



## The Bargain Shopper

**WC Latour**

Bridle goose Books

(189pp)

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*In the rollicking postmodern novel The Bargain Shopper, a cynical blue blood of reduced means waxes philosophical on the state of America.*

The tribulations, manifestos, and introspection of an aging, technology-adverse narcissist frame WC Latour's raucous satirical novel *The Bargain Shopper*.

Charles is a self-proclaimed Certified Professional Shopper, working for well-to-do Beatrice to stockpile future gifts. He scours department stores for bargains and takes pride in deals eked from the fine print of their policies, navigating life by cutting corners. His thriftiness is matched only by his indefatigable ego. The descendant of a French general who stood by George Washington leading up to his siege of Yorktown, he professes resentment toward his father, who squandered their family fortune.

Charles's hyperawareness of history and the minutiae of upper-class dynamics gave him a sense of superiority in his youth; now, though, he's more mired in daily gossip and his obsessions. In the face of a pandemic, he focuses on his family's past, on Beatrice's curious relationship with a plumber, and on the pursuit of the crumbling American Dream. Such subjects are brought into focus throughout, even as Charles himself becomes more unhinged.

But the book's close focus on Charles is also its limitation. Though he considers himself to be a "soldier of truth," he's an unreliable narrator, assessing floods of information in an age that he deems to be defined by disinformation. The story volleys between his present and flashbacks of his upbringing, its prose dense and moving at a mile a minute to cover all that he thinks.

Still, Charles is an often riotous subject thanks to his always unspooling psyche. He remembers working for a crime boss in Atlantic City, educational challenges, and fraternity salaciousness, if in often distorted terms. His perspectives on society and technology, Donald Trump, pandemic politics, and dying American idealism strike bizarre, if erudite, notes. And he is unflappable, considering his dictums to be final, even when they're crass:

*Krazy Karen went apoplectic. Sexually sidelined and shunned by the Knighthood like a Mennonite heretic for her affliction with crabs—not exactly Herpes or The Clap. 'What the fuck is the big deal', she conjectured with the divinatory clarity of a beautiful mind.*

Larger than life, Charles becomes akin to an animated whisper carrying existential dread and a sense of warped reality far and wide. He monologues at length about the country being out of control, resulting in a narrative that is often bleak and always uncertain.

*The Bargain Shopper* is a rollicking novel that moves through the postmodern United States, checking its social temperature with aplomb.

RYAN PRADO (November 26, 2024)

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