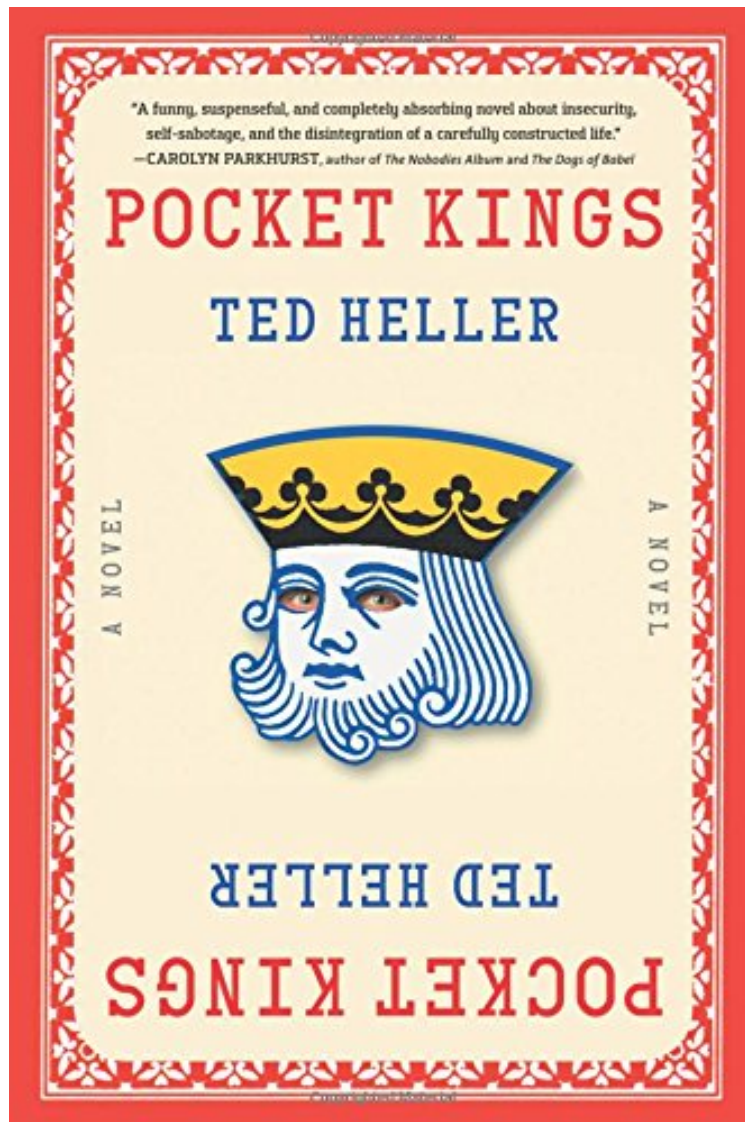


## Pocket Kings

*Ted Heller*

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**Ted Heller : Pocket Kings** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pocket Kings:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Error riddled story telling. Never mind poker, author can't do simple math. By saras Please do not purchase this book if you have ever played poker or know simple math. The reviews look good prior to my purchase, but just a few chapters in, I had to stop and request a refund. The author gets into a hand where the blinds are \$500/\$1000 and after the flop with 3 players staying in.....and some betting and calling going on....he wins something like \$2,400. WHAT??? The minimum pot would be \$8,000 at the end of the hand in his story.

That's not even poker, that's simple math. The SAME hand he is dealt a King and a 3. There is a king on the flop and the turn. The river is a 3. That's a full house. Three Kings and two threes. He states that he won the pot with his three kings. This author not only knows nothing about poker, can't even understand the math of adding bets. customer service is outstanding and I was able to get my refund. Again, even if you don't know poker, the blatant errors got in the way of being able to force myself through it. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Please write more books!

By Chris This is the last Ted Heller book I've got to read. He wrote four and I read four and I am now intensely sad I have no more to read. This book is intense. It's really good. You hate the main character basically the whole time but still you read on. Watching it happen is kind of cool. At one point something fairly terrible is happening to him and you kinda feel bad for him but not really because he kinda sucks and he brought it on himself but still... Then you have to put the book down and work through all these conflicting feelings. Anyway, well worth it. Every book Heller writes has been worth it and they're all different. Do yourself a favor and enjoy it. Enjoy something different. Something great

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Heller does it again

By Donald Capone Wow. I just finished Ted Heller's new novel, *Pocket Kings*, and I'm exhausted. What a ride he takes the reader on! I count Heller among my favorite authors, and it's hard to believe that it's been ten years since the publication of his last novel, *Funnymen*. It was worth the wait. This time Heller takes on the world of online addiction (in this case poker), along with the current state of book publishing. *Pocket Kings*, written in first-person, dumps you headfirst into the increasingly f\*ed-up life of narrator Frank W. Dixon, also known as his online poker persona, Chip Zero. Frank works at a boring, meaningless job after his first two novels didn't sell well. He's got another book completed, but his agent can't sell it. Frank feels like a failure as an author, but soon discovers one thing that he is great at: online poker. Besides winning loads of money, he forges relationships with other online poker players. But are they real friends, or even real people? People can be whoever they want to be online. And is it ever a good idea to meet these people in real life? Probably not. Heller never lets his lead character off easy. Which can be a hard trick to pull off when writing in first person (this novel is written as if it's a memoir, which in itself is a spoof of all the embellished "memoirs" that have been published in the last decade). Here, we get to see Frank/Chip tell us firsthand what he's thinking, his rationalizations, his insecurities, and yes, his hopes and dreams. We cheer for his successes as much as we cringe at some of his actions, especially the ones we know will hurt his loving and supportive wife, Cynthia. As Frank/Chip's success and winnings increase in poker, so do his frustrations as an author, of not getting published and becoming one of the darlings of the critics, the next Franzen, or Eggers, or Chabon (or as Frank refers to them, Jonathan David Safran Franzlethchabeggars). Frank often lapses into revenge fantasies against anyone who has rejected his writing, or who he sees as a roadblock to getting published again. Here he fantasizes about resurrecting his writing career by punching out a famous author and getting some free publicity: "In lieu of the aforementioned Jonathans and Davids, I could punch out an old coot like Phillip Roth or Joyce Carol Oates and hopefully not kill them. Or I could take on a career-dead writer like Marty Amis or Sal Rushdie, both of whom could use the publicity, too. But Joyce Carol Oates once wrote a book about boxing and could probably beat me up." Frank's online life and his real life cannot be kept separate for long, and the results when the two meet are funny, sad, and disturbing, and have a lot to say about modern addiction and "quiet desperation," or as Frank says about himself, "deafeningly not quiet." *Pocket Kings* barrels along full steam right up to the end, which is unexpected, satisfying, and makes perfect sense. Frank/Chip is an honest, reliable narrator of this "memoir," and his outlook on life and his brutally honest opinion of himself is hysterical. Ted Heller is one funny guy. I sincerely hope this novel is a hit, if for no other selfish reason than I won't have to wait ten years for the next one. Side note: I'm not a poker player, and don't know much about it, but I didn't need to. Heller's descriptions made sense and I never found it boring or distracting (in fact, it made me want to play online poker).

In this dead-on satire of online obsessions, a novelist with writer's block finds a new-and very lucrative-stream of income in a virtual world that appears to give him everything he lacks in the real world. When Frank Dixon, a frustrated writer who has seen his career crash and burn, decides to dabble in online poker, he discovers he has a knack for winning. In this newfound realm, populated by alluring characters—each of them elusive, mysterious, and glamorous—he becomes a smash success: popular, rich, and loved. Going by the name Chip Zero, he sees his fortunes and romantic liaisons thrive in cyberspace while he remains blind to the fact that his real life is sinking. His online success, however, does not come without complications, as he comes to realize that his virtual friends and lovers are, in fact, very real, and one rival player is not at all happy that Mr. Zero has taken all his money. Heller's cautionary tale is continually surprising and startlingly real, a tour de force of satirical storytelling in the vein of Jonathan Tropper and Sam Lipsyte.

Heller's novel about a failed writer offers an unlikable protagonist, vivid writing and a comic depiction of our most disgraceful inner states. The New York Times Book Editors Choice list Highly entertaining . . . *Pocket Kings* is, in spirit, the comical sequel to Frederick Exley's *Fans Notes*, the classic and psychologically tragic depiction of machismo mediocrity. The New York Times Book Ted Heller's brazen, often hilarious and always disturbing new novel, *Pocket Kings*, is a hybrid love letter and suicide note to 21st-century publishing . . . What seemed at first to be a smart if

limited satire about publishing and online gambling becomes an illuminating and fully realized story about identity and reputation in the digital age. At its best, *Pocket Kings* explores authentic existence and the desperate extremes to which a man will go to be recognized in an industry that he, like so many others, despises and loves. *The Washington Post* [A] recklessly funny, sparky satire of our obsession with the virtual world. *Vanity Fair* *Pocket Kings* is the kind of reading fun that offers nutritional value and not just empty calories. Ted Hellers third novel is a satirical, charming literary ride. *Buffalo News* A poignant, funny satire ... Hellers prose is razor sharp and his cultural reference points are spot on. In fact its all so believable that you have to wonder about Mr. Hellers own online poker credentials. Watch out for him at the virtual tables. *CultureMob* Heller (*Slab Rat*, *Funnymen*) seems to have inherited the satire gene from his father, Joseph. *New York Post* "The pace is fast, the plot twisty, and the satire bites viciously." *Library Journal* "Laugh-out-loud funny . . . There is a certain Everyman quality to Frank, whose hopes gradually fade away but whose self-deprecating humor helps carry him through his midlife angst and denial of addiction; you want to wish him well." *Booklist* A well-crafted and entertaining satire. *Publishers Weekly*