in conjunction with Pitch Dark, utilizes her effective style of fragmentation and articulate concision to report on the hypocrisies and surface cloaked meaninglessness of her contemporaries, as well as glimpses of herself

Pitch Dark is a large moaning leap into the battleground of Renata Adler's interior strewn with blood of amputated limbs, hearts abandoned still pulsing, thoughts rushing through the crammed sentences of a frightened mortal mind. Using her fragmented and articulate style she now whispers brief compelling stories, produces repetitions, offers bits of confounding thought urging the reader on in the narrative and further on into her mind. She has eschewed writing for telling us as it was, placing us there with her as she battles her demons, discovers herself, as we are doing the same.

The style bears a taut tension for her and we the reader who no longer read but share a consciousness, a difficult consciousness straining beneath the weight of what is desired but also feared. A consciousness similar to all of ours but also imprinted in its on specialized cast.

The initial of three parts-Please read, Proustite's and Brian Dice's fine reviews of this book- the first person female narrator retells the history of her relationship with a married lover of a number of years, shifting us in time. She is alone but missing him, wanting him. What is love for her? Can she love? She sees that something that has been there over time may be there because it is dying, is dead. If it is dead it is not love. She spies on the huge questions now surfacing, dominating her life; the off-on again distance of her relationship with her lover has her ruminating on whether veering any closer despite her wishes and dreams might combust in a dissimulation of herself she may never recover from. Can she exist within a relationship outside all the self-delusions, and still be herself? Will she necessarily be absorbed and within that context no longer exist? Can she exist alone, a separate entity with her paralyzing conflicts and fears?

She is in Ireland, alone, driving a rental car of a circumspect nature trying to find Dublin (Home? Home of herself?) It is getting dark, Then darker, rain misting. She is lost. Has she passed the turnoff? If so she must go back. However if she has not and does go back there will be that much further to go. It is darker and few if any cars on the road. She waves down a large truck asking the driver for help. Suspicious of the look he gives her still she chooses to follow him as he offered. Driving behind him she believes she has done something wrong concerning the rental car and the authorities may be looking for her. The truck driver may well be leading her in the opposite direction of Dublin. What to do?

If on her own what she locates is piercing thorns of paranoia and helplessness. No one cares about her, or outright would like to do her harm. This is a dangerous and claustrophobic world she hurtles into as she enters the pitch dark of her wavered and wounded mind, relentless in finding means of supporting its own beliefs. In the pitch dark of herself and the world she has created she is truly frightened. She has a right to be frightened.

The final section, Home, has the reader rooting for her, if that is possible, if there is time. It is so simple to be lost in the the writing's beauty of precision, its burning and burnt passion, the profound and courageous intellect of the author. You will have to read the book to find out what happens to her, of what she may or may not make happen, what we may or may not make happen for ourselves. As in all 5 star works there is wisdom, then left with a yearning for more, a taste we do not want to relinquish. Adler has also given us a unique style honed to the sheerness of beauty, sentences to lavish in, thoughts to relish. I am so glad that I have read this book, its enjoyment and challenges and its mirror held up for all to see themselves, if they so wish. Also, the gratitude that Speedboat, Pitch Dark, was reprinted and made available. The world would be lesser without its contributions. This may mean that readers such as ourselves are being heard and if nothing else making it worth a publisher's effort to reprint great works which might otherwise slip into oblivion. A new club? Keeping Authors From Burial to complement the already so valuable GR's, Buried Authors?

PS: I just wanted to thank you. I love talking about the books that I read, and believe there is someone listening. There is no other place I can do this. Whether what I write is agreed with or other, it is the community of book-interested people, all ages, all countries, connected through literature, that is so important. Completing this review reminded me how grateful I am.

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## **Proustitute says**

Review published in *3:AM Magazine*: <http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/centur...>

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## **Aubrey says**

*But the nearest analogue, as a business, to the law lies not in business but in the military, as it prepares for war.*

*There was all the difference in the world between the beneficiaries of what they were on the boards of and anyone who actually depended on them.*

How many thought that she was going to be raped? Seriously, though. The narrator goes off by herself to a foreign country only to drive around in the middle of the night and interact with a lot of shifty men, and not once during the whole of it does she get raped. Her thought processes and justified paranoia focus on

possible abuses of her person, true, but they are for the most part judicially and/or economically based. Maybe her being a woman was not supposed to play as big a role in the narrative as that, but considering how this meditation on law and free will and the eternal bet has been served up as a "love story", why not go the whole nine yards objectification-wise?

*So there is this pressure now, on every sentence, not just to say what it has to say, but to justify its claim upon our time.*

I was listening to a group in one of my classes riddle on the ethicality of states taxing the lottery when one person attempted to indict the lottery entirely by talking about the encouragement of gambling addiction. A fair point, but if you want that argument to float here in the US, talk to me when you've taken on credit scores and the stock market. Those mainstays of livelihood are just two stigmas birthed by that "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality that today has evolved into that right person at the right place at the right time for that right interview for that right career for that right income for the right amount sufficient for not living on the streets. Today's politicians have the legal right to lie and none whatsoever for the guarantee to water, which shows our priorities when it comes to crime and punishment.

*But we do not normally mistake progressions of weakness, the loss of the simple capacity to escape, for the onset of love.*

It does not surprise me Adler has a degree in law, but it does surprise me that she writes so candidly about what that really means. See, it's all a matter of money, but no one's allowed to talk about it or allude to it or give those who enforce it anything less than a free pass to abuse these rights they so assiduously protect. What's left is a don't-poke-the-sleeping-bear awareness, or if you do make damn sure you have all the documents, all the legal fees, all the personal connections, and all the time in the world. Justice isn't a science, but considering the vaster quantity of lives and, much more value in the US these days, financial welfare at stake, you'd think it'd depend less on cash-fueled theatrics and jargon-dismembered story time.

*And yet if you have acquired a profound aversion for just such a place simply because of an obstacle that once was there, or an incapacity to discern that the obstacle no longer exists, or an indifference as to whether it exists or not, or if the habit of pointless jumping, or detour, or even turning back dejected has become for you the path itself, or if you have a superstitious need to treat the spot as though the obstacle remained, or even a belief that the discovery that the obstacle is gone is in itself a punishable offence, if any of these things is true for you, then you are lost.*

It's The Trial, except with more emphasis on be kind/helpful/amazing/resourceful to everyone, you never know who'll clear your way to Heaven but you're damn certain who's biblically equipped to reduce your life to a zero-sum of a single fuck up and send you straight to Hell.

*The courts may only consider concrete, instant cases that actually, concretely come before them—and even those cases can be brought only by those who have “standing” to bring them, in other words, by the actual participants, with the most vital and demonstrable interest in the case.*

*Ideally, in other words, in its historical dimension, such a problem appears to have existed forever; and in its contemporary manifestation to be inextricable from every other problem in the world. Ideally, too, there should have grown up, over time, a number of industries and professions nominally dedicated to the eradication of the problem but actually committed, consciously or unconsciously, but almost inevitably out of self-interest, to the perpetuation of*

*the problem, and any misconceptions of it, for all time.*

"...negotiating with Jake for time, for attention, and for love" my ass.

*Or not worry about it, after all, everybody has them. And cars are dangerous, germs are dangerous, writing is dangerous, and reviewing is dangerous, and editing is dangerous, and some of those doctors were. So I'm not a coward or a hypochondriac so much, with respect anyway to risks of certain others. I've taken on a bully or two, in my professional capacity, and on occasions of another sort risked my physical self. But this buying of a gun, this simple, in some ways quotidian purchase, is the most extreme, the worst, most extremest, I can't find the word for it, thing I've ever done.*

*In those days, she said, we still believed in publicity, that it matters. She laughed again. I said, What do you mean? What do you now think matters? And she said, Violence.*

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