

THE CLASSIC BESTSELLER

CATCH-22



A NOVEL BY

JOSEPH HELLER

WITH AN UPDATED PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR



Joseph Heller

CATCH-22

SIMON & SCHUSTER PAPERBACKS
New York • London • Toronto • Sydney



Simon & Schuster Paperbacks
Rockefeller Center
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 1955, 1961 by Joseph Heller
Copyright renewed © 1989 by Joseph Heller
Preface to the special edition of *Catch-22* copyright © 1994 by Joseph Heller

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction
in whole or in part in any form.

First Simon & Schuster paperback edition 2004
SIMON & SCHUSTER PAPERBACKS and colophon are registered trademarks
of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases,
please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales at
1-800-456-6798 or business@simonandschuster.com

Designed by Brooke Zimmer

Manufactured in the United States of America

47 49 50 48 46

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:

Heller, Joseph.

Catch-22 / Joseph Heller.

p. cm.

I. World War II, 1939-1945—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3558.E476C3 1994

.813'.54—dc20 94-13984

ISBN 0-671-50233-6

0-684-83339-5 (Pbk)

BY JOSEPH HELLER

Catch as Catch Can

Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man

Closing Time

Picture This

No Laughing Matter (with Speed Vogel)

God Knows

Good as Gold

Something Happened

Catch-22

To Candida Donadio, literary agent,
and Robert Gottlieb, editor.
Colleagues.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE CATCH . . .

AND THAT WAS CATCH-22.

This island of Pianosa lies in the Mediterranean Sea eight miles south of Elba. It is very small and obviously could not accommodate all of the actions described. Like the setting of this novel, the characters, too, are fictitious.

Preface to the special edition of

CATCH-22

In 1961, *The New York Times* was a newspaper with eight columns. And on November 11 of that year, one day after the official publication date of *Catch-22*, the page with the book review carried an unusual advertisement that ran from top to bottom and was five columns wide. To the eye the effect was stupendous. The book review that day, of a work by somebody else, was squeezed aside to the fold of the page, as were the crossword puzzle and all else. The ad had this caption: WHAT'S THE CATCH? And displayed at the top in silhouette was the comic cartoon of a uniformed figure in flight, glancing off to the side at some unspecified danger with an expression of panic.

It was an announcement ad for *Catch-22*. Interwoven with the text were mentions of praise from twenty-one individuals and groups of some public standing, most connected to literature and the publishing world, who had received the novel before publication and had already reviewed it or commented about it favorably.

Within days after publication, there was a review in *The Nation* by Nelson Algren (a client of my own literary agent, who had urged him to read it), who wrote of *Catch-22* that it "was the best novel to come out of anywhere in years." And there was a review by Studs Terkel in a Chicago daily newspaper that recommended it about as highly.

So much attention to the work at publication was in large part the result of the industrious zeal and appreciation of my literary agent, Candida Donadio, and my editor, Robert Gottlieb, and I embrace the opportunity afforded now to dedicate this new edition to both of them, as colleagues and allies with talents that were of immeasurable value.

The work was not reviewed in the *Times* that day. However, it was reviewed in the *Herald Tribune* by Maurice Dolbier, and Mr. Dolbier said of it: "A wild, moving, shocking, hilarious, raging, exhilarating, giant roller-coaster of a book."

That the reviewer for the *Herald Tribune* came to review at all this war novel by someone unknown was almost entirely the product of coincidence. S. J. Perelman, much better known and the subject of an interview

by Mr. Dolbier, was publishing his own book at just about that time. His publisher was Simon & Schuster, mine too, and the editor in charge of his work there was also the same, Bob Gottlieb. In answer to a question put to him by Dolbier about his own reading, Mr. Perelman replied that he was very much engrossed in a novel pressed upon him by his editor, a novel called *Catch-22*. Returning to his office, Mr. Dolbier later confessed to me, he found the book already in the pile with others he had decided he would not have time to study as prospects to write about. Had it not been for Gottlieb, there would have been no Perelman, and had it not been for Perelman, there would have been no review by Dolbier.

And had it not been for Dolbier, there might not have been the *Times*. Two weeks afterward, and probably only because of Mr. Dolbier, the book was described with approbation in the daily *Times* by the reviewer Orville Prescott, who predicted it would not be forgotten by those who could take it and called it: "A dazzling performance that will outrage nearly as many readers as it delights."

The rest, one might say is history, but it's a history easily misconstrued.

The novel won no prizes and was not on any bestseller list.

And, as Mr. Prescott foresaw, for just about every good report, there seemed to appear one that was negative. Looking back at this novel after twenty-five years, John Aldridge, to my mind the most perceptive and persistent commentator on American literature over the decades, lauded Robert Brustein for his superbly intelligent review in *The New Republic*, which contained "essential arguments that much of later criticism has done little to improve on," and Mr. Aldridge recognized that many in the early audience of *Catch-22* "liked the book for just the reasons that caused others to hate it."

The disparagements were frequently venomous. In the *Sunday Times*, in a notice in back so slender that the only people seeing it were those awaiting it, the reviewer (a novelist who also by chance was a client of my own agent, Candida) decided that the "novel gasps for want of craft and sensibility," "is repetitious and monotonous," "fails," "is an emotional hodgepodge," and was no novel; and in the esteemed *The New Yorker*, the reviewer, a staff writer who normally writes about jazz, compared the book unfavorably with a novel of similar setting by Mitchell Goodman and decided that *Catch-22* "doesn't even seem to have been written; instead, it gives the impression of having been shouted onto paper," "what remains is a debris of sour jokes," and that in the end Heller "wallows in his own laughter and finally drowns in it." (I am tempted now to drown in laughter as I set this down.)

I do not recall that the novel was included in the several hundred books in the Christmas roundup of recommended reading of the *Times* that year or in the several hundred others picked out in the spring for summer reading.

But in late summer of 1962, Raymond Walters, on the bestseller page of the Sunday *Times*, which then carried regularly the column "In and Out of Books," reported that the underground book New Yorkers seemed to be talking about most was *Catch-22*. (The novel probably was more heavily advertised than any other that year, but it was still underground.) Not much later, *Newsweek* carried a story to the same effect in a space more than a page wide. And late that same summer, I was invited to my first television interview. The program was the *Today* show, then a variety show as much as anything else. The interim host was John Chancellor. Mr. Chancellor had recently returned from his newsman's post in the Kremlin, and he had agreed to accept the position on condition that he interview only those people he himself chose to.

After the show, in a bar close by the studio where I found myself drinking martinis at an earlier hour than ever in my life, he handed me a packet of stickers he'd had printed privately. They read: YOSSARI-AN LIVES. And he confided he'd been pasting these stickers secretly on the walls of the corridors and in the executive rest rooms of the NBC building.

Then came September and the paperback edition and with it, finally, an expansion in popular appeal that seemed to take the publishers, Dell, by surprise, despite elaborate promotion and distribution strategies. It seemed for a while that the people there could not fully bring themselves to believe the sales figures and that they would never catch up.

Paperback publishers print in the hundreds of thousands. For this, after an initial release of 300,000 copies, they went back to press five more times between September and the end of the year, twice each in October and December, and by the end of 1963, there were eleven printings. In England, under the auspices of the enterprising young editor there Tom Maschler, it was that way from the start. Bestseller lists there were new and rudimentary then, but *Catch-22* was quickly at the head of them.

For me the history of *Catch-22* begins back in 1953, when I started writing it. In 1953, I was employed as a copywriter at a small advertising agency in New York, after two years as an instructor in English composition at Pennsylvania State University, which then was a college. Early on, in anxious need of an approving opinion, I sent the opening chapter

off to the literary agents I had managed to obtain after publishing a few short stories in magazines, in *Esquire* and *The Atlantic*. The agents were not impressed, but a young assistant there, Ms. Candida Donadio, was, and she secured permission to submit that chapter to a few publications that regularly published excerpts from "novels in progress."

In 1955 the chapter appeared in a paperback quarterly *New World Writing* #7 (an anthology that also contained, under a pseudonym, an extract from another novel in progress—Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*). There came complimentary letters of interest from a few editors at established book publishers, and I was encouraged to continue with a work I now saw realistically was going to take me a good many years longer than I at first had guessed.

In 1957, when I had about 270 pages in typescript, I was employed at *Time* magazine, writing advertising-sales presentations by day when not furtively putting thoughts down on paper for my work on the novel at home that evening. And Candida Donadio was establishing herself as a preeminent agent in her own right, with a list of American authors as clients as impressive as any. We agreed it made sense to submit the partial manuscript to some publishers, mainly to obtain a practical idea of the potential for publication of this novel we both thought so much of. She was drawn toward a new young editor she knew of at Simon & Schuster, one she thought might prove more receptive to innovation than most. His name was Robert Gottlieb, and she was right.

While Gottlieb busied himself with those pages, I, with a four-week summer vacation from bountiful *Time* magazine, began rewriting them. Gottlieb and I met for lunch, mainly for him to gauge my temperament and ascertain how amenable I would be as an author to work with. After I listened to him allude with tact to certain broad suggestions he thought he eventually might be compelled to make, I handed him my new pages with the boastful response that I believed I had already taken care of nearly all of them.

He surprised me with concern that I might take exception to working with someone so young—he was twenty-six, I think, and I was thirty-four. I was more greatly surprised to learn from him later that both he and his closest colleague at Simon & Schuster, Nina Bourne, were intimidated at first by an air of suspicion I projected that I did not know I even possessed. I have not been suspicious of him since, and I doubt very much that Gottlieb, who went on to become the head of Alfred A. Knopf and then editor of *The New Yorker* magazine, has ever again been intimidated by anybody.

And what I still remember most agreeably about him is that he did not ask for an outline or once seek for even a hint of where this one-third of a novel he'd seen was going to go. The contract I received called for an advance of fifteen hundred dollars, half on signing, which I did not need, and the remainder on completion and acceptance.

Probably, I was his first novelist, but not his first to be published; other authors with completed manuscripts came to him in the three more years I needed to finish mine. Probably, I was *Candida's* earliest client too. Both were as delighted as I was with the eventual success of *Catch-22*, and the three of us have been reveling in our recollections of the experience ever since.

On February 28, 1962, the journalist Richard Starnes published a column of unrestrained praise in his newspaper, *The New York World-Telegram*, that opened with these words:

"Yossarian will, I think, live a very long time."

His tribute was unexpected, because Mr. Starnes was a newspaperman in the hard-boiled mode whose customary beat was local politics, and the *World-Telegram* was widely regarded as generally conservative.

To this day, I am grateful to Mr. Starnes for his unqualified and unsolicited approval and bless him for the accuracy of his prediction. Yossarian has indeed lived a long time. The *World-Telegram* has passed on. Many of the people mentioned in that first advertisement have died, and most of the rest of us are on the way.

But Yossarian is alive when the novel ends. Because of the motion picture, even close readers of the novel have a final, lasting image of him at sea, paddling toward freedom in a yellow inflated lifeboat. In the book he doesn't get that far; but he is not captured and he isn't dead. At the end of the successor volume I've just completed, *Closing Time* (that fleeing cartoon figure is again on the book jacket, but wearing a businessman's chapeau and moving with a cane), he is again still alive, more than forty years older but definitely still there. "Everyone has got to go," his physician friend in that novel reminds him with emphasis. "Everyone!" But should I ever write another sequel, he would still be around at the end.

Sooner or later, I must concede, Yossarian, now seventy, will have to pass away too. But it won't be by my hand.

JOSEPH HELLER, 1994
East Hampton, New York

The Texan

It was love at first sight.

The first time Yossarian saw the chaplain he fell madly in love with him.

Yossarian was in the hospital with a pain in his liver that fell just short of being jaundice. The doctors were puzzled by the fact that it wasn't quite jaundice. If it became jaundice they could treat it. If it didn't become jaundice and went away they could discharge him. But this just being short of jaundice all the time confused them.

Each morning they came around, three brisk and serious men with efficient mouths and inefficient eyes, accompanied by brisk and serious Nurse Duckett, one of the ward nurses who didn't like Yossarian. They read the chart at the foot of the bed and asked impatiently about the pain. They seemed irritated when he told them it was exactly the same.

"Still no movement?" the full colonel demanded.

The doctors exchanged a look when he shook his head.

"Give him another pill."

Nurse Duckett made a note to give Yossarian another pill, and the four of them moved along to the next bed. None of the nurses liked Yossarian. Actually, the pain in his liver had gone away, but Yossarian didn't say anything and the doctors never suspected. They just suspected that he had been moving his bowels and not telling anyone.

Yossarian had everything he wanted in the hospital. The food wasn't too bad, and his meals were brought to him in bed. There were extra rations of fresh meat, and during the hot part of the afternoon he and the others were served chilled fruit juice or chilled chocolate milk. Apart from the doctors and the nurses, no one ever disturbed him. For a little while in the morning he had to censor letters, but he was free after that to spend the rest of each day lying around idly with a clear conscience. He was comfortable in the hospital, and it was easy to stay on because he always ran a temperature of 101. He was even more comfortable than Dunbar, who had to keep falling down on his face in order to get *his* meals brought to him in bed.

After he made up his mind to spend the rest of the war in the hospital, Yossarian wrote letters to everyone he knew saying that he was in the hospital but never mentioning why. One day he had a better idea. To everyone he knew he wrote that he was going on a very dangerous mission. "They asked for volunteers. It's very dangerous, but someone has to do it. I'll write you the instant I get back." And he had not written anyone since.

All the officer patients in the ward were forced to censor letters written by all the enlisted-men patients, who were kept in residence in wards of their own. It was a monotonous job, and Yossarian was disappointed to learn that the lives of enlisted men were only slightly more interesting than the lives of officers. After the first day he had no curiosity at all. To break the monotony he invented games. Death to all modifiers, he declared one day, and out of every letter that passed through his hands went every adverb and every adjective. The next day he made war on articles. He reached a much higher plane of creativity the following day when he blacked out everything in the letters but *a*, *an* and *the*. That erected more dynamic intralinear tensions, he felt, and in just about every case left a message far more universal. Soon he was proscribing parts of salutations and signatures and leaving the text untouched. One time he blacked out all but the salutation "Dear Mary" from a letter, and at the bottom he wrote, "I yearn for you tragically. A. T. Tappman, Chaplain, U.S. Army." A. T. Tappman was the group chaplain's name.

When he had exhausted all possibilities in the letters, he began attacking the names and addresses on the envelopes, obliterating whole homes and streets, annihilating entire metropolises with careless flicks of his wrist as though he were God. Catch-22 required that each censored letter bear the censoring officer's name. Most letters he didn't read at all. On those he didn't read at all he wrote his own name. On those he did read he wrote, "Washington Irving." When that grew monotonous he wrote, "Irving Washington." Censoring the envelopes had serious repercussions, produced a ripple of anxiety on some etheral military echelon that floated a C.I.D. man back into the ward posing as a patient. They all knew he was a C.I.D. man because he kept inquiring about an officer named Irving or Washington and because after his first day there he wouldn't censor letters. He found them too monotonous.

It was a good ward this time, one of the best he and Dunbar had ever enjoyed. With them this time was the twenty-four-year-old fighter-

pilot captain with the sparse golden mustache who had been shot into the Adriatic Sea in midwinter and had not even caught cold. Now the summer was upon them, the captain had not been shot down, and he said he had the grippe. In the bed on Yossarian's right, still lying amorously on his belly, was the startled captain with malaria in his blood and a mosquito bite on his ass. Across the aisle from Yossarian was Dunbar, and next to Dunbar was the artillery captain with whom Yossarian had stopped playing chess. The captain was a good chess player, and the games were always interesting. Yossarian had stopped playing chess with him because the games were so interesting they were foolish. Then there was the educated Texan from Texas who looked like someone in Technicolor and felt, patriotically, that people of means—decent folk—should be given more votes than drifters, whores, criminals, degenerates, atheists and indecent folk—people without means.

Yossarian was unspringing rhythms in the letters the day they brought the Texan in. It was another quiet, hot, untroubled day. The heat pressed heavily on the roof, stifling sound. Dunbar was lying motionless on his back again with his eyes staring up at the ceiling like a doll's. He was working hard at increasing his life span. He did it by cultivating boredom. Dunbar was working so hard at increasing his life span that Yossarian thought he was dead. They put the Texan in a bed in the middle of the ward, and it wasn't long before he donated his views.

Dunbar sat up like a shot. "That's it," he cried excitedly. "There was something missing—all the time I knew there was something missing—and now I know what it is." He banged his fist down into his palm. "No patriotism," he declared.

"You're right," Yossarian shouted back. "You're right, you're right, you're right. The hot dog, the Brooklyn Dodgers. Mom's apple pie. That's what everyone's fighting for. But who's fighting for the decent folk? Who's fighting for more votes for the decent folk? There's no patriotism, that's what it is. And no matriotism, either."

The warrant officer on Yossarian's left was unimpressed. "Who gives a shit?" he asked tiredly, and turned over on his side to go to sleep.

The Texan turned out to be good-natured, generous and likable. In three days no one could stand him.

He sent shudders of annoyance scampering up ticklish spines, and everybody fled from him—everybody but the soldier in white, who had no choice. The soldier in white was encased from head to toe in plas-

ter and gauze. He had two useless legs and two useless arms. He had been smuggled into the ward during the night, and the men had no idea he was among them until they awoke in the morning and saw the two strange legs hoisted from the hips, the two strange arms anchored up perpendicularly, all four limbs pinioned strangely in air by lead weights suspended darkly above him that never moved. Sewn into the bandages over the insides of both elbows were zippered lips through which he was fed clear fluid from a clear jar. A silent zinc pipe rose from the cement on his groin and was coupled to a slim rubber hose that carried waste from his kidneys and dripped it efficiently into a clear, stoppered jar on the floor. When the jar on the floor was full, the jar feeding his elbow was empty, and the two were simply switched quickly so that stuff could drip back into him. All they ever really saw of the soldier in white was a frayed black hole over his mouth.

The soldier in white had been filed next to the Texan, and the Texan sat sideways on his own bed and talked to him throughout the morning, afternoon and evening in a pleasant, sympathetic drawl. The Texan never minded that he got no reply.

Temperatures were taken twice a day in the ward. Early each morning and late each afternoon Nurse Cramer entered with a jar full of thermometers and worked her way up one side of the ward and down the other, distributing a thermometer to each patient. She managed the soldier in white by inserting a thermometer into the hole over his mouth and leaving it balanced there on the lower rim. When she returned to the man in the first bed, she took his thermometer and recorded his temperature, and then moved on to the next bed and continued around the ward again. One afternoon when she had completed her first circuit of the ward and came a second time to the soldier in white, she read his temperature and discovered that he was dead.

"Murderer," Dunbar said quietly.

The Texan looked up at him with an uncertain grin.

"Killer," Yossarian said.

"What are you talkin' about?" the Texan asked nervously.

"You murdered him," said Dunbar.

"You killed him," said Yossarian.

The Texan shrank back. "You fellas are crazy. I didn't even touch him."

"You murdered him," said Dunbar.

"I heard you kill him," said Yossarian.

"You killed him because he was a nigger," Dunbar said.

"You fellas are crazy," the Texan cried. "They don't allow niggers in here. They got a special place for niggers."

"The sergeant smuggled him in," Dunbar said.

"The Communist sergeant," said Yossarian.

"And you knew it."

The warrant officer on Yossarian's left was unimpressed by the entire incident of the soldier in white. The warrant officer was unimpressed by everything and never spoke at all unless it was to show irritation.

The day before Yossarian met the chaplain, a stove exploded in the mess hall and set fire to one side of the kitchen. An intense heat flashed through the area. Even in Yossarian's ward, almost three hundred feet away, they could hear the roar of the blaze and the sharp cracks of flaming timber. Smoke sped past the orange-tinted windows. In about fifteen minutes the crash trucks from the airfield arrived to fight the fire. For a frantic half hour it was touch and go. Then the firemen began to get the upper hand. Suddenly there was the monotonous old drone of bombers returning from a mission, and the firemen had to roll up their hoses and speed back to the field in case one of the planes crashed and caught fire. The planes landed safely. As soon as the last one was down, the firemen wheeled their trucks around and raced back up the hill to resume their fight with the fire at the hospital. When they got there, the blaze was out. It had died of its own accord, expired completely without even an ember to be watered down, and there was nothing for the disappointed firemen to do but drink tepid coffee and hang around trying to screw the nurses.

The chaplain arrived the day after the fire. Yossarian was busy expurgating all but romance words from the letters when the chaplain sat down in a chair between the beds and asked him how he was feeling. He had placed himself a bit to one side, and the captain's bars on the tab of his shirt collar were all the insignia Yossarian could see. Yossarian had no idea who he was and just took it for granted that he was either another doctor or another madman.

"Oh, pretty good," he answered. "I've got a slight pain in my liver and I haven't been the most regular of fellows, I guess, but all in all I must admit that I feel pretty good."

"That's good," said the chaplain.

"Yes," Yossarian said. "Yes, that is good."

"I meant to come around sooner," the chaplain said, "but I really haven't been well."