



## Death of a Transvestite

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## **Death of a Transvestite** Ed Wood

"Hero/heroine Glen Marker sits on Death Row and offers to tell his life story in all its sordid detail in exchange for his last wish: to die in drag! In vivid pulp style, the author paints a portrait of the luscious Glenda on a one-way trip to the Big House."

## **Death of a Transvestite Details**

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Author : Ed Wood

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## From Reader Review Death of a Transvestite for online ebook

### brian says

i loooooooooooooove this book. love love love it. this pulped-out crazy piece-o-shit written by ed wood, goddammit, is just one of the best crime novels i've read. seriously. no bullshit irony. no smirk. no wink. and no, not good in the same way that his films are 'good'. good! not 'good!' as a stand alone crime novel this kicks serious tranny ass - a glorious shitshow of lunacy. read it, people, and re-evaluate ed wood. he wasn't a delusional madman; he was just a crummy filmmaker. and a pretty terrific crime novelist!

quick plot synopsis: hit man for 'the syndicate' glen marker sits in a jail cell three hours away from an appointment with ol' sparky... the warden, padre, and guards are all dying to hear his story. glen agrees, under one condition: they fry him and then bury him... in women's clothing. what the fuck? but they're curious. so they make the deal. lucky us. we get a terse, tough, and tender little crime novel which reads as a series of police reports: primary source is glen/glenda's recollection, with corroboration in the form of official lapd testimony from other characters or witnesses.

here's what we learn: when 'drag killer' glen/glenda quits his job as a hitman for the 'syndicate' and his skidrow life of nyc & denver poolhalls, whorehouses, and seedy bars for a new life in hollywood, the syndicates hires the only other 'drag killer' -- paul/pauline -- to head out and end glen/glenda's california dreamin'. we enter a sleazed-out world of los angeles in the mid 60s: freaks, stags, bull dykes, queers, trannies, whores, weirdos, drunks, and dope fiends. lots of characters populate these pages: rose 'red' groves, a whore-with-a-heart-of-gold who only wears red: red mohair sweater, red skirt, red heels, red undies, red bra... glen asks 'is your crotch red?' (the answer, glen discovers while lapping away, is 'yes') - we have femme fatale, high-priced whore, and wannabe h'wood star cynthia hargraves who bangs out old timer ronnie dixon for \$500 a week. we meet the bartender at the brown derby, a round of crooked cops, and rioting beatniks dropping lsd on the strip.

i kinda loathe when people heap praise on various artists for not condescending or exploiting freaks in their representation of 'em. for one, fuck all that politically correct boo-shit. if i wanna make fun of fags retard or - the rare and very beautiful hybrid - gaytards, ain't nobody gonna stop me, much less a retard like sarah fucking palin, thank you very much. secondly. most of the time it's way off mark. take werner herzog. now i love the guy. but that bastard catches some serious as shit undue praise for his treatment of the freaks, yeah? now i believe herzog genuinely digs the freaks, maybe even more than the 'normals', but please... anyone who says that herzog ain't treating 'em, on some level, like a circus sideshow is a fraud and a liar. yeah, we relate to 'em, we like them, but they're still freaks. and we're laughing at 'em. which is fine. but let's call it like it is, eh?

the difference b/t herzog and wood reminds me of that wonderfully insensitive joke that ended up in one of two chapters (chapter six: black. or chapter eight: homosexual.) of truly tasteless jokes depending on which edition you had:

- q. would you rather be black or gay?
- a. black. at least you don't have to tell your parents.

in this instance, herzog's the gay guy. he's walking around amongst a world of freaks but he can easily slip back into the 'real' world whenever he chooses -- part of wood's pathology, however, is that he can't: a necessary component of his transvestitism is showing it off in public. and herzog was and is a respected prestigious filmmaker who can shuttle between the two worlds of tiny offbeat documentaries and huge productions starring christian bale or nicholas cage; while wood was a ridiculous joke who, at the top of his game, scored a horror schlockmeister from another era to star in his godawful production. wood truly was a freak and loved the freaks and it shows in his work in a way it doesn't with other freaklovers. the freaks are inherently entertaining in that they're different and they scrape along the bottom and occasionally rise to the top (fuck the middle!), but we *care* about the whores and gaytards and trannies in wood's work regardless of who and what they stick in their mouths or asses.

furthermore - a guy like herzog exists in a world in which renegades, mavericks, & rogues are romanticized and emulated. herzog knows his antics are appreciated by the cult-of-herzog... wood, on the other hand, through the 40s, 50s, & 60s knew that transvestitism was NOT cool or glorified or romanticized. and this shows.

again - wood's book exists as a badass clusterfuck of a crime novel without my (jewishuppermiddleclasscaucasianmostlyliberalmostlyhetero) reading, but, ultimately, it is his treatment of the sexual deviants and dregs of society that elevate this book above being a simple pulp fiction. one can feel wood pleading his case in glen/glenda's desperate monologues, and one feels the author's twisted rage behind paul/pauline's extreme violence. and it hurts to read this stuff. but it's also wildly and deliciously evil entertainment. this is why we read!

and, that ending. powerful powerful stuff. when glenda's walking to the chair, with minutes left of life, shitscared and clutching her angora sweater, the warden asks why she went to such trouble to stay in women's clothing (women's clothing was not only her final wish, but it was also instrumental in her being caught), and she replies: *"But, Warden, you should be able to see now why it is so important to a transvestite not to leave the world in male attire. It's our religion, so to speak. Maybe we live a lie, but also perhaps in death we come to a truth."*

i'm sure some librul fags & retards gotta hate this book just like they stupidly and wrongly hate jean genet for showing gay people as killers and whores and deviants and all that junk, but, yo dude. that's dumb. and if you don't like this book, so are you.

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### **Mike McDougal says**

Much like Ed Wood's movies, this book can't really be characterized as 'good'. Also like Wood's movies, this book is exceptionally entertaining. Perhaps it's an odd dichotomy, but Ed Wood manages to create something that is simultaneously bad and pretty enjoyable!

The plot is one Mickey Spillane might have devised: one hit-man tries to leave a crime syndicate so a second hit-man is sent to kill the first hit-man. Odd...it's somehow an unwritten rule that crime syndicates have the worst retirement plan ever. Instead of a gold watch and a 401K, outgoing employees of crime syndicates get hunted down.

Beyond the main characters and the general plot, I was a little surprised by the amount of sex / sexual

references in the book. The references weren't really troubling, I'm not particularly prudish. It was just surprising to find so many sexual references in a book published in the 1960s.

In any case, the book will likely never merit much more than a short footnote in the history of 20th century American literature. But the story was amusing and worth the effort.

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### **Sally says**

This is the story of a cross-dressing killer for hire who is on the run from yet another cross-dressing killer for hire. Glen is actually a decent guy (if you ignore his job) who loves being with women as much as he loves being one. As Glenda, he is passable, attractive, and more than willing to play the role expected of him. The Killer, meanwhile, is one sadistic son-of-a-bitch who targets women, rapes them, kills them, and then takes their clothing. He definitely does not make an attractive woman, and his jealousy plays a large part in his decision to take the contract on Glen.

The story is told in a broken, disjointed manner, incorporating Glen's final prison confession, witness testimony, police reports, and assumptions or speculations on the part of the narrator. It's a format that works well, and does a lot to set the overall tone. It's interesting that Glen's confession shifts gender, depending on whether he's talking about Glen or Glenda, but never allows The Killer to be anything but masculine.

As you might expect from its pulp nature, and from the time in which it was written, this is a very politically incorrect read. Wood writes about GAYS, DRAGS, and (beat)NICKS – always in caps – and Glen thinks nothing of slugging a woman in the face for laughing at him. The police are racist, sexist, and homophobic, and the teenaged NICKS are rowdy little punks.

I picked this up as a novelty read, but I actually enjoyed it – not just as a curiosity, but as a hard-boiled crime novel . . . starring two men in drag.

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### **George K. says**

Τι να σχολι?σει κανε?ς γ'αντ? το βιβλ?ο; Μ?νο ?τι συγγραφ?ας ε?ναι ο Εντ Γουντ, ο γνωστ?ς σκηνοθ?της, σεναριογρ?φος, παραγωγ?ς και ηθοποι?ς, που ?χει γυρ?σει κ?ποιες απ? τις χειρ?τερες χαμηλο? μπ?τζετ ταιν?ες στο Χ?λιγουντ, νομ?ζω ?τι αρκε?. Plan 9 From Outer Space, Glen Or Glenda, Jail Bait, Bride Of The Monster, Night Of The Ghouls τα πιο γνωστ? του... αριστουργ?ματα.

Η ιστορ?α ?χει να κ?νει με τον πρ?ην εκτελεστ? της μαφ?ας και νυν προσωριν? ?νοικο εν?ς κελιο? στην πτ?ρυγα μελλοθαν?των, Γκλεν Μ?ρκερ, ο οπο?ος ?χει μια τελευτα?α επιθυμ?α πριν ψηθε? στην ηλεκτρικ? καρ?κλα και εν συνεχε?α στην κ?λαση: Να πεθ?νει με γυναικε?α ρο?χα. Και για να πε?σει τον διευθυντ? της φύλακ?ς, θα του πει την ενδιαφ?ρουσα ιστορ?α του, πως ?ρχισε να τρελα?νεται με τα γυνα?κα εσ?ρουχα και ρο?χα και να φ?ρεται σαν τραβεστ?, χωρ?ς ?μως να λ?ει ?χι στο σεξ με γυνα?κες, και πως μπ?κε στο στ?χαστρο της Μαφ?ας, που ?στειλε ?λλον ?ναν τραβεστ? εκτελεστ? στο κατ?πιν του...

Η πλ?κα ε?ναι ?τι η γενικ? παλπ ατμ?σφαιρα και κ?ποια πολ? μικρ? και λ?γα κομμ?τια μου ?ρεσαν, ?πως και οι διαφορετικ?ς οπτικ?ς αφ?γησης της ιστορ?ας, αλλ? η τρ?λα του Γκλεν (?)

Γκλ?ντα) για τα γυναικε?α ρο?χα και ?λο του το ερωτικ? παραλ?ρημα μ?καναν να απηνδ?σω κ?ποια στιγμ?, χ?ρια το απλο?κ? σεν?ριο και οι αστε?οι δι?λογοι. Γενικ? ε?χε πλ?κα, χωρ?ς ?μως να ?χει τ?τοιο σκοπ?, και δεν λ?ω, π?ρασα καλ?.

Πρ?κειται για ?να παλπ μυθιστ?ρημα με ?λη την σημασ?α της λ?ξης, απ? ?ναν συγγραφ?α που ε?χε και ο ?διος π?θος με τα γυναικε?α ρο?χα, χωρ?ς να ε?ναι ομοφυλ?φιλος. Πραγματικ? ενδιαφ?ρουσα περ?πτωση ανθρ?που και καλλιτ?χνη, σ?γουρα θα δω την ταιν?α του Τιμ Μπ?ρτον που εξιστορε? την ζω? του, αλλ? δεν ξ?ρω αν θ'αντ?ξω να δω τις ταιν?ες που ?χει γυρ?σει... (b-movies και παρωδ?ες, χωρ?ς να ?χει τ?τοιο σκοπ?, καταλ?βατε...).

?σοι θ?λετε ?να σ?ντομο, βρ?μικο παραλογοτεχνικ? μυθιστ?ρημα με αλλ?κοτη πλοκ?, τ?τε αυτ? πρ?κειται για ?να διαμαντ?κι στην κατηγορ?α του.

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### **Lil' Grogan says**

I expected worse and louder...actually, I was looking forward to it. Instead, found it mainly bland. The conceit didn't work. Dialogue was that pulp - cheesy, rhythmic and posturing, but ultimately average. The juxtaposition of Glen and Paul, the two drag killers, was interesting. Overall, I guess interesting for what it represents rather than what it actually is.

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### **Miss Poppy says**

Oh. My. God.

I loved, loved, LOVED this book. Ed Wood is an exquisitely bad author. At times I had to read and reread a sentence until it approximated something that made sense. He had a strangely wonderful grasp of the English language and it perfectly expressed the tawdriness of the plot.

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### **Andy says**

The follow-up to "Killer In Drag" will never be confused with fine literature but you would be hard-pressed to find a more demented novel in all your years.

A cross-dressing hit man is dispatched to kill another drag queen hit man, none other than Glen from "Glen Or Glenda?" fame. While they're busy pursuing each other, watch them jealously seethe with green-eyed fury at each other's sexy ensembles.

Add the Watts riots as a backdrop (1965) and a climactic shoot-out at a psychedelic Sunset Strip rock nightclub and you've got one of the most ridiculous time wasters ever written. This one you have to read!

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### **Sarospice says**

I wish HARD CASE CRIME would find all of Ed Wood Jr's noir and nudie paperbacks to reprint. Whatever you thought of him as a director, Ed is certainly a fan of this time and place of dames and hard thug types.

He just wants to be one of the dames! But not just... a very interesting reveal into the mind of the TRANSVESTITE is given in this and the previous Glen/Glenda book... should be a classic. Never leaves you bored which is what you want from a great paperback!

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## **Erik Ryman says**

Ed Wood Jr didn't write great books of literary excellence, he wrote pulp fiction.

He didn't even write good pulp fiction, in the main his were pretty dodgy, his characters were two dimensional, no cliché was passed-up and where the stories looked thrown together (and boy at times do they) they most definitely were.

Let Me Die In Drag isn't even his best book, but despite it's many flaws it is probably my favourite.

If you haven't heard of Ed Wood, he was a Hollywood director (we all need a day job) and even at that he wasn't much cop. He 'made' Bela Lugosi, but is best remembered for his posthumous Golden Turkey Awards and the fact that he is rated as one of the worst film directors of all time. His film 'Plan 9 from Outer Space' being recognised as the baddest ever.

So he couldn't write, was generally pretty useless as a film director, and it isn't a surprise that he died broke in the 1970s. So why am I reviewing Let Me Die In Drag?

Basically, because it is a brilliant book to read, with more imagination and ideas than anything on this (or last) year's Booker list, and because I just happened to read it again after a gap of a lot of years.

But to the book.

Let Me Die In Drag is a story based around a transvestite, former hitman for the Mafia-like 'Syndicate' Glen Marker/Glenda Satin who is awaiting his turn in the electric chair. When the warder asks if he has a final request, Glen just wants to die in drag as Glenda, and in return for this favour (and the loan of the warder's daughters clothes) Glen tells the previously untold true story of his activities.

And it has to be said, it is a great story to read. Glen was a transvestite hitman for the Syndicate, and highly effective. As with all good things, he finally quit and the story takes up from the point where (as he 'knows too much') the Syndicate send another hitman to 'silence' him.

Naturally enough, the new girl on the team is also a transvestite - though with an inferior sense of style - and the chase is on.

I won't spoil the story further, as in the main you can probably imagine it, but it is for the time, a sexually graphic, and brutal tale of corruption, murder and angora jumpers.

Whilst it creaks aplenty, some of the description is brilliant and the broad-brush characters work well, often despite Wood's best efforts. Caricatures abound, but the result is vivid and perhaps unsurprisingly cinematic. The Glen/Glenda character is just about perfect in its self-absorption, and as Wood was himself a 'Heterosexual Transvestite' it is probably not a surprise that he played the part in the film he made of the book (or is this the book he made from the film? Nobody seems to know, and Wood probably wouldn't have

cared about that.)

Overall then, Wood does here for transvestite hitmen what Iceberg Slim does for pimps and gangs, in a similar way and with a unique insight. And if a bit of sleazy pulp floats your boat, this is well worth a look.

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### **Morgue Anne says**

So incredibly horrible that it's just that incredibly good! If you're familiar with Edward D. Wood Jr's work in film, this is perfect for you.

There's really no way to describe this book other than it's just too strange. There's transvestites, a woman in red, and everything else you would put in a cheap novel you wrote at 4 in the morning after ODing on crack.

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### **Kayla says**

It took me two years to read this. Only even think about attempting it if you're a fan of Ed Wood otherwise you're just torturing yourself for no reason.

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### **Jason Coffman says**

Ed Wood, writer/director of such infamous curiosities as "Plan 9 from Outer Space," was also a prolific writer of dirty paperbacks. Like his films, there's plenty of outlandish dialogue and puzzling actions taken by the characters, but on the page Wood's obsession with women's clothing is given full reign. There are numerous descriptions of men wearing frilly panties, negligees, etc. This particular story is about a hitman in drag telling his story on death row, specifically about how The Syndicate sent another hitman in drag to take him out and how that landed him in the Big House. It's trashy, lurid pulp, but like Wood's films it's also entertaining.

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### **Jason says**

Let me preamble this with the disclosure that I am a huge Ed Wood fan. Ever since staying up until 2:30 in the morning when I was in eighth grade to watch "Plan 9" on TV, I've been an admirer and follower of all of Wood's work. I've seen his sleazy porn stuff from his later years, own "Night of the Ghouls," and even own a handful of documentaries on the guy as well as Tim Burton's biopic.

With that said, I just couldn't stand this book.

I don't know what exactly I was expecting, but it's easier for me to enjoy Wood's inept filmmaking than it is to enjoy his inept writing on its own. This book was so cliché in its descriptions, so bland in its action and plot, that one almost forgets just how trashy it is. It's like Wood went out of his way to give every chapter the chance for a) two people to fuck wearing the wrong underwear, and b) long-winded and obsessive description of the two transvestites' love for ladies undergarments and angora.

I ended up actually putting this one down, as short as it is, with only 30 pages or so left. I just couldn't do it, and felt like I was wasting my reading time with this one. I do believe I'll stick with Wood's films from now on. Didn't enjoy this one at all.

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### **Michael says**

Today, Ed Wood's popularity results from his film work, most notoriously his auteur-ship of "the worst movie ever made," "Plan Nine from Outer Space." It may well be that more people are familiar with Tim Burton's romanticized Wood bio-pic, starring Johnny Depp, than have actually viewed Wood's original films. That film covers his debut work on "Glen or Glenda," a movie about a heterosexual transvestite, as Wood's "burning desire to tell his story," making him out to be something of a pioneer in trans-gender liberation. The real Ed Wood is more complex, and there is a seedier, sadder side which the film glosses over. The real Ed Wood made his living mostly by writing cheap smut, and drank most of his paychecks in the form of bad whiskey. He got worse as the years went by, ultimately killing himself through booze, and his penchant for women's clothing became more of a sad attempt to escape reality than a statement of individual worth. This version of Ed Wood can be seen most clearly in "Take it Out in Trade," one of his later films, in which he appears as the debauched and pathetic "Alecia."

This book skirts the line between the two extremes of Ed Wood. He put more of his real self into it than most writers of titillating adult material, and also made an effort to create a thrilling hard-boiled crime novel in the process. But the signs of wear are visible, the compromises are there already, and in some ways the slap-dash approach that makes his films so charming undercuts his writing and leaves it stale. Ed wrote fiction more or less the way he wrote movies - unconventionally to say the least - but at times the dialogue sparkles with its imprecision. People in the real world rarely talk in perfectly formed sentences, but rather often express themselves in Wood-like malapropisms. I enjoyed this book for its audacity, but in the end Ed is a victim or his own honesty - it might have been better to hold back a bit more and leave something to the reader's imagination.

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### **Emily says**

Much like Ed Wood's "classic film" Plan 9 From Outer Space, this trashy little novel is so bad it's good. Corny sex, an implausible plot and ham-fisted characters; all written without a shred of self-awareness. It is the fried twinkie of books: you're not going to gain anything by reading it, and you damn well know you could be reading something better, but it's just too fun to ignore.

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