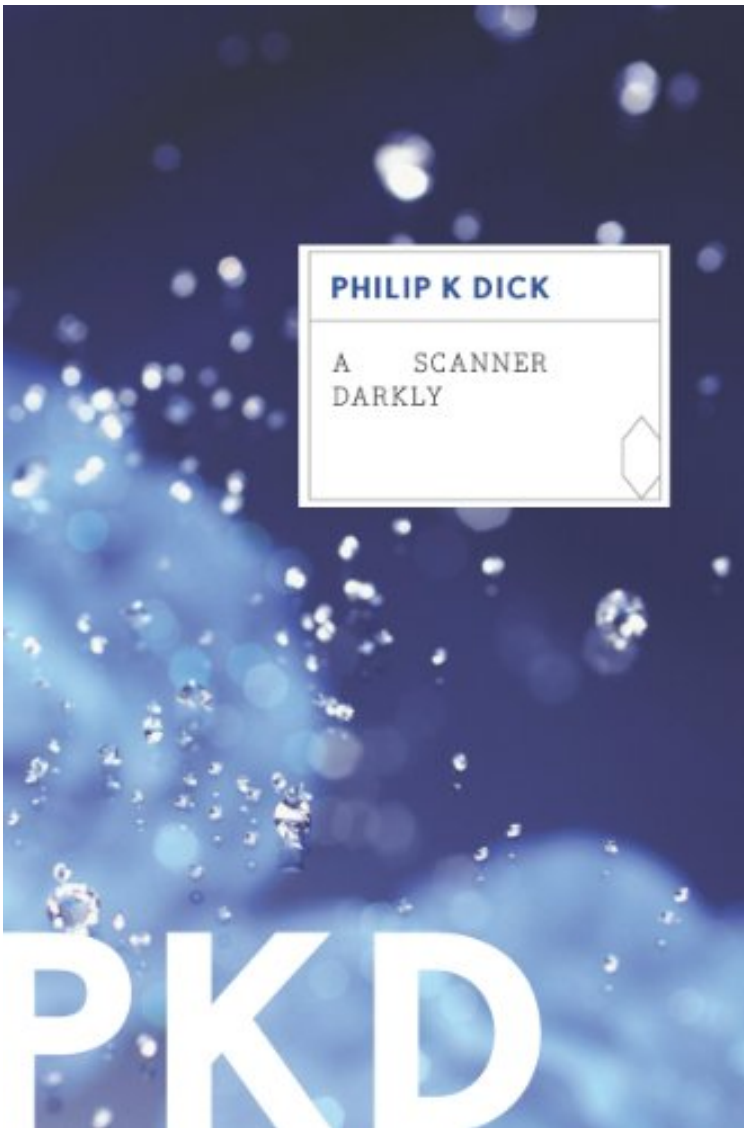


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A Scanner Darkly



Par Philip K. Dick
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurDick is Thoreau plus the death of the American dream.Roberto Bolao Bob Arctor is a junkie and a drug dealer, both using and selling the mind-altering Substance D. Fred is a law enforcement agent, tasked with bringing Bob down. It sounds like a standard case. The only problem is that Bob and Fred are the same person. Substance D doesnt just alter the mind, it splits it in two, and neither side knows what the other is doing or that it even exists. Now, both sides are growing increasingly paranoid as Bob tries to evade Fred while Fred tries to evade his suspicious bosses. In this award-winning novel, friends can become enemies, good trips can turn terrifying, and cops and criminals are two sides of the same coin. Dick is at turns caustically funny and somberly contemplative, fashioning a novel that is as unnerving as it is enthralling. ExtraitOnce a guy stood all day shaking bugs from his hair. The doctor told him there were no

bugs in his hair. After he had taken a shower for eight hours, standing under hot water hour after hour suffering the pain of the bugs, he got out and dried himself, and he still had bugs in his hair; in fact, he had bugs all over him. A month later he had bugs in his lungs. Having nothing else to do or think about, he began to work out theoretically the life cycle of the bugs, and, with the aid of the Britannica, try to determine specifically which bugs they were. They now filled his house. He read about many different kinds and finally noticed bugs outdoors, so he concluded they were aphids. After that decision came to his mind it never changed, no matter what other people told him ... like "Aphids don't bite people." They said that to him because the endless biting of the bugs kept him in torment. At the 7-11 grocery store, part of a chain spread out over most of California, he bought spray cans of Raid and Black Flag and Yard Guard. First he sprayed the house, then himself. The Yard Guard seemed to work the best. As to the theoretical side, he perceived three stages in the cycle of the bugs. First, they were carried to him to contaminate him by what he called Carrier-people, which were people who didn't understand their role in distributing the bugs. During that stage the bugs had no jaws or mandibles (he learned that word during his weeks of scholarly research, an unusually bookish occupation for a guy who worked at the Handy Brake and Tire place relining people's brake drums). The Carrier-people therefore felt nothing. He used to sit in the far corner of his living room watching different Carrier-people enter--most of them people he'd known for a while, but some new to him--covered with the aphids in this particular nonbiting stage. He'd sort of smile to himself, because he knew that the person was being used by the bugs and wasn't hip to it. "What are you grinning about, Jerry?" they'd say. He'd just smile. In the next stage the bugs grew wings or something, but they really weren't precisely wings; anyhow, they were appendages of a functional sort permitting them to swarm, which was how they migrated and spread--especially to him. At that point the air was full of them; it made his living room, his whole house, cloudy. During this stage he tried not to inhale them. Most of all he felt sorry for his dog, because he could see the bugs landing on and settling all over him, and probably getting into the dog's lungs, as they were in his own. Probably--at least so his empathic ability told him--the dog was suffering as much as he was. Should he give the dog away for the dog's own comfort? No, he decided: the dog was now, inadvertently, infected, and would carry the bugs with him everywhere. Sometimes he stood in the shower with the dog, trying to wash the dog clean too. He had no more success with him than he did with himself. It hurt to feel the dog suffer; he never stopped trying to help him. In some respect this was the worst part, the suffering of the animal, who could not complain. "What the fuck are you doing there all day in the shower with the goddamn dog?" his buddy Charles Freck asked one time, coming in during this. Jerry said, "I got to get the aphids off him." He brought Max, the dog, out of the shower and began drying him. Charles Freck watched, mystified, as Jerry rubbed baby oil and talc into the dog's fur. All over the house, cans of insect spray, bottles of talc, and baby oil and skin conditioners were piled and tossed, most of them empty; he used many cans a day now. "I don't see any aphids," Charles said. "What's an aphid?" "It eventually kills you," Jerry said. "That's what an aphid is. They're in my hair and my skin and my lungs, and the goddamn pain is unbearable--I'm going to have to go to the hospital." "How come I can't see them?" Jerry put down the dog, which was wrapped in a towel, and knelt over the shag rug. "I'll show you one," he said. The rug was covered with aphids; they hopped up everywhere, up and down, some higher than others. He searched for an especially large one, because of the difficulty people had seeing them. "Bring me a bottle or jar," he said, "from under the sink. We'll cap it or put a lid on it and then I can take it with me when I go to the doctor and he can analyze it." Charles Freck brought him an empty mayonnaise jar. Jerry went on searching, and at last came across an aphid leaping up at least four feet in the air. The aphid was over an inch long. He caught it, carried it to the jar, carefully dropped it in, and screwed on the lid. Then he held it up triumphantly. "See?" he said. "Yeahhhhh," Charles Freck said, his eyes wide as he scrutinized the contents of the jar. "What a big one! Wow!" "Help me find more for the doctor to see," Jerry said, again squatting down on the rug, the jar beside him. "Sure," Charles Freck said, and did so. Within half an hour they had three jars full of the bugs. Charles, although new at it, found some of the largest. It was midday, in June of 1994. In California, in a tract area of cheap but durable plastic houses, long ago vacated by the straights. Jerry had at an earlier date sprayed metal paint over all the windows, though, to keep out the light; the illumination for the room came from a pole lamp into which he had screwed nothing but spot lamps, which shone day and night, so as to abolish time for him and his friends. He liked that; he liked to get rid of time. By doing that he could concentrate on important things without interruption. Like this: two men kneeling down on the shag rug, finding bug after bug and putting them into jar after jar. "What do we get for these," Charles Freck said, later on in the day. "I mean, does the doctor pay a bounty or something? A prize? Any bread?" "I get to help

perfect a cure for them this way," Jerry said. The pain, constant as it was, had become unbearable; he had never gotten used to it, and he knew he never would. The urge, the longing, to take another shower was overwhelming him. "Hey, man," he gasped, straightening up, "you go on putting them in the jars while I take a leak and like that." He started toward the bathroom. "Okay," Charles said, his long legs wobbling as he swung toward a jar, both hands cupped. An ex-veteran, he still had good muscular control, though; he made it to the jar. But then he said suddenly, "Jerry, hey--those bugs sort of scare me. I don't like it here by myself." He stood up. "Chickenshit bastard," Jerry said, panting with pain as he halted momentarily at the bathroom. "Couldn't you--""I got to take a leak!" He slammed the door and spun the knobs of the shower. Water poured down. "I'm afraid out here." Charles Freck's voice came dimly, even though he was evidently yelling loud. "Then go fuck yourself!" Jerry yelled back, and stepped into the shower. What fucking good are friends? he asked himself bitterly. No good, no good! No fucking good! "Do these fuckers sting?" Charles yelled, right at the door. "Yeah, they sting," Jerry said as he rubbed shampoo into his hair. "That's what I thought." A pause. "Can I wash my hands and get them off and wait for you?" Chickenshit, Jerry thought with bitter fury. He said nothing; he merely kept on washing. The bastard wasn't worth answering ... He paid no attention to Charles Freck, only to himself. To his own vital, demanding, terrible, urgent needs.

Everything else would have to wait. There was no time, no time; these things could not be postponed. Everything else was secondary. Except the dog; he wondered about Max, the dog. Charles Freck phoned up somebody who he hoped was holding, "Can you lay about ten deaths on me?" "Christ, I'm entirely out--I'm looking to score myself. Let me know when you find some, I could use some." "What's wrong with the supply?" "Some busts, I guess." Charles Freck hung up and then ran a fantasy number in his head as he slumped dismally back from the pay phone booth--you never used your home phone for a buy call--to his parked Chevy. In his fantasy number he was driving past the Thrifty Drugstore and they had a huge window display; bottles of slow death, cans of slow death, jars and bathtubs and vats and bowls of slow death, millions of caps and tabs and hits of slow death, slow death mixed with speed and junk and barbiturates and psychedelics, everything--and a giant sign: YOUR CREDIT IS GOOD HERE. Not to mention: LOW LOW PRICES, LOWEST IN TOWN. But in actuality the Thrifty usually had a display of nothing: combs, bottles of mineral oil, spray cans of deodorant, always crap like that. But I bet the pharmacy in the back has slow death under lock and key in an unstepped-on, pure, unadulterated, uncut form, he thought as he drove from the parking lot onto Harbor Boulevard, into the afternoon traffic. About a fifty-pound bag. He wondered when and how they unloaded the fifty-pound bag of Substance D at the Thrifty Pharmacy every morning, from wherever it came from--God knew, maybe from Switzerland or maybe from another planet where some wise race lived. They'd deliver probably real early, and with armed guards--the Man standing there with Laser rifles looking mean, the way the Man always did. Anybody rip off my slow death, he thought through the Man's head, I'll snuff them. Probably Substance D is an ingredient in every legal medication that's worth anything, he thought. A little pinch here and there according to the secret exclusive formula at the issuing house in Germany or Switzerland that invented i...Revue de presse One of the most original practitioners writing any kind of fiction, Dick made most of the European avant-garde seem like navel-gazers in a cul-de-sac (Sunday Times) My literary hero (Fay Weldon) For everyone lost in the endlessly multiplying realities of the modern world, remember: Philip K. Dick got there first (Terry Gilliam)