

Slaughterhouse Five

– Kurt Vonnegut Jr

“There must be tons of human bone meal in the ground. So it goes” (pg1)

“I hope that we’ll meet again in a world of peace and freedom in the taxi cab if the accident will.” (pg2)

“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.” (pg4)

“A whole city gets burned down, and thousands and thousands of people are killed. And then this one American foot soldier is arrested in the ruins for taking a teapot. And he’s given a regular trial, and then he’s shot by a firing squad.” (pg6)

“The destruction of Dresden was represented by a vertical band of orange cross-hatching, and all the lines that were still alive passed through it, came out the other side.” (pg6)

“The rabid little American I call Paul Lazzaro in this book had about a quart of diamonds and emeralds and rubies and so on. He had taken these from dead people in the cellars of Dresden. So it goes.” (pg7)

“At that time they, were teaching that there was absolutely no difference between anybody. They may be teaching that still. Another thing they taught was that nobody was ridiculous or bad or disgusting.”(pg9)

“World War Two had certainly made everybody very tough.”(pg12)

“...about the raid on Dresden, who ordered it, how many planes did it, why they did it, what desirable results there had been and so on... He said that he was sorry, but that the information was top secret still. I read the letter out loud to my wife, and I said, ‘Secret? My God – from whom?’” (pg13)

“The river was the Hudson. There were carp in there. They were as big as atomic submarines.”(pg15)

“That table top was screaming with reflected light from a two-hundred-watt bulb overhead. Mary had prepared an operating room.” (pg15)

“We had been foolish virgins in the war, right at the end of our childhood.” (pg18)

“She didn’t want her babies or anybody else’s babies killed in wars. And she thought wars were partly encouraged by books or movies.” (pg18)

“History, in her solemn page informs us that the crusaders were but ignorant and savage men, that their motives were those of bigotry unmitigated, and that their pathway was one of blood and tears. Romance, on the other hand, dilates upon their piety and heroism, and portrays, in her most glowing and impassioned hues, their virtue and magnanimity, the imperishable honor they acquired for themselves.” (pg19)

“We went to the New York World’s Fair, saw what the past had been like, according to the Ford Motor Company and Walt Disney, saw what the future would be like according to General Motors. And I asked myself about the present: how wide it was, how deep it was, how much was mine to keep.” (pg23)

“...There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds. And what do the birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like “*Poo-tee-weet*” (pg23)

“I have told my sons that they are not under any circumstances to take part in massacres, and that the news of massacres of enemies is not to fill them with satisfaction or glee. I have also told them not to work for companies which make massacre machinery, and to express contempt for people who think we need machinery like that.” (pg24)

“The time would not pass. Somebody was playing with the clocks, and not only the electric clocks, but the wind-up kind too. The second hand on my watch would twitch once, and a year would pass, and then it would twitch again.” (pg25)

“No art is possible without a dance with death, he wrote.” (pg26)

“So it goes. Those were vile people in both those cities, as is well known. The world is better off without them. And Lot’s wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she *did* look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human. So she was turned into a pillar of salt. So it goes. People aren’t supposed to look back. I’m certainly not going to do it anymore.” (pg27)

“He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next.” (pg29)

“Frames are where the money is. Billy became rich.” (pg30)

“Everybody was killed but Billy. So it goes. While Billy was recuperating in hospital in Vermont, his wife dies accidentally of carbon-monoxide poisoning. So it goes.” (pg31)

“He told about having come unstuck in time. He said, too, that he had been kidnapped by a flying saucer in 1967. The saucer was from the planet Tralfamadore... He was taken to Tralfamadore, where he was displayed naked in a zoo.” (pg32)

“The creatures were friendly, and they could see in four dimensions. They pitied Earthlings for being able to see only three... The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist.” (pg34)

“Now, when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadoreans say about dead people, which is ‘So it goes.’” (pg34)

“He was doing nothing less now, he thought, than prescribing corrective lenses for Earthing souls. So many of those souls were lost and wretched.” (pg36)

“He was powerless to harm the enemy or to help his friends.” (pg38)

“The umpire had comical news. The congregation had been theoretically spotted from the air by a theoretical enemy. They were all theoretically dead now. The theoretical corpses laughed and ate a hearty noontime meal.” (pg39)

“Billy Pilgrim, empty-handed, bleakly ready for death” (pg40)

“It was absolutely necessary that cruelty be used, because Billy wouldn’t do anything to save himself.” (pg42)

“Billy’s Christ died horribly. He was pitiful. So it goes.” (pg48)

“Like so many American, she was trying to construct a life that made sense from things she found in gift shops.” (pg48)

“The pines were planted in ranks and files.” (pg49)

“He had every piece of equipment he had ever been issued ...bulletproof Bible, a pamphlet entitled “Know Your Enemy,” another pamphlet entitled “Why We Fight”. (pg50)

“This is when Billy first came unstuck in time ... passing into death, which was violet light ... there was just violet light – and a hum.” (pg54)

“He dimly sensed that somebody was rescuing him. Billy resented that.” (pg55)

“He has directly challenged the authority of the government, and future discipline depends upon a resolute reply to this challenge.” (pg57)

“They had been ... living from moment to moment in useful terror, thinking brainlessly with their spinal cords.” (pg61)

“If you look in there deeply enough, you’ll see Adam and Eve ... They were naked. They were naked. They were so innocent, so vulnerable, so eager to behave decently. Billy Pilgrim loved them.” (pg67)

“He asked himself this: ‘Where have all the years gone?’” (pg72)

“Billy Pilgrim tried hard to care.” (pg73)

“It was all they had, and they’d wrecked it.” (pg75)

“Billy was not moved to protest the bombing of North Vietnam, did not shudder about the hideous things he himself had seen bombing do.” (pg75)

“Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future.” (pg75)

“But sleep would not come. Tears came instead. They seeped.” (pg79)

“They were moving like water, downhill all the time, and they flowed at last to a main highway on a valley’s floor. Through the valley flowed a Mississippi of humiliated Americans.” (pg81)

“Billy found the afternoon stingingly exciting. There was so much to see – dragon’s teeth, killing machines, corpses that were blue and ivory. So it goes.” (pg82)

“When food came in, the human beings were quiet and trusting and beautiful. They shared.” (pg90)

“The queer earth was a mosaic of sleepers who nestled like spoons.” (pg90)

“The champagne was dead. So it goes.” (pg92)

“The minerals were then shipped to specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground, to hide them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again” (pg94)

“Everybody turned into a baby, and all humanity, without exception, conspired biologically to produce two perfect people named Adam and Eve, he supposed.” (pg95)

“Well, here we are, Mr.Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There is now why.” (pg97)

“This law tells us that for every action there is a reaction which is equal and opposite in direction. This can be useful in rocketry.” (pg101)

“All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I’ve said before, bugs in amber.” (pg108)

“There isn’t any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvellous moments seen all at one time.” (pg111)

“And they came to a shed where a corporal with only one arm and one eye wrote the name and serial number of each prisoner in a big, red ledger. Everybody was legally alive now.” (pg114)

“Only the candles and the soap were of German origin. They had a ghostly, opalescent similarity. The British had no way of knowing it, but the candles and the soap were made from the fat of rendered Jews and Gypsies and fairies and communists, and other enemies of the state.” (pg122)

“They had both found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in war.” (pg127)

“And Billy had seen the greatest massacre in European history, which was the fire-bombing of Dresden.” (pg128)

“So they were trying to reinvent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was a big help.” (pg128)

“I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful new lies, or people just aren’t going to want to go on living.” (pg128)

“She made him feel embarrassed and ungrateful and weak because she had gone to so much trouble to give him life, and to keep that life going, and Billy didn’t really like life at all.” (pg130)

“And on it went – that duet between the dumb, praying lady and the big, hollow man who was so full of loving echoes.” (pg131)

“Before you kill somebody, make absolutely sure he isn’t well connected.” (pg138)

“Oh boy – they sure picked the wrong guy to lynch that time! ... And that thought had a brother, ‘There are right people to lynch.’ Who? People not well connected. So it goes.” (pg138)

“He expected them to fear that the Earthling combination of ferocity and spectacular weaponry might eventually destroy part or maybe all of the innocent Universe.” (pg147)

“I am from a planet that has been engaged in senseless slaughter since the beginning of time. I myself have seen the bodies of schoolgirls who were boiled alive in a water tower by my own countrymen, who were proud of fighting pure evil at the time.” (pg147)

“He has always pressed it, and he always will. We always let him and we always will let him. The moment is structured that way.” (pg149)

“It was a simple-minded thing for a female Earthling to do, to associate sex and glamor with war.” (pg152)

“It is in fact a crime for an American to be poor, even though America is a nation of poor.” (pg163)

“They do not love one another because they do not love themselves. Once this is understood, the disagreeable behaviour of American enlisted men in German prisons ceases to be a mystery.” (pg165)

“The light from the single source threw the baroque detailing of Montana’s body into sharp relief. Billy was reminded of fantastic architecture in Dresden, before it was bombed.” (pg170)

“Billy received a message carried by the radiations. He was told not to find out what the lumps were. He was advised to be content with knowing that they could work miracles for him, provided he did not insist on learning their nature. That was alright with Billy Pilgrim.” (pg174)

"I, Billy Pilgrim, the tape begins, will die, have died, and always will die on February 13th, 1976." (pg180)

"So Billy experiences death for a while. It is simply violet light and a hum. There isn't anybody else there. Not even Billy Pilgrim is there." (pg181)

"You needn't worry about bombs, by the way. Dresden is an open city. It is undefended, and contains no war industries or troop concentrations of any importance." (pg184)

"They smiled, and then they laughed. Their terror evaporated. There was nothing to be afraid of. Here were more crippled human beings, more fools like themselves. Here was light opera." (pg189)

"Tralfamadorians, of course, say that every creature and plant in the Universe is a machine." (pg196)

"'You're going to have to fight the Communists sooner or later,' said Campbell. 'Why not get it over with now?'" (pg207)

"There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces. One of the main effects of war, after all, is that people are discouraged from being characters." (pg208)

"Trout, incidentally, had written a book about a money tree. It had twenty-dollar bills for leaves. It's flowers were government bonds. Its fruit was diamonds. It attracted human beings who killed each other around the roots and made very good fertilizer. So it goes." (pg212)

"It predicted the widespread use of burning jellied gasoline on human beings. It was dropped on them from airplanes. Robots did the dropping. They had no conscience, and no circuits which would allow them to imagine what was happening to the people on the ground. " (pg213)

"The burning never stops hurting." (pg219)

"There was a fire-storm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn." (pg226)

“Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals.” (pg226)

“One thing was clear: Absolutely everybody in the city was supposed to be dead, regardless of what they were, and that anybody that moved in it represented a flaw in the design. There were to be no moon men at all.” (pg229)

“One of the things Rumford had told Lily to get in Boston was a copy of President Harry S. Truman’s announcement to the world that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima.” (pg236)

“I deeply regret that British and U.S. bombers killed 135 000 people in the attack on Dresden, but I remember who started the last war and I regret even more the loss of more than 5 000 000 Allied lives in the necessary effort to completely defeat and utterly destroy Nazism.” (pg239)

“Billy and the doctors unharnessed the horses, but the horses wouldn’t go anywhere. Their feet hurt too much.” (pg252)

“The window reflected the news. It was about power and sports and anger and death. So it goes.” (pg255)

“Robert Kennedy, whose summer home is eight miles from the home I live in all year round, was shot two nights ago. He died last night. So it goes. Martin Luther King was shot a month ago. He died, too. So it goes. And everyday my government gives me a count of corpses created by military science in Vietnam. So it goes. My father died many years ago now – of natural causes. So it goes. He was a sweet man. He was a gun nut, too. He left me his guns. They rust.” (pg268)

“East Germany was down below, and the lights were on. I imagined dropping bombs on those lights, those villages and cities and towns.”(pg269)

“Prisoners of war from many lands came together that morning at such and such a place in Dresden. It had been decreed that here was where the digging for bodies was to begin. So the digging began.” (pg272)

“And then, one morning, they got up to discover that the door was unlocked. World War Two in Europe was over.” (pg274)