

KURT

VONNEGUT



SLAUGHTERHOUSE-
FIVE A NOVEL

AMERICA'S GREATEST SATIRIST

KURT VONNEGUT IS...

“UNIQUE ... one of the writers who map our landscapes for us, who give names to the places we know best.”

—DORIS LESSING

The New York Times Book Review

“OUR FINEST BLACK HUMORIST.... We laugh in self-defense.”

—*The Atlantic Monthly*

“AN UNIMITATIVE AND INIMITABLE SOCIAL SATIRIST.”

—*Harper's Magazine*

“A MEDICINE MAN, CONJURING UP FANTASIES TO WARN THE WORLD.”

—*The Charlotte Observer*

“A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION.”

—*Chicago Sun-Times*

“A LAUGHING PROPHET OF DOOM.”

—*The New York Times*

BY KURT VONNEGUT

A Man Without a Country

Armageddon in Retrospect

Bagombo Snuff Box

Between Time and Timbuktu

Bluebeard

Breakfast of Champions

Canary in a Cat House

Cat's Cradle

Deadeye Dick

Fates Worse Than Death

Galápagos

God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater

Happy Birthday, Wanda June

Hocus Pocus

Jailbird

Like Shaking Hands with God (*with* Lee Stringer)

Mother Night

Palm Sunday

Player Piano

The Sirens of Titan

Slapstick

Slaughterhouse-Five

Timequake

Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon

Welcome to the Monkey House

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

OR

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH

KURT VONNEGUT

WHO, AS AN AMERICAN INFANTRY SCOUT
HORS DE COMBAT, AS A PRISONER OF WAR,
WITNESSED THE FIRE-BOMBING OF DRESDEN, GERMANY,
"THE FLORENCE OF THE ELBE," A LONG TIME AGO,
AND SURVIVED TO TELL THE TALE.

THIS IS A NOVEL SOMEWHAT IN THE TELEGRAPHIC
SCHIZOPHRENIC MANNER OF TALES OF THE PLANET
TRALFAMADORE, WHERE THE FLYING SAUCERS
COME FROM.

PEACE.



A DIAL PRESS TRADE PAPERBACK

*For Mary O'Hare
and Gerhard Mutter*

*The cattle are lowing,
The Baby awakes.
But the little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes.*

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ALL THIS HAPPENED, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really *was* shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really *did* threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. And so on. I've changed all the names.

I really *did* go back to Dresden with Guggenheim money (God love it) in 1967. It looked a lot like Dayton, Ohio, more open spaces than Dayton has. There must be tons of human bone meal in the ground.

I went back there with an old war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare, and we made friends with a cab driver, who took us to the slaughterhouse where we had been locked up at night as prisoners of war. His name was Gerhard Müller. He told us that he was a prisoner of the Americans for a while. We asked him how it was to live under Communism, and he said that it was terrible at first, because everybody had to work so hard, and because there wasn't much shelter or food or clothing. But things were much better now. He had a pleasant little apartment, and his daughter was getting an excellent education. His mother was incinerated in the Dresden firestorm. So it goes.

He sent O'Hare a postcard at Christmastime, and here is what it said:

“I wish you and your family also as to your friend Merry Christmas and a happy New Year and I hope that we’ll meet again in a world of peace and freedom in the taxi cab if the accident will.”

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I like that very much: “If the accident will.”

I would hate to tell you what this lousy little book cost me in money and anxiety and time. When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a masterpiece or at least make me a lot of money, since the subject was so big.

But not many words about Dresden came from my mind then—not enough of them to make a book, anyway. And not many words come now, either, when I have become an old fart with his memories and his Pall Malls, with his sons full grown.

I think of how useless the Dresden part of my memory has been, and yet how tempting Dresden has been to write about, and I am reminded of the famous limerick:

*There was a young man from Stamboul,
Who soliloquized thus to his tool:*

*“You took all my wealth
And you ruined my health,
And now you won’t pee, you old fool.”*

And I'm reminded, too, of the song that goes:

*My name is Yon Yonson,
I work in Wisconsin,
I work in a lumbermill there.
The people I meet when I walk down the street,
They say, "What's your name?"
And I say, My name is Yon Yonson,
I work in Wisconsin ..."*

And so on to infinity.

Over the years, people I've met have often asked me what I'm working on, and I've usually replied that the main thing was a book about Dresden.

I said that to Harrison Starr, the movie-maker, one time, and he raised his eyebrows and inquired, "Is it an anti-war book?"

"Yes," I said. "I guess."

"You know what I say to people when I hear they're writing anti-war books?"

"No. What *do* you say, Harrison Starr?"

"I say, 'Why don't you write an anti-*glacier* book instead?'"

What he meant, of course, was that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers. I believe that, too.

And even if wars didn't keep coming like glaciers, there would still be plain old death.

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