

Slaughterhouse-Five Book Notes

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

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Author/Context

"The nature of his talent has been to realize just how strong the human imagination is; that no matter how pessimistic the conditions of the world may be, man still possesses the right to create his own reality." - Jerome Klinkowitz, on Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on November 22, 1922, the third child of two middle-class parents. His father was an architect and his mother came from a socially prominent family. He grew up during the Great Depression, and saw his life transformed as his family lost much of its money. Vonnegut has said that his greatest cultural debts are to the comedians, such as Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, Jack Benny, and Charlie Chaplin, who kept him laughing even during the Great Depression.

He worked on both his high school and college newspapers, and in 1943 enlisted in the United States Army. He went to Cornell University. His father told him to study something useful, so he studied chemistry and biology. He was sent to war when a bout with pneumonia during his junior year cost him his draft deferral. In 1944, when he was home on leave, his mother committed suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills. On December 22, 1944, Germans captured him at the Battle of the Bulge and he was a prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany, where he worked in a malt-syrup factory. In 1945, he experienced the Allied firebombing of Dresden, which killed between 135,000 and 250,000 civilians, even more than the U.S. dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After the war, he worked for the Chicago News Bureau and studied Anthropology at the University of Chicago but did not gain his Master of Arts degree until 1971, when the department of Anthropology decided that his novel *Cat's Cradle* could serve as a thesis. His rejected thesis proposals included a comparative study of revolutionary groups such as French Cubists and the American Plains Indians Ghost Dance movement, and another, a comparative study of the structure of the folktales of Russia, Kentucky, and other regions. His familiarity with story structure through the research for this proposal gave him an understanding of short stories, and he began writing and selling them to magazines such as *Colliers* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. At the same time, he worked in public relations for General Electric for several years but then quit and moved, with his wife and children, to Massachusetts to write full-time. His first five novels and his books of short stories (*Player Piano*, 1952; *The Sirens of Titan*, 1959; *Canary in a Cat House* (stories), 1961; *Mother Night*, 1962; *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, 1965; and *Welcome to the Monkey House* (stories), 1968) did not gain widespread critical recognition. In 1965, when started a teaching position at the Iowa Writer's workshop, his career could not have been in worse shape. Many of the magazines which published him had become defunct, and he was only receiving publication in small science-fiction magazines. However, that year, two publishers decided to reissue his previous novels, and the American public finally began to see that he was not a science-fiction writer but a serious writer who had a firm, if humorous grasp on middle-class American society. In 1968, he received a Guggenheim fellowship to return to Dresden.



It was *Slaughterhouse-Five* which really put him on the map. The review was given the coveted and prestigious first page of the New York Times Book Review, and a personality piece followed on the next page. It had taken him nearly twenty years to be able to write about the massacre in Dresden, but the novel is known as one of great anti-war novels of our time. Critic Gerome Hicks wrote of *Slaughterhouse-Five* that the real Kurt Vonnegut "lives and breathes in the book, and that this is one reason why it is the best he has written."

Kurt Vonnegut has since written eight novels, including *Breakfast of Champions*, two plays, several collected works of fiction and non-fiction, a requiem, and many, many uncollected works of fiction and nonfiction, including articles, interviews, and speeches. He is one of the most unique and well-known American writers of the twentieth century, known as both a humorist and a humanist, always reminding us with a reassuring irony not to give up on the human race.

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Plot Summary

The narrator opens with an elaborate hyperbole of a subtitle for the book, explaining that he is a veteran living in easy circumstances, who witnessed the bombing of Dresden, Germany as a prisoner of war and survived to tell the tale in the manner of the planet of Tralfamadore where the flying saucers come from. He went back to Dresden with a war buddy years later. He ends the first chapter saying that his war novel, his novel of looking back is over, since there is nothing intelligent one can say about a massacre.

He then tells the story of Billy Pilgrim, who is unstuck in time-- he uncontrollably gets flung around the scenes of his life. He was a prisoner of war, became an optometrist, and married a rich girl who died of carbon monoxide poisoning. He was the only survivor of a plane crash. He was abducted and kept in a zoo on the planet Tralfamadore, where he was mated with movie star Montana Wildhack.

With every mention of death in the book, the narrator says, "So it goes," Tralfamadorians believe that time exists all at once and not moment-by-moment like beads on a string. So a person is never dead, because he is still alive in the past. Billy's daughter Barbara is furious at him for trying to tell people his crazy notions.

He wandered behind enemy lines with a fat, sadistic soldier named Roland Weary and two scouts, who ditched them. Weary got so mad at Billy for this that he beat him and when they were captured by German soldiers, he convinced many others that it was Billy's fault when he died. Pre-capture, Billy also traveled to, among other places, his mother's nursing home, where she asks him weakly how she got old, and to the YMCA where his father taught him to swim by throwing him into the deep end. He also goes back to the night of his abduction.

Everyone at the prison camp was shocked to see how weak the Americans were. Billy was delirious, and he flipped out and was hospitalized. Edgar Derby, an older soldier who would be shot for plundering a teapot, stayed with him. Paul Lazzaro, a weak, hateful man, told Billy he had sworn to avenge Roland Weary by shooting him. Billy was not worried; he had seen when he would die. He traveled in time to his second hospitalization during his last year of optometry school. There he met Eliot Rosewater, who introduced him to the science fiction works of Kilgore Trout.

While there, Billy traveled back to Tralfamadore. When he told the crowd at the zoo to fear the power of Earthlings, they thought he was stupid; they knew it would be them, experimenting with a new jet fuel, who would destroy the universe.

Billy and the other soldiers were transferred to Dresden, which was a beautiful city. Billy traveled to the airplane crash, where he mistook the people who rescued him for German soldiers. During surgery, he traveled back to Dresden. In Dresden, he worked at a factory that made malt syrup with vitamins, which everyone illegally spooned. They



were kept in slaughterhouse number five. About a month later, the city was bombed, and the prisoners survived in an underground bunker.

At his eighteenth wedding anniversary party, to which he invited Trout after they met in an alley, Billy flipped out; the barbershop quartet reminded him of the Dresden guards.

Years later, in the hospital after the plane crash, Billy met Air Force Historian and war-hawk Bertram Copeland Rumfoord, who told him that the bombing of Dresden was necessary and had to be kept a secret because of all the American "bleeding hearts."

After the crash, Billy escaped to New York, where he snuck onto a radio show to preach his Tralfamadorian wisdom.

In the last chapter, the narrator tells of how he traveled back to Dresden, and how Billy and the other prisoners had been made to dig up corpses from the ruins.



Major Characters

Billy Pilgrim: Billy Pilgrim is the main character and the debatable hero of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. He is rather bumbling and funny-looking, almost like a puppet or a rag doll throughout the book. He is an unexceptional man, except that he has become unstuck in time, and consequently, throughout the narrative of the book, he spontaneously and uncontrollably time-travels throughout scenes from his life, mostly revolving around his experiences as a soldier. He is in his mid-forties in the book's present. He is a veteran of World War II, where he was captured and kept as a prisoner of war in Germany, where he witnesses the total destruction of the town of Dresden. He did not engage in any active combat; on the contrary, he fumbled his way through the war, starting off as a chaplain's assistant and getting lost often. When he returned, he went to optometry school and married Valencia, the rich daughter of the owner, who died of carbon monoxide poisoning on the way to see him in the hospital. After a plane crash, which killed everyone on the plane but him, he began announcing to anyone who would listen that he had been taken to the planet Tralfamadore. He preached the unique Tralfamadorian views of time and space and continues to do so, letting his optometry practice dissolve. People, especially his daughter Barbara, think he is crazy. He dies, as he knew through his time travel he would, of a shot to the head inflicted by someone avenging Roland Weary on behalf of Paul Lazzaro.

Narrator: The author explains in the preface that he is the narrator of the book. He is attempting to write a war book when we first meet him, and he goes to his war-buddy Bernard V. O'Hare's house to try to reminisce and dig up some memories for material. They did not think of much. He explains that there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre because everything is supposed to be dead and can't say anything anymore. So he gives up on writing his war novel after the first chapter. The narrator tells Billy's story matter-of-factly, explaining all of the time travel, often adding his own appearances in the story, in the men's latrine and on a boxcar, for instance, and often adding his two-cents. The narrator is very anti-war and has forbidden his sons to have anything to do with it. The narrator has a unique writing voice made up of anti-war sentiment and subtle wisecracks.

Bernard V. O'Hare: Bernard V. O'Hare is the narrator's war buddy. They both fought in World War II. The narrator goes to see him to think up material for his war book, and they go to Dresden and other European cities. The narrator seems surprised that his friend has aged a lot, and he does not drink anymore.

Paul Lazzaro: Paul Lazzaro is a soldier who was kept as a prisoner of war with Billy and the other Americans. The narrator writes that he has the worst and weakest body of all the Americans that arrived at the prison camp, with his rotting teeth and bones and boil-scarred skin. He is extremely hateful and violent, and thinks there is nothing sweeter than revenge. He had revenge on a dog that once bit him by feeding it steak with sharp metal pieces, and he swears to avenge his friend Roland Weary by having Billy Pilgrim shot.



Valencia Merble: Valencia is Billy's wife. She is the daughter of the rich owner of the optometry school that Billy attended. He knew he was going crazy when he heard himself asking her to marry him. She is very, very overweight because she cannot stop eating; almost every time she makes an appearance in the book, she is eating several candy bars. She loves Billy very much and didn't think anyone would ever marry her. She dies of carbon monoxide poisoning in her car on the way to visit Billy in the hospital after his plane crashes.

Montana Wildhack: Montana Wildhack is a beautiful movie star who the Tralfamadorians abduct in a saucer and take back to their planet to be Billy Pilgrim's mate. She is scared at first, but comes to love and trust him and eventually has his baby.

Edgar Derby: Edgar Derby is a soldier who is kept as a prisoner of war with Billy and the other Americans. He is old, but pulled strings so that he could fight in the war. His son is fighting in the war as well. He was a teacher before he was a soldier. He spoke up to the American-turned-Nazi-propagandist Howard W. Campbell Jr. when he came to speak to them in Dresden. Derby is eventually shot by a German firing squad for plundering a teapot from the corpse mines he was working in. This is a potent memory for Billy and it repeats throughout the book, from the first chapter to the last.

Kilgore Trout: Kilgore Trout is the author's alter-ego, a mediocre and not very well-known science fiction writer. Billy is first introduced to his books by Eliot Rosewater, his bed-neighbor in the mental hospital he has checked himself into in his last year of optometry school. Rosewater is an avid fan of Trout's, and writes him unintelligible letters saying he should be the President of the World. Billy ran into Trout, who was bossing around the newspaper boys who work for him, in an alley and brings him to his eighteenth wedding anniversary, where the guests are all impressed that he is a real writer. The story of abduction in one of Trout's books suspiciously closely resembles what Billy insists happened to him on Tralfamadore.

Roland Weary: Roland Weary is a soldier who fights in World War II. He is fat and sadistic and hates constantly being rejected. He has always been unpopular because he smells like bacon even when he washes. He is wrapped in a ton of warm clothing, and as a result, he is very energetic and considers himself the leader of his group. He is traveling with two scouts when he comes across Billy. He considers the three of them to be a team, which he grandiosely calls The Three Musketeers. The scouts have no idea of this, and they do not like him. They ditch him with Billy, and while he is beating Billy up in his frustration at being ditched, they are captured and taken as prisoners of war. In the boxcar on the way to the prison camp, he deliriously and repeatedly tells everyone in the car his version of the story, convincing them that he had a wonderful threesome called the Three Musketeers, who did wonderful and brave things for the country and for God, and that Billy had broken them up and killed him. Weary dies on the boxcar.



Minor Characters

Gerhard Muhler: Gerhard Muhler is the cab driver for Bernard V. O'Hare and the narrator when they are in Dresden. He takes them to the slaughterhouse where they were kept as prisoners of war. He had been a prisoner of the Americans. His mother was killed in the bombing of Dresden.

Nancy: Nancy is the narrator's daughter. He takes her with him to visit Bernard V. O'Hare in New York.

Alison Mitchell: Alison Mitchell is the narrator's daughter Nancy's best friend. She goes with them to New York to see the narrator's war buddy Bernard V. O'Hare.

Mary O'Hare: Mary is Bernard V. O'Hare's wife. When the narrator arrives at their house to talk with him about the war she acts strangely. She reveals that it is because she thinks that they were just babies when they were in the war, and she suspects that he will write a heroic war book that will glorify war, making it seem like more of them should happen, and her babies will someday be sent into war. The narrator appeases her, telling her that he will subtitle his book 'The Children's Crusade,' which he does, on the title page of Slaughterhouse-Five.

Sam (Seymour Lawrence): Sam is the narrator's publisher. He has a three-book deal. In the first chapter, he announces to Sam that he is done with his war novel, since nothing intelligent can be said about massacre.

Robert Pilgrim: Robert Pilgrim is Billy Pilgrim's son. He was trouble in high school, but he joined the Green Berets and got straightened out. He fought in Vietnam.

Barbara Pilgrim: Barbara Pilgrim is Billy Pilgrim's daughter. She is very upset that her mother is dead and her father seems to be insane, with his talk of aliens and such. She tries to keep him from preaching his Tralfamadorian knowledge, even coming and retrieving him from New York when he goes on the radio there.

Scouts: The scouts are the two soldiers who Weary travels with. He calls them the Three Musketeers and feels a great bond of friendship, but they eventually ditch him, making Weary so mad that he starts to beat up Billy and they are captured by a group of Germans. The scouts are eventually shot by German soldiers and die in the snow.

Werner Gluck: A sixteen-year-old who guarded the carts in the slaughterhouse. He was a distant cousin of Billy's.

Eliot Rosewater: Eliot Rosewater is the eccentric millionaire who collects Kilgore Trout's science fiction books. He is an avid fan and writes Trout that he should be President of the World. Rosewater and Billy meet when he had the bed next to Billy in the mental hospital Billy checks himself into in his last year of optometry school.

Howard W. Campbell, Jr.: Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is the American-turned-Nazi propagandist. He speaks German and has written popular German plays and poems.



He comes to the Americans when they are being held as prisoners of war in the slaughterhouse and promises them good food and other benefits if they join his group. Edgar Derby speaks up against him.

Lily: Lily is Bertram Copeland Rumfoord's fifth wife. She is much younger than him, pretty, and a high-school dropout who cannot read. She pretends to read Truman's statement about the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Wild Bob: Wild Bob is a colonel who Billy meets as a prisoner of war. Wild Bob is delirious and addresses Billy as if he were addressing his troops, most of which were killed. He tells them that if they are ever in Cody, Wyoming, to ask for Wild Bob.

Bertram Copeland Rumfoord: Bertram Copeland Rumfoord is an Air Force Veteran with many medals and a well-known Air-Force historian who is trying to condense the twenty-seven volume Air Force history of World War II into a book. He has a very young, pretty, dumb girlfriend, Lily. He and Billy have beds next to each other in the hospital. He thinks Billy is crazy and annoying and does not believe it when Billy says he was in Dresden. He thinks that the weak should just die. The hospital staff thinks he is mean and bitter.

Blue Fairy Godmother: The Blue Fairy Godmother is an English soldier who works at the pseudo-hospital in the camp for the prisoners of war. He is called the Blue Fairy Godmother because that was his role in the Cinderella musical that the Englishmen put on for the Americans to welcome them.

Guide: The guide works at the zoo on Tralfamadore where Billy Pilgrim and Montana Wildhack are kept.

Lionel Merble: Lionel Merble is Billy Pilgrim's rich father-in-law, Valencia Merble's father. He is an optometrist, too, and owns the optometry school that Billy attended. He is killed in the plane crash that only Billy survives.

Maggie White: Maggie White is a guest at the eighteenth wedding anniversary party for Billy and Valencia. She is the wife of an optometrist, and not particularly bright. She talks to Kilgore Trout, the science-fiction novelist, at the party. He tells her about his books, and he petrifies her.

Lance Corwin: Lance Corwin is a character in Kilgore Trout's science-fiction novel *The Gospel from Outer Space*. He goes back in time and measures Jesus Christ at five-foot-three.

Maori: The Maori is a man who digs out corpses from the ruins of Dresden with Billy Pilgrim. He is also a prisoner of war. He dies from too much vomiting from the stench.

hobo: The hobo is on the boxcar with Billy on the way to Dresden. He is either optimistic or delusional, for he keeps telling Billy that it is not so bad, that he has been hungrier before. He dies on the ninth day, and those are his last words.



Billy's father: Billy's father died when he was young. He taught him to swim using the sink-or-swim method, which consisted of him throwing Billy into the deep end of a swimming pool at the YMCA.

Billy's mother: Billy's mother appears several times in the book. She is not very religious, but played organ at church and taught Billy how. She bought him a gory crucifix for over his bed. She comes to visit him in the mental ward at Ilium, New York, and he hides from her because he feels so ungrateful that she gave him life and he does not like it.



Objects/Places

Dresden: Dresden is a city in Germany which was firebombed during World War II. Billy is held as a prisoner of war in Dresden, and is there for the bombing

Slaughterhouse: Billy and the other Americans are kept as prisoners of war in a slaughterhouse in Dresden, Germany.

Tralfamadore: Tralfamadore is the planet which Billy says he was taken in a saucer. He is able to time-travel and often travels to his future there while he is fighting in the war. The Tralfamadorians look like toilet plungers with little hands. They see time as something constant, where events always have happened, are happening, and will happen, as opposed to how Earthlings are stuck in the present and live moment-to-moment.

Children's Crusade: The narrator promises Mary O'Hare that he will subtitle his book 'The Children's Crusade' after she angrily tells him that they were just babies when they fought in the war. She is afraid that he will write a book glorifying the war, which will encourage more wars to happen, making it necessary for her babies to fight in wars someday.

mustard gas and roses: This is the narrator's repeating motif for something that smells bad or rotten. He uses it to describe his breath late at night when he makes phone calls to people he hasn't seen in a long time. He also uses it to describe the corpse mine from which the soldiers have to extract bodies of the victims of the Dresden bombing.

'Poo-tee-weet?': 'Poo-tee-weet?' is the sound of a bird chirping. Billy hears it at the very end of the novel, and it is foreshadowed when the narrator reveals at the end of the first chapter that his story will begin 'Listen:' and end 'Poo-tee-weet?'

Ilium: Ilium is the city in New York where Billy and his wife Valencia live.

So it goes: 'So it goes' is the phrase that follows each and every mention of death in the novel, whether it is the mass death after the bombing of Dresden or the death of the lice and bacteria on the soldier's clothes as they are cleaned. It signifies the Tralfamadorian attitude toward death, which the protagonist Billy Pilgrim has adopted as his own. Their belief is that moments exist not sequentially, with a past, present and future; but as a constant state of has happened, is happening, and will happen. Therefore, when a person or thing is dead, they are also alive, because every moment that they were alive is simultaneously existing-- it is just that their body is currently not in very good shape. So they say 'So it goes.'

Weary's knife: Roland Weary has a three-sided knife, which he shows to Billy and explains that it makes a wound which will not close. The Germans who capture he and Billy take it away from him.



Plane crash: Billy is the only survivor of a plane crash which happens when the plane crashes into the top of a mountain in Vermont on the way to an optometrist's convention. After the plane crash, he begins to talk freely about his experiences on Tralfamadore.

Sodom and Gemorrah: Sodom and Gemorrah are biblical cities which God destroyed because there were wicked people living there. The family of Lot was spared, but told not to look back as they fled. Lot's wife looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt. The narrator explains that people are not supposed to look back anymore, and that the book he tried to write about his experiences in the war was not good, because it was written by a pillar of salt.

Princess: Princess is the lady dog who arrives with the Germans who come to capture Roland Weary and Billy. They have heard her bark from afar and she sounds fierce, but the narrator reveals that she is a farmer's dog that they borrowed that morning and she has never been in war.

Sapphire ring: Billy bought Valencia a star sapphire ring for their eighteenth wedding anniversary. He was planning on presenting it to her in front of everyone, but he was so upset by the barbershop quartet which sang at the party that he felt faint and absent-mindedly handed it to her.

Late movie: Billy watches the late movie one night. Because he can time-travel, he watches it forward and backward. Backward, to summarize, the movie goes like this: American planes suck up shrapnel and fire from the ground and put it back in cylinders which they pack in their planes and which are sent back to be disassembled in factories, their dangerous contents hidden deep in the ground where no one can find them again.

Valley of the Dolls: Valley of the Dolls is the only book the Tralfamadorians have for Billy to read on the way to the planet in the saucer. All the rest of the books are in Tralfamadorian, a series of symbols which Billy cannot read.

Locket: Montana Wildhack, the movie star who is kept captive with Billy on Tralfamadore, wears a locket with these words engraved on it: 'God Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom always to tell the difference.' There is a picture of the locket and her breasts in the book. Billy has the same epigram on the wall of his optometrist's office.

Red Badge of Courage: Red Badge of Courage is a novel by Stephen Crane. It is the story of a young man's experiences in war. Edgar Derby reads it to Billy Pilgrim when they are in the hospital.

Zoo: Montana Wildhack and Billy Pilgrim are kept in a zoo on Tralfamadore, where they are kept in a sealed dome and observed in a habitat of furniture that the Tralfamadorians stole from a warehouse.

Febs: The Febs are a barbershop quartet whose name stands for 'Four-eyed Bastards.' Their music causes Billy to flip out at his eighteenth wedding anniversary, because they



remind him of the guards during the war. They and everyone else but Billy die on the plane crash in Vermont on the way to an optometrists' convention.

Schlachthof-funf: Schlachthof-funf is the German for Slaughterhouse-Five. The Germans tell the Americans kept as prisoners of war in Dresden to remember this as their address in case they get lost.

Free American Corps: Howard W. Campbell, Jr., the American turned Nazi-propagandist, tries to get the Americans to join his racist, anti-Communist organization by visiting them when they are prisoners of war and promising them meat and potatoes if they join.

Syrup-spooning: Billy and other prisoners of war work in a factory that makes a sticky syrup full of vitamins and minerals which is for pregnant women. All the workers spoon syrup for themselves. This is illegal, so they hide the spoons everywhere. Edgar Derby shows up and Billy makes him a syrup lollipop on a spoon and Derby is so happy that he cries.

Diamond: The two-carat diamond is one of the two objects that Billy finds in the dead civilian's coat that the Germans gave him. He has it set as an engagement ring for Valencia. He could feel it in the pocket, but he knows not to take it out until he needs it, which was when he was confronted by a German soldier for his ridiculous outfit made of the red toga and silver boots he got from the Englishmen's theatre set.

Partial denture: The partial denture is one of the two objects that Billy finds in the dead civilian's coat that the Germans gave him. He could feel it in the pocket, but he knows not to take it out until he needs it, which was when he was confronted by a German soldier for his ridiculous outfit made of the red toga and silver boots he got from the Englishmen's theatre set. He keeps the partial denture in a drawer with his cufflinks, which he has accumulated because he gets a pair for each Father's Day.

Corpse mine: Several days after the bombing of Dresden, the prisoners of war are sent out to the burnt city, where they must dig up the dead bodies of those killed in the bombing. Billy Pilgrim digs with a Maori man, who dies from vomiting too much from the stench like mustard gas and roses.

Ilium School of Optometry: Billy goes to this school to become an optometrist. He marries the daughter of the owner.

umpire: The narrator describes 'umpires' as people who come and tell the soldiers who is winning or losing the war.

Billy's crucifix: Billy had a gory crucifix hanging over his bed that his mother bought for him in Santa Fe. When Roland Weary tells him gory stories and thinks he knows nothing of the sort, Billy knows that he could tell him a few things about the crucifix.

dirty picture: Weary has a dirty picture of a woman attempting sex with a Shetland pony. The man who took it claimed it was artistic, and the Greek pillars evoked



mythology and classicism, but he was arrested and died in jail. The picture ends up in a porn shop in Time's Square that Billy visits when he escapes there to broadcast his Tralfamadorian knowledge.

Three Musketeers: Roland Weary considered himself and the two scouts the Three Musketeers and made up all sorts of heroic visions about them in his mind. He was furious when they ditched him and he blamed Billy.

Lion's Club: Billy belongs to the Lion's Club, and he often time-travels back to their meetings. He has been elected president of the Lion's Club.

'mopping up': The Germans that capture Roland Weary and Billy Pilgrim are involved in an operation called 'mopping up,' which consists of gathering any enemy soldiers not killed in battle.

black ghetto: Billy Pilgrim drives past the black ghetto one night and it reminds him of when he saw Dresden destroyed.

Spot: Spot is Billy Pilgrim's dog, who died.

Luxembourg: Billy Pilgrim's war adventure start in Luxembourg, where he is captured by German soldiers and eventually becomes a prisoner of war in Dresden.

boxcars: Billy Pilgrim and other American soldiers who are prisoners of war are loaded into boxcars. Each time the chain of boxcars stops at a prison camp, it leaves some boxcars there.

delousing station: The Americans are stripped naked when they get to the prison camp and their clothes are sent through a delousing station, where poison gas is sprayed on the clothes to kill all their lice and bacteria.

Hospital: Billy is hospitalized twice. The first chronological time, he flips out during a musical that the Englishmen put on to welcome them to the prison camp and is taken to their makeshift hospital with no real doctors. The second time, he is in a mental ward for non-violent patients in Ilium, where he has checked himself in voluntarily in his last year of optometry school.

Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension: Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension is the title of a science-fiction novel by Kilgore Trout in which crazy people cannot be diagnosed because their diseases only exist in the fourth dimension.

The Gospel from Outer Space: The Gospel from Outer Space is the title of a science-fiction novel by Kilgore Trout in which a flying saucer visitor says that the problem with the story of Jesus is that it teaches that it is only wrong to kill someone who is well-connected. He gives Earth a new gospel in which Jesus is a bum who God adopts, upon his death, as the Son of the Most Powerful Being in the Universe.



Gutless Wonder: Gutless Wonder is the title of a science-fiction novel by Kilgore Trout in which a robot is accepted as soon as he clears up his bad breath. Trout predicts napalm in this book. The robot has no conscience, so he can drop the toxins on the people below.



Quotes

Quote 1: "Slaughterhouse-Five /or The Children's Crusade/ A Duty-Dance with Death/ by Kurt Vonnegut/ A Fourth-Generation German American/ Now Living in Easy Circumstances/ On Cape Cod/ [And Smoking Too Much]/ 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." Preface

Quote 2: "And even if the wars didn't keep coming like glaciers, there would still be plain old death." Chapter 1, pg. 4

Quote 3: "As a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations, I had outlined the Dresden story many times." Chapter 1, pg. 5

Quote 4: "At that time, they were teaching that there was absolutely no difference between anybody. They may be teaching that still." Chapter 1, pg. 8

Quote 5: "The nicest veterans in Schenectady, I thought, the kindest and funniest ones, the ones who hated war the most, were the ones who'd really fought." Chapter 1, pg. 11

Quote 6: "We went to the New York World's Fair, saw what the past had been like, according to the Ford Motor Car 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." Chapter 1, pg. 18

Quote 7: "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." Chapter 2, pg. 23

Quote 8: "All this responsibility at such an early age made her a bitchy flibbertigibbet." Chapter 2, pg. 29

Quote 9: "They crawled into a forest like the big, unlucky mammals they were." Chapter 2, pg. 29

Quote 10: "It is, in the imagination of combat's fans, the divinely listless loveplay that follows the orgasm of victory. It is called 'mopping up.'" Chapter 3, pg. 52

Quote 11: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to always tell the difference." Chapter 3, pg. 60

Quote 12: "The legs of those who stood were like fence posts driven into a warm, squirming, farting, sighing earth. The queer earth was a mosaic of sleepers who nestled like spoons." Chapter 3, pg. 70



Quote 13: "I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply *is*." Chapter 4, pg. 86

Quote 14: "'My God--what have they done to you, lad? This isn't a man. It's a broken kite.'" -Englishman, Chapter 5, pg. 97

Quote 15: "So they were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe....Science fiction was a big help." Chapter 5, pg. 101

Quote 16: "And on and on it went that duet between the dumb, praying lady and the big, hollow man who was so full of loving echoes." Chapter 5, pg. 103

Quote 17: "The skyline was intricate and voluptuous and enchanted and absurd. It looked like a Sunday school picture of Heaven to Billy Pilgrim." Chapter 6, pg. 148

Quote 18: "In my prison cell I sit,/ With my britches full of shit,/ And my balls are bouncing gently on the floor./ And I see the bloody snag/ When she bit me in the bag./ Oh I'll never fuck a Polack any more." - Barbershop quartet, Chapter 7, pg. 155

Quote 19: "There are 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. But old Derby was a character now." Chapter 8, pg. 164

Quote 20: "Rumfoord was thinking in military manner: that an inconvenient person, one whose death he wished for very much, for practical reasons, was suffering from a repulsive disease." Chapter 9, pg. 192

Quote 21: "The cattle are lowing,/ The Baby awakes./ But the little Lord Jesus/ No crying he makes." Chapter 9, pg. 197

Quote 22: "Everything is all right, and everybody has to do exactly what he does." Chapter 9, pg. 198

Quote 23: "If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadorians is true, that we will all live forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still--if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice." Chapter 10, pg. 211



Topic Tracking: Anti-War

Chapter 1

Anti-War 1: The narrator has acknowledged that he is writing an anti-war book. The filmmaker told the narrator that he might as well write an anti-glacier book as an anti-war one, and the narrator, who has been in a war and knows its terrible power, understands this to mean that wars are impossible to stop as glaciers.

Anti-War 2: The narrator needed to express his reaction to the war, and he did so in all media, from crayons to his writing. When asked by a woman writer whether seeing a "squashed guy" bothered him, he said it didn't because he had seen worse in the war.

Anti-War 3: The narrator made friends with veterans, who he found shared his views of the war. He comments that those who hated the war the most were the ones who fought in it and experienced it firsthand.

Anti-War 4: When the narrator went to visit his war buddy Bernard V. O'Hare to talk about the war for his book, his wife Mary was acting strangely. Finally, Mary burst out with her anti-war sentiments. She knew that they were just babies when they went to the war, not brave men as they were forced to act like, and she feared that he would write a book glorifying war, making it seem like a good thing to do, so that people would make more war and someday her babies too would have to fight in it.

Anti-War 5: The narrator has taught his sons to be anti-war by telling them not to participate in or support it.

Chapter 2

Anti-War 6: The narrator was completely unprepared for the war he was thrust into. He was sent as a chaplain's assistant and ended up on enemy lines. The bizarre incident on the hill, in which he classifies soldiers who bring battle updates as "umpires" show his unpreparedness for the realities of war and death.

Anti-War 7: Roland Weary is a young man who is bitter about his whole life and takes it out on Billy. He is ridiculous and a failure, as his mis-shot at a tank left the rest of his troops dead, and Billy cannot even grasp the danger of his situation, as he keeps time-traveling away. They are weak and pathetic boys in the middle of a real war.

Chapter 3

Anti-War 8: Billy and Weary are captured by the Germans. The narrator takes all the romance and glory out of war by showing not the orgasm of victory, but the sloppy after-effects. He illustrates war as a ridiculous thing in which teenagers and old people use farm-dogs to round up boys in the snow and the enemy must stage photos to make themselves look proud and victorious.



Anti-War 9: The Marine at the Lion's Club meeting thinks of war as glorious and heroic, telling Billy that he should be proud that he has a son in the Green Berets in Vietnam. But the war left Billy not feeling like a proud hero, but a victim of uncontrollable weeping.

Chapter 4

Anti-War 10: Billy's ability to become unstuck in time allows him to watch the late movie backwards, which undoes all the harm and horror of the war and reverts Earth to a state of paradise.

Anti-War 11: The narrator describes the terrible conditions of the Americans who were loaded into the boxcars and the pathetically weak and ridiculous bodies of the prisoners of war, especially Billy and Paul Lazzaro.

Chapter 5

Anti-War 12: The Englishman sees that the war has broken Billy, to the extent that he does not even notice that he is on fire, and says that he is not a man anymore, but a broken kite.

Anti-War 13: Edgar Derby describes the horrible conditions he and the troops were subjected to before they surrendered. The narrator gives a painful and odd description of the bombing as terrible weather of knives and razors for Earthlings who others do not want to inhabit the earth any longer.

Anti-War 14: Billy encounters horrible conditions in the prison camp. Because the Americans had not eaten for days, even the good food that the Englishmen gave them wreaked havoc on their digestive systems and they all had horrible diarrhea as a result. It took them days to recover and eat normally after the Germans starved them on the trip to Dresden.

Chapter 6

Anti-War 15: The narrator poignantly describes how Edgar Derby is writing a letter to his wife in his head. From the beginning of the novel, though, it is clear, foreshadowed, that Derby will not make it through the war to see his family again.

Chapter 7

Anti-War 16: Billy still feels the effect of the war twenty years later, as he seems to think he has been injured in battle after the plane crash and whispers the address where he lived in Germany to the Austrian ski instructors who come to rescue him.

Chapter 8

Anti-War 17: Howard W. Campbell, Jr., an American turned Nazi-propagandist, is dressed in a ridiculous outfit, including a ten-gallon hat and a yellow body stocking. He



preaches war and aggression, but Edgar Derby speaks up to him in the finest moment of his life.

Anti-War 18: During the celebration of his eighteenth wedding anniversary, the barbershop quartet reminds him of the guards at Dresden, and he has a terrible flashback and leaves his own party to cry.

Chapter 9

Anti-War 19: Bertram Copeland Rumfoord is a war-hawk. There is a contrast between his involvement and obsession in the war and his much-younger girlfriend Lily's inability to understand battles that happened before she was even born. Lily holds in her hands one of the most crucial documents in the history of war, perhaps in the history of the world, which is Truman's announcement of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan, and she cannot even read it.

Anti-War 20: Rumfoord tells Billy that the Air Force kept the Dresden massacre a secret because of the the "bleeding hearts." As far as he is concerned, weak people should die. Billy, since he is inconvenient and bothers him, is a non-person.

Anti-War 21: Montana makes a parallel between the obscenity of the pornographic movie she was in and the obscene violence of the scene of the shooting of Edgar Derby.

Anti-War 22: The narrator returns to Dresden with Bernard V. O'Hare. He sees the lit-up, alive city and cannot help but imagine dropping bombs on it, as did the Americans.

Anti-War 23: The prisoners of war are forced into the awful task of digging up the bodies of the dead in Dresden after it is bombed. The stench is awful, and one man dies from throwing up from the stench.



Topic Tracking: Death

Chapter 1

Death 1: The narrator visits Dresden, and comments that Dresden must have a lot of bone meal in the ground. He says the phrase, "So it goes," for the first time in the book. He will proceed to say this after every single mention of death, from soldiers to bacteria.

Death 2: The narrator comments that the war made everyone tough, especially the women who took over for men's jobs. While working as a reporter for the Chicago City News Bureau, the narrator once covered a story about a man who had been crushed by an elevator after his wedding ring got snagged. So it goes. He recounted the story to the stenographer, and she said nonchalantly that she had seen worse in the war.

Death 3: The narrator tells his publisher that he cannot write a book entirely about Dresden because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre, for everyone is dead. So it goes.

Death 4: The narrator compares himself to Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt when she turned and looked back at the destruction of the city. So it goes. He says that what he wrote about the war was written by a pillar of salt.

Chapter 2

Death 5: The narrator announces the death of Billy's father bluntly. So it goes. There is never any emotional response elaborated.

Death 6: The narrator announces the death of Billy's wife matter-of-factly and without much tact. So it goes. He never elaborates on any possible emotional response by Billy, though his daughter Barbara does grieve.

Death 7: The narrator explains the phrase, "So it goes." It is the Tralfamadorian response to death, for on Tralfamadore, people only appear to die. They know, though that he is still alive in the past; all moments of past, present, and future are always alive. When they see a corpse, they think that the person is in bad shape at that moment.

Death 8: Billy is in South Carolina when his father dies. So it goes. Again, the death of Billy's father is mentioned emotionlessly.

Death 9: Billy is confronted with old age and death when he visits his mother in the nursing home. She asks him painfully how she got so old, and he sees the dead body of an old man who used to be a famous runner. So it goes.

Chapter 3



Death 10: Wild Bob, the colonel who addressed Billy, thinking he was addressing his troops, is a brave figure who dies a pathetic death as a delirious prisoner of war. So it goes.

Chapter 4

Death 11: The narrator described the prisoners in the boxcars as a liquid which would flow out of the cars toward coolness and light. The hobo cannot flow because he is a solid, dead. So it goes.

Chapter 6

Death 12: Paul Lazzaro, a vengeful, weak, rotting man, blames Billy for Weary's death and threatens to have him shot to avenge his friend.

Death 13: Because Billy can become unstuck in time, he has already seen that he will die from being shot in the head at a rally. So it goes. He speaks at the rally, telling them the Tralfamadorian wisdom, and tells them that he will die, but only for a little while, and that if they protest, they have learned nothing from him.

Chapter 7

Death 14: Because Billy has seen the future, he knows that the plane will crash and only he will survive. So it goes. He does not say anything because he does not want to cause a scene and knows people would think he was a fool.

Chapter 8

Death 15: Billy sees Dresden after the bombing and it is so barren and uneven that he refers to it thereafter as the moon. Everyone is dead. So it goes.

Chapter 9

Death 16: Billy's wife Valencia dies of carbon monoxide poisoning on the way to see him in the hospital after the plane crash. So it goes. It was foreshadowed in the beginning of the book, and there is never any emotional response to it.

Death 17: Death surround the narrator, from the deaths of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, to the rising death tolls in Vietnam, to the death of his own father, and to this, he responds: So it goes. He clarifies, though, that his father died of natural causes.

Death 18: Billy and the other prisoners are made to dig up corpses from the ruins of Dresden, where everyone has died. So it goes.



Topic Tracking: Humor

Preface

Humor 1: The preface, though it discusses the fact that the book will be about war, is silly and informal, a run-on sentence, with the narrator confessing he smokes too much and bringing up the fantastic subject of flying saucers.

Chapter 1

Humor 2: Amidst the discussion of the death of the cab driver's mother and the hard times under Communism, the narrator thinks of a lewd, funny limerick about an old man and his penis.

Humor 3: The narrator calmly explains the ridiculous: that he has to believe in clocks and calendars because he is an earthling.

Chapter 2

Humor 4: Billy is in a ridiculous situation: He can time-travel, but he cannot control where or when he will travel to.

Humor 5: The Tralfamdorians are described as two-foot tall toilet plungers with tiny little hands and advanced knowledge.

Humor 6: The narrator pokes fun at Billy's overanxious daughter Barbara, calling her a bitchy flibbertigibbet and saying she has legs like an Edwardian Grand Piano.

Humor 7: Weary is a silly and pathetic figure who takes himself and the war very seriously. He is overzealous, everyone ditches him, and he always smells like bacon.

Humor 8: The dirty picture which caused such a scandal is actually quite silly and melodramatic: A woman attempts sex with a Shetland pony against a backdrop of red velvet and Grecian columns.

Humor 9: When he is lying in the ditch in the snow, Billy has a fantastic hallucination that he is dancing in white sweatsocks on a ballroom floor.

Chapter 3

Humor 10: The Germans try to get a look of shock and horror on Billy's face for a propaganda picture, but what they really capture is a goofy smile, since he has time-traveled back to the Lion's Club.

Humor 11: While they are in a prisoner's march after being captured, Billy is bobbing up and down like an excited child as if he is watching the circus. What he really is seeing is things like a colonel and a whore.



Chapter 4

Humor 12: Billy is able to reverse the late movie so that the bloody and violent war turns into an ideal and naïve fantasy where bombers suck up fire and shrapnel and everyone reverts to paradise and the two perfect people, Adam and Eve.

Chapter 5

Humor 13: The coat that the Germans give Billy is ridiculous. It is made for a small monkey, with a fur collar like a dead animal.

Humor 14: Billy thought he was being all suave and well-spoken, telling the Tralfamadarians of Earth's awesome power, but he has really said something incredibly stupid. They know that the universe will end not because of Earthlings, but when they are trying a new jet fuel and accidentally blow the universe up.

Chapter 6

Humor 15: Billy's scavenged materials to keep warm leave him dressed in his ridiculous coat, silver boots, and a red toga.

Humor 16: The people of Dresden see the pathetic, awkwardly dressed Americans as some sort of parade. It is a variation on the dullness of their lives as they have been during the war years.

Chapter 8

Humor 17: Kilgore Trout is a hit at the party, where the pretentious and wealthy people talk to him enthusiastically because they think he is a famous writer. He is talking to Maggie, the not-so-bright wife of an optometrist, when he laughs at his own joke and spits fish eggs onto her cleavage.

Chapter 9

Humor 18: Billy makes a ridiculous figure in his toga, silver boots, and the silver sword he treasures, which is a relic of the Nazis. Yet he is content as a sleeping baby as he sits in the sun while his companions plunder Dresden.

Preface

An elaborate subtitle follows the title:

"Slaughterhouse-Five /or The Children's Crusade/ A Duty-Dance with Death/ by Kurt Vonnegut/ A Fourth-Generation German American/ Now Living in Easy Circumstances/ On Cape Cod/ [And Smoking Too Much]/ 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." Preface

Topic Tracking: Humor 1



Chapter 1

The narrator assures that the story to follow is real, at least the war parts. He went back to Dresden, where he had been kept prisoner years ago. It looked like Dayton, Ohio and he thinks there must be lots of human bone meal in the ground. He went with his war buddy Bernard V. O'Hare to the slaughterhouse where they were kept as prisoners of war. They talked with the cab driver, Gerhard Muller, who had been a prisoner of the Americans, who said it was hard to live under Communism, but things were better now. His mother was killed in the bombing of Dresden. The narrator writes, "So it goes." He wanted to write about Dresden, and make a lot of money off it, but instead he has become an old fart. He thinks of a lewd limerick about a young man and his non-functional penis, then a playful song.

Topic Tracking: Humor 2

Topic Tracking: Death 1

A filmmaker once told him he should write an anti-glacier book instead of an anti-war book. He understands this to mean that wars are as easy to stop as glaciers. "And even if the wars didn't keep coming like glaciers, there would still be plain old death." Chapter 1, pg. 4

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 1

To research the Dresden book, he looked up Bernard O'Hare's phone number. He jokes that he has a disease involving alcohol and the telephone, in which he gets drunk and tracks down old friends. O'Hare is awake when he calls, and although he does not remember much, he encourages him to come talk. The narrator asks if he thinks the climax should come at the execution of Edgar Derby for stealing a teapot. O'Hare mumbles that writing is not his trade. The narrator says:

"As a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations, I had outlined the Dresden story many times." Chapter 1, pg. 5

The best outline of the story he ever made was with his daughter's crayons. His description lapses from the simple drawing into complicated recollections. He remembers being freed with other soldiers, the saber he has as a souvenir, and the diamonds and rubies that another soldier got from the dead. So it goes. They went to France, where they ate rich food, got covered in baby fat, then went home, got married, and had babies who are all grown up and he and the others are old farts.

He went to college briefly. He studied Anthropology. "At that time, they were teaching that there was absolutely no difference between anybody. They may be teaching that still." Chapter 1, pg. 8 As a result, his stories never have villains.



He was a police reporter for the Chicago City News Bureau during college. He covered courts and police stations and the Fire Department. Reporters called in stories to writers wearing headphones. The toughest reporters were women who had taken over for men who had gone to war. His first story was about a veteran who had been crushed to death by an elevator because his wedding ring got caught. So it goes. He called in the story and, despite his gory description of the body, the woman at the Chicago City News Bureau said she'd seen worse in the war.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 2

Topic Tracking: Death 2

He was writing about Dresden even then. He told a professor about it and the professor told him about how the Germans has made soap and candles out of the fat of Jews killed in the concentration camps. All the narrator could say is, "I know, I know, I *know*."

He says World War II made people tough. When he became a public relations man his boss was very tough. He joined a tough church, too. He and his wife lost their baby fat and got scrawny and had scrawny veteran friends. "The nicest veterans in Schenectady, I thought, the kindest and funniest ones, the ones who hated war the most, were the ones who'd really fought." Chapter 1, pg. 11 When he asked the Air Force about details about Dresden, a man who, he notes snidely, is in public relations just like him, said it is top secret information. The narrator wonders from whom it is secret.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 3

He went to see Bernard V. O'Hare. He cannot remember the date. Frustrated, he lapses into repeating limerick fragments. He took his daughter Nancy and her best friend Allison Mitchell with him because they had never seen big bodies of water. He says they saw carp as big as atomic submarines. The girls are well-behaved and dressed nicely in party shoes.

He remembers meeting Mary, Bernard's wife. He dedicates the book to her and to Gerhard Muller. He sent the girls off to play. He sensed Mary did not like him, so he complimented her house. He imagined a nostalgic setting, but she brought him to the sterile kitchen. O'Hare said her behavior had nothing to do with him, but he knew he was lying. They tried to reminisce about the war but could think of only anecdotes, like a friend who got so drunk they had to carry him home in a wheelbarrow, or two Russians, drunk after raiding a clock factory. Mary came in and burst out that they were just babies then. She accused him of planning to write a heroic war book, making babies look like men, making war look like a wonderful thing we should have more of, causing more babies to be sent into war. Suddenly he understood: she did not want her babies fighting in wars. He told her his book probably would never be finished, but that if it was, he promised no big Hollywood stars would be in the movie, and that he would call it "The Children's Crusade." She was his friend after that.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 4



They looked up the real Children's Crusade. One said that the crusaders were ignorant and savage with a path of blood and tears. In 1213, two monks tricked 30,000 children, telling them they were going to Palestine, but they planned to sell them as slaves. Mary applauded the people of Genoa, who rescued a boatful of children.

The narrator read a history of Dresden, describing its glory and then its devastation in 1760. The next day he took the two girls out:

"We went to the New York World's Fair, saw what the past had been like, according to the Ford Motor Car 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." Chapter 1, pg. 18

He has a three-book contract. He addresses the publisher, Sam, saying that the book is short and jumbled because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everything is dead and quiet except for the birds, who say, "Poo-tee-weet?"

Topic Tracking: Death 3

He has told his sons not to take place in massacres, nor is the news of massacres to fill them with glee, nor are they to make massacre machinery, but to express contempt for people who think we need such machinery.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 5

He went back to Dresden with O'Hare. They had fun in other European cities. He says he saw a lot of authentic backgrounds that he will use in later fictional stories.

He missed his plane to Germany. He says the night passed slowly because someone was playing with the clocks so that a year would pass each time the second hand moved. He could do nothing, since as an Earthling he had to believe in clocks and calendars. On the plane, he read a novel about a soldier who gets his head cracked in the war, who then becomes a doctor and writes grotesque novels at night when he cannot sleep.

Topic Tracking: Humor 3

He looked through the Bible in the motel, reading the story of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. So it goes. He loves Lot's wife for turning back, because this is so human. She was turned into a pillar of salt. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 4

He writes that people aren't supposed to look back, not anymore. He announces the completion of his war book; the next one is going to be fun. This one was bad because it was written by a pillar of salt. He announces that it will begin: "Listen: Billy Pilgrim has become unstuck in time," and will end, "Poo-tee-weet?"



Chapter 2

The novel begins as he announced. Billy Pilgrim came unstuck in time. He went to bed a senile widower in 1955 and woke on his wedding day in 1941. He has no control over where in time he will go, and the trips are not always pleasant. "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." Chapter 2, pg. 23

Topic Tracking: Humor 4

Billy Pilgrim was born in 1922 in Ilium, New York. He is funny-looking. He was drafted for World War II after high school. His father died before the war. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 5

He was taken prisoner by the Germans. After his honorable discharge, he enrolled in the Ilium School of Optometry, became engaged to the owner's daughter, then suffered a breakdown. He was put in a veteran's hospital and married her after his release. Ilium was a good city for optometrists because there was a big company there where every employee (out of sixty-eight thousand) was required to have safety glasses.

Billy became rich and had two children. His daughter, Barbara, married another optometrist, who he set up in business. His son, Robert, joined the Green Berets and fought in Vietnam. In 1968, Billy was the only survivor of a plane crash on the way to a convention. So it goes. While he was recuperating, his wife accidentally died of carbon monoxide poisoning. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 6

He was very quiet when he got back, then went on the radio and started saying he had become unstuck in time, and that he had been abducted in 1967 and taken to the planet Tralfamadore, where he was put in a zoo and mated with movie star Montana Wildhack.

Barbara heard this and got upset. She brought him home. After a month, he wrote to the newspaper describing Tralfamadoreans as two-foot-high toilet plungers. On top of the shaft is a hand with an eye. They are friendly and have much to teach. On Tralfamadore, people only appear to die. They do not cry because he is still alive in the past; all moments of past, present, and future are always alive. Earthlings' way of seeing time as moment-to-moment like beads on a string, is an illusion. When they see a corpse, they think that the person is in bad shape at that moment. Tralfamadoreans' reaction to death is: "So it goes."

Topic Tracking: Death 7

Topic Tracking: Humor 5

Billy is writing his next letter in his cold basement on an old, heavy typewriter. His feet are blue and cold, but his heart is warm, thinking about all the people his letter will



comfort. Barbara is at the door but he does not answer. She thinks he is senile and considers herself the head of the family, taking care of her mother's funeral and her father's business. "All this responsibility at such an early age,' writes the narrator, 'made her a bitchy flibbertigibbet.'" Chapter 2, pg. 29 Billy has been trying to convince her he was sane. She says he is lying that he didn't hear her at the door. She is pretty, except that she has legs like an Edwardian grand piano. She resents that he is making a fool of himself and everyone associated with him. She threatens to put him in a home. She is angry, but he is calm and insists that it is all true, and insists that the problem is that Tralfamadore cannot be detected from Earth. She asks why he didn't mention it before the airplane crash, and he says that the time wasn't ripe.

Topic Tracking: Humor 6

He he first came unstuck in 1944, long before he was abducted. He worked for a preacher in the war, and was powerless to harm the enemy. Once an "umpire" (the narrator explains that there were umpires everywhere, men who said who was winning or losing the theoretical battle) comes with comical news that they have been theoretically spotted by the theoretical enemy and are theoretically dead. The theoretically dead soldiers laughed and ate. Billy was sent home when his father died. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 8

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 6

He was in the last German attack of the war. He never met his supervisor, nor was he issued gear. He ended up alive, dazed behind German lines in Luxembourg, tagging along two scouts and one anti-tank gunner, without food or maps.

On the third day, someone shot at them. The first bullet hit the scouts, the second the antitank gunner, Roland Weary. The third missed Billy, buzzing by his ear. He politely waited for the next shot, thinking it was the rules of war that the shooter should get another chance. The next shot missed too. Weary yelled for him to get down, adding the word *fucker*, which Billy had never heard from a white person (nor adds the narrator, had he ever fucked anybody), and it snapped him out of his daze.

Weary had shot at a tank and missed. The tank turned its fire in his direction and killed everyone but him. So it goes. He was only eighteen, at the end of an unhappy childhood. He was always unpopular because he was fat and mean and always smelled like bacon. He was always ditched, and hated it. In return, he would find someone even more unpopular than him, be friendly, then find a reason to beat him up. His father collected torture instruments. He gave Weary's mother a thumbscrew for a paperweight and a table lamp which was a model of the Iron Maiden, which, the narrator explains, was a medieval torture instrument in which the victim was enclosed in a chamber whose inner surfaces were covered with spikes, with a drain to let out the blood. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Humor 7



Weary told Billy that the worst form of torture is to stake a man over an anthill in the desert, with honey on his balls and pecker, and cut off his eyelids so he has to stare at the sun until he dies. He showed Billy his knife with a triangular blade, which caused a wound which wouldn't close. He taunted Billy for not knowing more about it, and sneered, asking what the hell they taught him in college. Billy meekly said he wasn't there for long. Weary told him there was more to life than what one read in books. Billy thought he could tell Weary about gore, since he had a gory crucifix above his bed in Ilium. Christ died horribly on Billy's crucifix. So it goes.

Billy's mother bought the crucifix in Santa Fe, the narrator writes, because she was like other Americans, trying to make sense of life through things she bought in gift shops.

After ten minutes, the two scouts decided to leave the ditch: "They crawled into a forest like the big, unlucky mammals they were." Chapter 2, pg. 29 They left tracks. Roland Weary was wearing every piece of equipment he'd ever been issued, every present he'd received from home, and carrying tons of supplies, including booklets called "Know Your Enemy" and "Why We Fight" and a pamphlet of German phrases such as, "Where is your headquarters?" and "Surrender, your situation is hopeless." He had a print of the first dirty picture, of a woman attempting sex with a pony, which he showed Billy. The narrator explains that the word *photography* was first used in 1839. Louis J. M. Daguerre revealed to the French Academy his process for developing an image. His assistant was arrested for trying to sell the pony picture and claimed that it evoked Greek mythology because of the columns in the background and the precedence for sex between mortals and gods posing as animals. He died in prison. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Humor 8

Roland considered himself the leader because he was the busiest. He also had no sense of danger, so snug and warm was he, and he could pretend that he was safe at home. Weary's story for his family went like this: There was a big German attack which only he survived. He found the two scouts and they formed "The Three Musketeers." A damn college kid joined them and they dragged him along, saving his hide. In reality, he was walking, trying to find Billy. He bumped his head, which went *clonk*, but he did not hear it because he was imagining that he and The Three Musketeers were winning medals and would never be separated.

Meanwhile, Billy Pilgrim was sitting against a tree, and he became unstuck in time for the first time. He passed through his life and into his death, which was nothing but violet light and a hum. He swung into pre-birth, red light and bubbling sounds, then into life, where he was a little boy showering with his hairy father at the YMCA. He was terrified, for his father had said that he would learn to swim by the sink or swim method, which consisted of Billy's father throwing him into the deep end. When Billy opened his eyes, he was at the bottom of the pool, and he dimly sensed someone rescuing him, which he resented.

He traveled to 1965, where he was visiting his mother at a nursing home. She asked him "How?" and was too tired to finish. He did not understand. She cried, summoned up



all her energy, and asked him how she got so old. She passed out. Billy saw the body of an old man wheeled by. He was a famous runner. So it goes. In the waiting room, he read an account of a soldier executed for cowardice in the Civil War. So it goes. The judge said that it had to be done to uphold the discipline necessary for an army to defeat an enemy. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 9

He went back to 1958, a little league banquet for Robert. The coach spoke emotionally.

He traveled to 1961, where he was disgracefully drunk at an optometry New Year's party. He was cheating on his wife for the first and only time with another drunk woman in the laundry room. She asks why he is called Billy and not William. He says business reasons, which means that his father told him people would remember "Billy" because there weren't any other grown Billys and it was a friendly name. He climbed into his car and tried to find the steering wheel. Amazingly, he could not. He was in the backseat.

Roland Weary found him in the snow and shook him awake, then flung him against the tree. He told Weary to leave him behind. Weary shoved and kicked him back with him, and told the scouts how Billy would owe his life to the Three Musketeers. This was the first they had heard of The Three Musketeers. Billy lay there thinking he was turning into steam, wishing people would leave him alone. Weary threw his arms around the scouts and asked what the Three Musketeers should do. Billy hallucinated that he was wearing warm, white socks and skating on a ballroom floor. The narrator clarifies that this is not time travel, but the craziness of a dying young man with shoes full of snow. The scouts ditched Weary and Billy in the creekbed and told them to find someone to surrender to.

Topic Tracking: Humor 9

Billy's skating gave way to 1967, where he was receiving an award in Ilium for being elected to the president of the Lions Club. He is scared stiff to make the speech, but all of a sudden, a humble, funny speech came out. The narrator explains that the miracle happened because he took a class on public speaking. He traveled back to the creek. Roland Weary was about to beat the living shit out him. Weary was furious at having been ditched again. He felt that it was Billy's fault that he was ditched. He thought Billy was laughing, and he was about to kick his spine when he saw five German soldiers and a dog wondering why one American would try to murder another, and why he was laughing.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 7



Chapter 3

The narrator explains that the Germans and the dog were in a military operation which is seldom described in detail. "It is, in the imagination of combat's fans, the divinely listless loveplay that follows the orgasm of victory. It is called 'mopping up.'" Chapter 3, pg. 52 The dog, whose bark sounded so ferocious, was a female dog they borrowed from a farmer. Her name was Princess and she had never been to war. Two of the Germans were teens and two were old men, farmers, given the equipment of the dead. So it goes. The commander was middle-aged, scrawny, dried-out and tired of war. He took his golden cavalry boots from a dead Hungarian. So it goes. Billy Pilgrim saw Adam and Eve in his shiny boots. They were naked and innocent and he loved them. He also saw a pair of feet in rags and clogs. He saw an angel. The lovely boy helped him to his feet and searched him for weapons. Three shots sounded, which was the sound of the two scouts being shot from behind. So it goes. They took Weary's knife, promising in German to use it on him. They tore open his coat as if they meant to rip his heart out and took his bullet-proof Bible and the dirty picture. He switched Weary's good boots with the boy's clogs and made Billy and Weary walk miles. They were taken to a cottage where other captured Americans sat. Billy went to sleep on the shoulder of a rabbi who had been shot through the hand. Billy traveled in time and found himself in his optometrist's office, having fallen asleep during an examination. The patient thought he had found something terrible because he was quiet. When she left, he opened the drapes and saw thousands of cars. He owned a Cadillac, a gift from his father-in-law. Billy realized that he was old and asked himself where all the years went. He went to his desk and read an article he did not care about. A siren went off for high noon, scaring him, since he expected World War Three at any moment.

When he opened his eyes again, he was back in World War II. The American soldiers were paraded outside. A German photographer took pictures of Weary and Billy's ill-equipped feet, which were used to show that the American army was not so rich after all.

The photographer also staged a photo of a capture by throwing Billy into the bushes and having soldiers pull pistols on him. He emerged with a goofy smile, as he had traveled to 1967, riding to a Lions Club meeting in his Cadillac. He passed through the black ghetto in his air-conditioned car, and it reminded him of some burnt-down towns he had seen during the war.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 8

Topic Tracking: Humor 10

The speaker at the meeting was in the Marines and spoke about how America must keep fighting in Vietnam until they win or the Communists realize they cannot force themselves on weak countries. He was in favor of more bombing. Billy was not against it or for it; he was simply having lunch with a club of which he was president. Billy had a framed motivational poem on his wall which the patients liked, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and



wisdom to always tell the difference." Chapter 3, pg. 60 The narrator explains that Billy cannot change are the past, present and future. Billy was introduced as a veteran with a son in the Green Berets. The Marine told him he should be proud. He took a nap after lunch under doctor's orders after he had complained about unexplainable weeping.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 9

Billy was very rich. He never expected to be. He owned a house, a business, part of a hotel, and ice cream stands. He had no servants, the narrator explains, because people just weren't interested in careers in domestic services anymore. There had been a dog, Spot, but it died. So it goes.

His bed had a vibrating function, on the recommendation of his doctor. Billy undressed and tried to nap, but cried instead. The doorbell rang and Billy looked and saw a crippled man, whom the narrator describes as spastic in space as Billy is in time, flapping around as if he were trying to imitate a famous movie star. Billy knew he was scamming, selling subscriptions to magazines that would never come. He heard about it at the Lions Club. He saw a Buick which he knew belongs to their boss. He wept and traveled back in time.

Back in Luxembourg, he was marching with other Americans. He kept bumping into Weary accidentally. The narrator describes their feet as blood puddings. There were tens of thousands of humiliated marching Americans, each small group joining a larger one. Billy smiled at each soldier. There were vehicles on the road which were rushing new German reserves with machine guns, sausages, and cigars, eager to fight. One soldier, drunk spat his tobacco-snot-sausage-liquor spit on Weary. Billy was bobbing up and down excitedly; there was so much to see. He saw a farmhouse and a colonel with a whore.

Topic Tracking: Humor 11

When they reached Germany, a motion-picture camera was recording the German victory. It focused on Billy, then back into the distance, where there was a battle and people were dying. So it goes. The soldiers were loaded onto boxcars.

They were sorted into ranks. A colonel with pneumonia asked if he was in his regiment. He had lost most of his men. Billy did not know what regiment he was in. The colonel yelled out to his troops that he was there, Wild Bob. Only Roland Weary was from his troop, but he couldn't hear over the agony in his feet. Staring into Billy's eyes, the colonel imagined that he was addressing his troops. He tells them that if they are ever in Cody, Wyoming, to ask for Wild Bob. Billy's head rang with the nonsense. The narrator says that he was there, too, with Bernard V. O'Hare.

The soldiers were packed tightly into the boxcars and Billy and Weary were separated. Germans wrote in blue chalk the ranks and number of people in each car. Most of the soldiers in Billy's car were young. A former hobo told him that it wasn't so bad.



Billy heard a man yell that a man in his car had died. So it goes. The guards did not open this door, but went into the next, where Billy saw their comparably luxurious home, with blankets and a stove and food and pictures on the walls. They smoked cigars in there and wagged their fingers at Billy. They finally went to the car with the colonels, which was not very crowded at all, and took out the dead man, who is Wild Bob. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 10

Some trains left during the night. They were marked with orange and black to indicate that they were full of prisoners and should not be bombed. The war was almost over. German prisons were full. Billy's train did not move for two days. The hobo said it wasn't that bad. The train was locked. Each car became one living organism which ate, drank, and excreted through ventilators. The soldiers excreted into steel helmets which were dumped out of the boxcars. When the food came in, they shared. The narrator describes them as quiet and trusting and beautiful.

They took turns standing and lying down. "The legs of those who stood were like fence posts driven into a warm, squirming, farting, sighing earth. The queer earth was a mosaic of sleepers who nestled like spoons." Chapter 3, pg. 70 Billy spooned with the hobo. When he fell asleep, he time-traveled to the night he was abducted.



Chapter 4

Billy could not sleep on his daughter's wedding night. He was forty-four. The reception was in an orange and black tent. He was in bed with his wife Valencia, who was snoring like a saw, and whose uterus had been removed by a surgeon. Billy looked at his white and blue feet in the moonlight. He went down the hallway knowing he was about to be kidnapped by a flying saucer. He passed his children's rooms, thinking of how they were children no more. His daughter took all her stuff out of her room. He answered his daughter's phone and it was a wrong number. There was a soda bottle on her windowsill which boasted that it had no nutrition whatsoever.

He went downstairs and found half a bottle of champagne. It said "Drink me," but it was dead. So it goes. He looked at the clock and saw that he had an hour until the saucer came. He watched the late movie forward and backward. Backward, the movie went like this: Wounded American planes took off backward from England. German fighter planes sucked shrapnel and bullets from France and American bombers, who flew back into formation. The bombers sucked up fire into containers which were stored neatly in racks. The Germans below sucked more fragments from crewmen and planes. Over France, German fighters made everything good as new. The cylinders were shipped to factories in the USA, where women separated the dangerous contents into minerals which were shipped to remote areas where they were hidden in the ground so as never to harm people again. The Americans turned in their uniforms, and Billy elaborates on the movie, supposing that Hitler turned into a baby as well, as did all people, who conspired to produce two perfect people, Adam and Eve.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 10

Topic Tracking: Humor 12

It was time to get into the saucer. It was one hundred feet in diameter and the portholes gave off purple light. A ladder came down and Billy's will was paralyzed. He took hold and was hauled into the saucer, where his brain started working again. The Tralfamadorians communicated telepathically. They used a computer and voice generator to welcome him aboard. Billy asked why he had been chosen. They told him that, like bugs trapped in amber, he is trapped in the amber of the moment; there was no why.

They gave him anaesthetic so he would sleep. They had stolen lots of Sears-Roebuck merchandise for his habitat. The acceleration sent him back to the war, where he was in a boxcar again. He imagined that there was a year between each click of the wheels on the tracks. Each time it passed a prison, it left a few cars. Billy wanted to go to sleep, but no one would let him sleep near them, saying he kicks and whimpers. He had to sleep standing from then on, food stopped coming in, and nights were getting colder.

On the eighth day, the hobo was still saying it wasn't so bad. He died on the ninth. Roland Weary died on the ninth day in his car, too. He kept talking about The Three



Musketeers and how he wanted to be avenged. When he would ask who killed him, everyone knew that the answer was Billy Pilgrim.

On the tenth night the door of Billy's car was opened. As he coughed, he "shit thin gruel." The narrator explains that this was because of Newton's Third Law of Motion: for every action there is a reaction equal and opposite in direction, which is useful in rocketry.

The prison was originally an extermination camp for Russian prisoners of war. The guards had not dealt with Americans before. The narrator explains that they knew that the contents of the car was a liquid which could be convinced to flow toward coolness and light. It was night, and the only light was from a small bulb far away. It was silent except for the guards cooing. The narrator describes people unloading from the cars as liquid beginning to flow, gobs of it plopping to the ground. He explains that the hobo could not pop because he was not liquid anymore, but stone. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 11

Billy did not want to drop from the car because he was convinced he would shatter. The guards cooed him down from the train. In the guards' car, dinner was served.

The Americans were herded toward three seeming haystacks which were really piles of jackets taken from dead prisoners. So it goes. The coats were frozen together. Billy got a small civilian's coat with a collar which looked like a dead furry animal. All the others got soldiers' coats. They were encouraged into long, narrow, unlit sheds. A dog barked and it sounded like a gong in the winter silence.

Billy saw his first Russian. Barbed wire separated them. He looked into Billy's soul with sweet hopefulness, as if Billy would have good news, even if he was too dumb to understand it. Billy zoned and came to a brightly lit building which he thought could be Tralfamadore, but which was the delousing station on Earth. He took off his clothes, which was also the first thing they made him do on Tralfamadore. A German inspected his body and wondered why America would send such a weakling to the front.

The best body was that of Edgar Derby. He was so old that he had a son in the war. He had used his connections to get into the war. He taught Contemporary Problems in Western Civilization in Indianapolis, and he was on the tennis team. The narrator explains that Derby's body would soon be filled with holes by a firing squad. So it goes.

Paul Lazarro had the worst body. His bones and teeth were rotten, and he was covered in boil scars. He had given his word to avenge Weary. The naked Americans were herded into showers. The narrator tells that their genitals were shriveled, but adds that reproduction was not the main business of the evening. While the hot water scalded their skin, still not thawing the ice in the marrow of Billy's bones, their clothes were passing through poison gas to kill bacteria and lice. So it goes. Billy zoomed back to his infancy. His mother gave him a warm, soft bath.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 11



Then he was a middle-aged optometrist playing golf instead of going to church. He made a great shot, then was in the saucer again. Tralfamadorians explained that they will be in a time warp which will allow them to arrive in hours instead of centuries. He asks how, and they say Earthlings are the great explainers, explaining why and how, while Tralfamadorians see all time as constant: "I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is." Chapter 4, pg. 86 The Tralfamadorian replies that only on Earth, of almost one hundred fifty planets, is there any talk of free will.



Chapter 5

Tralfamadorians see the stars as luminous spaghetti. They can see where each star has been and where it is going. Humans have thousands of legs, from babies' to old people's.

Billy asked for something to read on the saucer trip and they gave him *Valley of the Dolls*. Tralfamadorian novels were symbols, like a telegram, with each clump describing a situation. There was no particular relationship between the messages, no beginning, end, or moral, except that they were beautiful and deep.

Billy was then flung back to when he was twelve years old, visiting the rim of the Grand Canyon. He was sure he would fall in. His mother touched him and he wet his pants.

A ranger told a French tourist there were about three suicides a year. So it goes. He then jumped ten days later to Carlsbad Caverns. Billy was sure the ceiling was going to fall in. The ranger turned out all the lights. Billy did not know if he was still alive or not.

He found himself back in the war. The shower was over. Billy got his clothes back. His coat was about the right size for an organ grinder's monkey, and it was full of bullet-holes. He tried to put it on and it split. The flare that was supposed to happen at the waist happened at Billy's armpits. The Germans found it screamingly funny.

Topic Tracking: Humor 13

The Americans, happier since the shower, were herded to a shed, where they were recorded in a ledger. Before this, they were missing in action or dead. So it goes. An American muttered something and the guard punched him in the face. The American asked "why me?" and the guard replied "why anybody?"

Billy got an iron dogtag; in case he died, one half could mark his body and one half his grave. When Edgar Derby died, his dogtag was snapped in two. So it goes. In two days the soldiers' families would learn of their whereabouts. Paul Lazzaro was next to Billy. His stomach had shrunk to the size of a walnut. Next was Edgar Derby. He had expected to become a captain because of his wisdom and age. They halted outside sheds. The doors opened and light poured out at 186,000 miles per second. Fifty middle-aged men marched out singing.

The English soldiers had not seen birds, women, or children for four years or more. They were officers who had tried to escape from another prison. They were strong and had been singing and exercising for years. A clerical error by the Red Cross had caused five hundred instead of fifty parcels to arrive every month. They had accumulated tons of sugar, coffee, chocolate, tobacco, tea, flour, canned beef, butter, cheese, milk, and marmalade. The Germans adored them for making war look stylish and reasonable and gave them four sheds. They gave them building materials in return for coffee. When the Englishmen heard that the Americans were coming, they fixed the place up. They set up



a candle-lit banquet for the Americans. They did not know that the candles and soap of German origin were made of the fat of killed Jews and Gypsies and homosexuals and communists. So it goes.

Billy stood close to the stove and his coat caught on fire. He did not notice. He was thinking about calling his mother. An Englishman beat out the flames. The Englishman, stunned, said, "My God--what have they done to you, lad? This isn't a man. It's a broken kite." Chapter 5, pg. 97 They asked if his coat was a joke. They told him that he mustn't let Jerry do things to humiliate him. He swooned, and when he came to, he had somehow eaten and was enjoying their production of Cinderella. While laughing Billy began shrieking. He was carried to the hospital.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 12

He was tied down and given morphine. Edgar Derby volunteered to watch him and read *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane. Under morphine, Billy dreamed of giraffes in a garden. He was a giraffe, too. They accepted them as his own and kissed him.

Night came to the garden. He slept without dreaming, time traveled, and woke in a ward for nonviolent mental patients in New York, three years after the war. A bird outside asked him, "Poo-tee-weet?" The narrator explains that the patients had come voluntarily, alarmed by the outside world. Billy had committed himself in his last year of school. The doctors thought it was because of his father throwing him into the pool. The man in the bed next to Billy's was named Eliot Rosewater. He was a former infantry captain who was tired of being drunk all the time. He had a huge, beloved collection of science fiction by a writer named Kilgore Trout, which he kept under his bed. They smelled like flannel pajamas that hadn't been washed for a month, or like Irish stew. Kilgore Trout became Billy's favorite too. The narrator explains that Rosewater was twice as smart as Billy, but they had both found life meaningless due to the war. Rosewater had shot a fourteen-year-old firefighter, mistaking him for a German soldier, and Billy had seen the firebombing of Dresden. So it goes.

"So they were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe....Science fiction was a big help." Chapter 5, pg. 101

One time Rosewater said that everything there was to know about life was in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, but that wasn't enough anymore. Another time, Billy heard Rosewater tell a psychiatrist that they would have to come up with a whole lot of new lies, or people wouldn't want to keep living.

The narrator describes Billy's bedside table as a still-life. The glass of water was dead. So it goes. Weak bubbles were trying to get out. The cigarettes belonged to his mother. Billy covered his head when he saw his mother because he felt ungrateful that she had given him life and he didn't like it.

Rosewater was big, but not very powerful, as if he were made of putty. He was experimenting with being sympathetic with everyone in order to make the world more



pleasant. He was calling everybody "dear." She told him that she prayed every night that someday Billy would come out and talk to her. She talked about the importance of prayer. Rosewater sympathetically agreed. She asked him if his mother came to visit and he told her she was dead. So it goes. She said Billy's father was dead and that a boy *needs* a father. The narrator says, "And on and on it went, that duet between the dumb, praying lady and the big, hollow man who was so full of loving echoes." Chapter 5, pg. 103

Billy's mother told Rosewater that her son was at the top of the class when he checked himself in. Rosewater suggested that he was working too hard. He was trying to be polite, but also trying to read Kilgore Trout's *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension*, in which maniacs could not be treated because their diseases were of the fourth dimension, which Earthlings could not imagine. So were heaven and hell and William Blake.

She told him Billy was engaged to a rich girl. Rosewater agreed that money could be a comfort. Billy fell asleep and woke up tied to the prison bed with Edgar Derby reading to him. He saw the future of Edgar Derby, the firing squad with four men. The head Englishman, not a real doctor, came to check on him. The Englishman commented how nice it must be to feel nothing and still get full credit for being alive. Derby tried to salute, but the Englishman told him that it was unnecessary pageantry. The colonel told him that all the other men had been shaved, and it reminded him of The Children's Crusade. Derby described his capture, and how tanks drove him into hiding in the trees. He described the artificial weather Earthlings create for other Earthlings whom they do not want to inhabit the earth any longer, showers of knives and needles and razorblades which wounded and killed lots of people. So it goes. Germans called for their surrender.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 13

Billy traveled back to the veteran's hospital. His fiancée, Valencia, was there. She was big as a house from eating. Her rhinestone glasses matched her diamond engagement ring. Billy had found the diamond in Germany and insured it for eighteen hundred dollars. He knew he was going crazy when he heard himself proposing; she was a symptom of his disease. He said he was feeling better and sent wishes to his classmates. He told her about the Kilgore Trout books. Rosewater told him about *The Gospel from Outer Space*, in which an alien studied Christianity to learn why humans could be cruel. He came to the conclusion that the Gospels taught that before you kill someone, you should make sure he isn't well connected. The alien saw the flaw in the Christ story: readers, when confronted with the murder of the Son of the Most Powerful Being in the Universe, thought about how he was the wrong person to kill, and that there must be a *right* person to kill, a person who is not well connected. The alien made a gift of a new Gospel in which Jesus was a nobody, but when he was crucified, God said he was adopting the bum as his son and giving him full privileges as the Son of the Most Powerful Being in the Universe, and said that he would punish anyone who tormented an unconnected bum.

Valencia started on a second candy bar. Rosewater threw a book down, complaining that Trout's writing was dreadful; only his ideas were good. All of Trout's characters were



Americans, as if he had never left the country. Rosewater tried to contact him many times, but no two books had the same publisher. He complimented Valencia's ring, and he said the attractive part of war was that everyone got something.

The narrator reveals that Kilgore Trout actually lived in Ilium, Billy's hometown, friendless and despised, and that they would meet.

Valencia asked Billy annoyingly about choosing a silver pattern. He traveled to Tralfamadore, where he was kept naked in a zoo. Thousands were looking at his body, fascinated. He could not escape; the atmosphere outside was cyanide and Earth was zillions of miles away. He had a fully furnished habitat with a TV that didn't work. Everything was out in the open. Billy urinated in the bathroom and the crowd went wild. He ate breakfast and exercised. Tralfamadorians had no way of knowing his body was not beautiful, which had a good effect on Billy's ego. The guide at the zoo was telepathically lecturing. One of the guests asked him if he was happy, and he replies that he was as happy as he was on Earth.

There were five genders on Tralfamadore. The differences were in the fourth dimension. Tralfamadorians told him that they had identified seven different genders on earth, but five were only active in the fourth dimension: there could be no babies without male homosexuals, old women, and babies who had lived an hour or less. They could not explain what time looked like to them, nor could he explain what time looked like him. The guide explained it as if they were looking across a desert and could see in all directions, but the Earthling's head was encased in a steel sphere which only had one eyehole. This was just the beginning of the analogies that the guide used, all of which were torturous and miserable for the Earthling Billy, who was unaware of his situation.

As a result of science fiction, Billy expected the Tralfamadorians to be stunned by all the killing on earth and to fear Earthlings for this. One day, when asked what he thought was most valuable about Tralfamadore, he said that it is how the whole planet can live in peace. He launched into what he thought was a soaring speech about the senseless slaughter on earth, how Earthlings know the secrets of the universe and could use it to harm other planets. However, he saw the Tralfamadorians put their hands on their eyes and knew he had said something stupid. The guide explained to him that they already knew how the universe would end: Earth would have nothing to do with it; Tralfamadorians will blow it up while experimenting with new fuels for their saucers.

They could not prevent it; it had always and would always happen. He went on to say that trying to prevent war on Earth was stupid, too, that there had been horrible wars on Tralfamadore, too but that they ignored the awful times and concentrated on the good.

Topic Tracking: Humor 14

After he went to sleep, Billy traveled to his wedding night. He was making love to Valencia. Valencia was imagining that she was Queen Elizabeth I and Billy was Christopher Columbus. The narrator explains that the result would be Robert Pilgrim, who would be a problem in high school but would straighten out in the Green Berets.



Billy made a noise like a rusty hinge as he ejaculated into Valencia, which, explains the narrator, contributed his share of the Green Beret. Huge Valencia had a rapt expression on her face. Billy was rich, explains the narrator, rewarded for marrying a girl nobody in his right mind would have married. His mother said the Pilgrims were coming up in the world.

They listened to the singing sounds of a boat. Their headboard made singing sounds as they made love. Valencia cried with happiness. She told him she never thought anyone would marry her. She said that she was going to get thin for him, and he said he liked her the way she was. He had already seen ahead that the marriage would be bearable.

A motor yacht carrying two beautiful people went by. The narrator reveals that Billy Pilgrim would later share a hospital room with the man's uncle, Bertram Rumfoord.

Valencia asked her funny-looking husband if he ever thought about the war. When he replied "Sometimes," she said that she had a funny feeling he was full of secrets. He lied and said he wasn't. She told him she was proud that he had been a soldier and asked if it was awful. He said that sometimes it was. She asked him if he would talk about it if she asked him to. In her body, explains the narrator, she was assembling materials for a Green Beret. Billy told her it would sound like a dream, and others' dreams weren't usually interesting. She asked him many questions. He answered her in one-syllable answers and then excused himself to the bathroom, where he found that he had traveled to 1944, the prison hospital again.

(On the next page of the book is an illustration of a headstone. There is a fat little angel drawn on it, and the epitaph reads "Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt.") Edgar Derby fell asleep in the cot next to him. Billy went looking for a bathroom but stumbled into barbed wire. A Russian saw a funny little scarecrow, Billy, and helped free him.

Billy peed on the ground. He contemplated where he had come from and where he should go. He shuffled toward cries of grief and approached, without knowing it, a latrine. His perceptions were so off that he read a sign on the wall as letters floating, with the words "Please leave this latrine as tidy as you found it!" The wall with the nails looked to Billy like a curtain with lovely silver dots, and he supposed it was all part of some religious ritual he knew nothing about. He looked in the latrine and it was full of Americans who had gotten terrible diarrhea from the banquet. One wailed that he had excreted everything but his brains, and moments later wailed that they too were gone. The narrator explains that was him, the author of the book. Billy reeled away. Englishmen told him disgustedly to button his pants. He found himself in Cape Ann again. Valencia said she missed him, and he said that he missed *her*. They went to sleep and Billy traveled back to the train ride in 1944 to his father's funeral.

The same night as Billy was brought to the prison hospital, so was Paul Lazzaro, who had been beaten for stealing cigarettes. The man who beat him up carried him in. The man had played the Blue Fairy Godmother in Cinderella. He was embarrassed that he had beaten such a weakling. He and a colonel talked about how wimpy the Americans. A German major who they knew well and who played games with them and gave them



lessons came in. He apologized for their having to put up with the Americans, who he said would soon be shipped to Dresden as laborers. He had a report on the behavior of enlisted men written by an American who had risen high in the German Ministry of Propaganda, whose name was Howard W. Campbell, Jr. Campbell would later hang himself while awaiting trial as a war criminal. So it goes.

The German major read passages by Campbell about how America was a wealthy nation, but full of poor people who were urged to hate themselves. Every other nation has folk traditions of poor men who were extremely wise and therefore more esteemed than rich men. Campbell was said to have the highest I.Q. of any war criminal who faced death by hanging. So it goes. He wrote that Americans believe things that are obviously untrue, especially that it is easy to make money. The poor blame themselves when they find this is not true, and this provides an easy way out of guilt for the rich. Americans have the novelty of an undignified poor who do not love each other because they do not love themselves. Once this is understood, it is easy to understand why Americans in German prisons behave so badly. Every army but the Americans made an effort to dress their soldiers impressively. One should not expect brotherly love between American soldiers, but a sulky child who wishes he were dead.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 14

Billy went to sleep and woke up as a widower. Barbara is yelling at him. She tells him he is a child when she realizes he didn't notice the heat wasn't on and he is freezing. The narrator writes that it was exciting for her to take his dignity away in the name of love.

She calls the oil-burner man and makes her father get under the electric blanket. Billy travels in time to the zoo again, where Montana Wildhack, a movie star, has arrived. The Tralfamadorians brought her as a mate for Billy. Everybody wanted to see Earthlings mate. They were both naked. The narrator reveals that Billy has "a tremendous wang."

Montana fluttered her long lashes, disoriented. The last thing she remembered was swimming in California. She was twenty, and wore a silver locket which hung between her breasts. She turned and saw the masses of Tralfamadorians and she screamed. Her terror was unpleasant, so the zookeeper covered the dome. Billy switched on a lamp and saw Montana's body, which reminded him of fantastic architecture in Dresden.

Montana came to love and trust him, and eventually, after what would have been an Earthling week, she asked him to sleep with her, and it was heavenly.

He travels back to 1968. The oil-burner man arrived and the heat is running. His sheets smell like a mushroom cellar. He has had a wet dream about Montana.

The morning after, he decides to return to his office. His assistants are startled, since Barbara told them he might never practice again. His first patient is a little boy whose father was killed in Vietnam. So it goes. Billy tells the boy all about his adventures on Tralfamadore, that his father is alive and he will surely see him again. The boy's mother tells the receptionist that Billy is crazy, and he is taken home. Barbara is dismayed.



Chapter 6

Billy Pilgrim went to Dresden after his morphine night. He woke at dawn with Edgar Derby and Paul Lazzaro snoring on either side of him. He had no idea what year or planet it was, but it was cold. He woke because of the animal magnetism that he felt in his muscles. He imagined a vampire bat was behind him, but it was only his coat with the fur. He found two lumps in the pockets, one shaped like a horseshoe and one like a pea. He received a message from their radiations that was not to find out what they were but that they would perform miracles for him. He was grateful.

He dozed and awoke in the hospital again. He hears strong men digging holes for upright timbers in hard ground. Englishmen were building a new latrine. Lazzaro told the Blue Fairy Godmother that he made a big mistake and that he'd kill anyone who touched him. The Blue Fairy Godmother carefully smiled and said there was still time to kill *him*. Lazzaro told him to fuck himself and the Blue Fairy Godmother replied he had tried that.

He left, amused. Lazzaro told Derby and Billy that people were sorry when they fucked with him. Once a dog bit him and he fed it a steak filled with sharp metal pieces and watched it and taunted it as it died. He said the sweetest thing in life is revenge.

When Dresden was destroyed, writes the narrator, Lazzaro did not revel in this, as he was not avenging anything, and liked to take his enemies one at a time. Lazzaro said he planned to have the Blue Fairy Godmother shot, that he would open his door one day after the war and someone would shoot his pecker off, let him think about what life would be like without a pecker, then shoot him dead. Lazzaro said that he could have anyone killed for a thousand dollars. Derby asked who was on his list, and Lazzaro said he should make sure *he* didn't get on it. He told Derby he had a friend, Roland Weary, who died in his arms on account of Billy. Lazzaro called Billy a silly cocksucker and told him he was going to have him shot after the war. He waved away anything Billy had to say and told him to enjoy life while he could, and always have someone else answer the door.

Topic Tracking: Death 12

Billy Pilgrim knew how he would die; he saw it on an audio tape that he recorded and put in his safe-deposit box. It begins with him saying that he will die, have died, and will always die on February thirteenth, 1976. He says at the time of his death, he is in Chicago addressing a crowd on flying saucers and the true nature of time. He has had to cross three international boundaries to get to Chicago, since the US has been split into twenty nations so that it will no longer be a threat to world peace. Chicago has been H-bombed by angry Chinamen. So it goes. He is speaking to a packed audience in a baseball park. He tells them that years ago, a man planned to kill him. He tells them that if they protest, they have not learned anything from what he has said. He ends by saying farewell and hello. Police offer to protect him and stay with him, but he tells them it is time for them to go home to their families and for him to be dead for a little while--



then live again. He is then shot in the head with a high-powered laser gun. He experiences death for a while, which is violet light and a hum. Nobody is there, not even him.

Topic Tracking: Death 13

He swings back into life again, to after when Lazzaro threatened him. He and Lazzaro and Derby had to go to the theater to elect a leader for themselves by secret ballot. Derby was writing letters to his wife in his head, telling her that it was okay and he would be home soon. Lazzaro was talking to himself about all the people he was going to have killed after the war and the women he was going to make fuck him. If he had been a dog, a policeman would have shot him and sent him to a lab to see if he had rabies. They saw an Englishman drawing a line in the earth with his heel.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 15

The theater was covered in Americans nestled like spoons. They cursed at Billy to close the door. The stage was still set for Cinderella. Billy, Lazzaro and Derby were in the hospital during blanket distribution. They improvised with the red curtains. Billy stole Cinderella's silver boots. Billy Pilgrim and Cinderella were one and the same.

Topic Tracking: Humor 15

There was a lecture on personal hygiene, but most of the Americans slept through it. The Englishman said that when one stopped taking pride in his appearance, he would soon die. He made vows of cleanliness to himself, which he shared with the uncaptivated audience. The Englishman said he envied them, and Billy wondered why someone laughed. He continued to say that they were being sent to the beautiful city of Dresden, while he himself had not seen a plant, woman or child in years. He tells them not to worry about bombs; that Dresden is unimportant and undefended.

Edgar Derby was elected head American. Derby made a speech about responsibility and Lazzaro told him to go take a flying fuck at a rolling doughnut.

It was very hot out that day. The Americans were becoming able to hold their food. Billy looked stylish as he marched out, with his silver boots and red curtain-toga. He and Derby, who was still composing letters in his head, still had beards. Billy saw the dead hobo frozen stiff beside the train tracks spooning with no one. He thinks it is alright, somehow, his being dead. So it goes.

The trip to Dresden was quick. "*The skyline was intricate and voluptuous and enchanted and absurd,*" writes the narrator, "*It looked like a Sunday school picture of Heaven to Billy Pilgrim.*" Chapter 6, pg. 148 Someone behind Billy said "Oz". That, the narrator clarifies, was him; the only other city he had ever seen was Indianapolis.

Dresden was the only city which had not been bombed and burned. Sirens wailed, but the planes were always going somewhere else. There was electricity, theaters and restaurants, a zoo, and people working in enterprises.



Eight Dresden soldiers came toward them, self-conscious about looking foolish, expecting strong, cocky Americans. They saw Billy in his getup. He looked sixty years old. They saw rabid Lazzaro. They saw middle-age Derby. They laughed and their terror evaporated as they saw more fools like themselves, like a light opera.

The opera marched through the streets. Billy led the parade. Thousands of people saw them. They were pale and watery, having eaten mostly potatoes during wartime. Billy was fascinated by the intricate and decadent architecture. He knew, with his memories of the future, that it would all be destroyed in a month, and that most of the people watching him would be dead. So it goes. A civilian was offended by Billy's bad taste in clothing, thinking his outfit was intentional and mocking. He asked Billy if he found war funny and Billy was mystified. He wanted to be friendly, so he took the two objects out. They were a two-carat diamond and a partial denture. He smiled.

Topic Tracking: Humor 16

The parade made its way to the slaughterhouse, which wasn't busy, since most of the edible animals had been killed and eaten. So it goes. They were taken to the fifth building. The only English-speaking guard told them to memorize their address, which was "*Schlachthof-funf*," which meant Slaughterhouse-Five.



Chapter 7

Billy got into a chartered airplane. He knew that it was going to crash, but he didn't want to make a fool of himself by saying so. He was going to an optometrists' convention in Montreal. His wife was outside with a candy bar and his father-in-law Lionel was next to him. The narrator explains that Lionel was a machine, that Tralfamadorians believe that every creature and plant is a machine, and they find it funny that people are offended by it.

The moment was structured so that the plane took off without incident. There was a barbershop on board called "The Febs" which stood for "Four-Eyed Bastards." They sang Lionel his favorite song: "*In my prison cell I sit,/ With my britches full of shit,/ And my balls are bouncing gently on the floor./ And I see the bloody snag/ When she bit me in the bag./ Oh I'll never fuck a Polack any more.*" Chapter 7, pg. 155 Billy once accidentally saw a Pole hanged in Dresden, a farm laborer hung for having sex with a German woman. So it goes.

Billy knew they were about to crash, so he imagined he was back in the ditch in Luxembourg with the Three Musketeers, telling them to continue without him. The plane hit the top of a mountain. Everybody was killed except Billy and the copilot. So it goes. Austrian ski instructors found them, speaking German as they went from body to body. Their strange skiing attire made them look like they were golliwogs, which, the narrator explains, were white people who pretended to be blacks to get laughs. Billy's skull was fractured, but he was still conscious. One of the golliwogs leaned in to hear what they thought would be his last words, and he whispered "*Schlachthof-funf.*" They brought him down the mountain on a toboggan. Billy looked up at a chair lift and assumed they were part of a radical new phase of World War II. Everything was pretty much all right.

Topic Tracking: Death 14

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 16

He was taken to a small private hospital where a surgeon operated on his brain for three hours. He dreamed millions of things, some of them true, like time-travel. He dreamed of his first evening in the slaughterhouse, of pushing a cart with Edgar Derby. A sixteen-year-old named Werner Gluck guarded them. The axels were greased with with the fat of dead animals. So it goes. The sunset lit up the city, which was blacked out in case the bombers came. The Elbe river would have reflected the lights beautifully.

Werner Gluck had never been in the slaughterhouse before. He and Billy did not know that they were distant cousins. He had a heavy musket with a bayonet. He tried to take them to a kitchen but wandered accidentally to a shower, where dozens of teen-age girls screamed to see them. Neither Werner Gluck nor Billy had seen a naked woman before.

They found the kitchen, where it was their job to cook for the workers in the slaughterhouse. There was a woman waiting for them. She asked Derby if he wasn't too



old to be in the army and he admitted he was. She asked Billy what his costume was and he said he was trying to keep warm. She said all the real soldiers were dead. It was true, adds the narrator. So it goes.

During their month in Dresden, the prisoners did lots of cleaning and factory work. One of the factories made malt syrup enriched with vitamins and minerals, which was for pregnant women. Everybody who worked there ate it while they worked. They hid the spoons they used to eat it, as spooning was a crime. Billy thrust a spoon into the vat and ate the gooey lollipop and every cell in his body applauded gratefully. Derby rapped on the factory window once, and Billy made him a lollipop, too. Derby burst into tears.



Chapter 8

Howard W. Campbell, Jr., an American who had become a Nazi propagandist, visited them. He came to recruit for "The Free American Corps," which would fight on the Russian front. He had an extravagant costume: a ten-gallon white hat, black cowboy boots decorated with swastikas and stars, a blue body stocking with yellow stripes, and a patch with Lincoln's silhouette. He wore a nazi armband. Billy had heartburn that day, as he had spooned too much syrup. The audience was sleepy from work, and sick. He offered them steak and mashed potatoes if they would join him in fighting Communists.

Derby spoke. It was the finest moment of his life. "There are no characters in this story," explains the narrator, "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. But old Derby was a character now." Chapter 8, pg. 164 He called Campbell a snake and a blood-filled tick. He spoke of freedom and justice and brotherhood between America and Russia, how they were going to destroy the disease of Nazism. The air sirens wailed and they all took shelter in a meat locker. There were a few dead animals on meat hooks. So it goes. Howard Campbell, Jr. talked in excellent German to the guards. He had written popular plays and poems in German, and had married a German actress. She had been killed while entertaining troops. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 17

Nothing happened that night, writes the narrator, it was the next night that one hundred and thirty thousand people in Dresden would die. So it goes. Billy dozed, and woke in 1968 again, arguing with Barbara. She is still admonishing him for telling the twelve-year-old about Tralfamadore during his optometry appointment, and says she could just kill Kilgore Trout, whose books Billy has read dozens of, and who is his friend.

Trout lives in a basement in Ilium. He has no idea how many novels he has written. He works as a circulation manager, managing newspaper delivery boys. Billy met him for the first time in 1964, when he was driving his Cadillac down a back alley and he found him harassing some kids about newspapers, promising a free trip to whoever sold the most. Billy saw his face but could not place it as the paranoid face on his books. One girl asked if she could bring her sister, and Trout told her hell no, that money doesn't grow on trees. He had actually written a book about a tree whose leaves were money and fruit was jewels. The people who killed each other around the roots made excellent fertilizer.

When the meeting ended, one boy stayed after to quit. Trout called him a gutless wonder. He had written a book with this title about a robot who became popular after ridding himself of bad breath. In the book he predicted the use of napalm. Robots dropped it. They had no conscience to imagine the results on the people on the ground.



Trout knew that he now had to deliver the papers himself. Billy approached him. Trout thought he was a complaining customer and was shocked to see that Billy was an avid fan. Billy helped him deliver in his Cadillac. Trout said that he had felt that he had been opening the window and making love to the world. He had only received one fan letter, and it was from Rosewater, who he assumed was fourteen since the writing was so bad. Rosewater said he should be President of the World. He thought Rosewater was insane.

Billy invited Trout to his eighteenth wedding anniversary. The guests were impressed that there was a real writer there. He was talking with his mouth full to an optometrist's wife named Maggie White. Billy had a sapphire cocktail ring in his pocket for his wife Valencia. Maggie told Trout that she was afraid she didn't read as much as she ought to, and he replied that everyone was afraid of something, like cancer or rats. He told her that the most famous thing he ever wrote was about a funeral for a great French chef where mourners sprinkled spices in the casket. So it goes. Maggie asked if that really happened. The narrator explains that she is dull, but men wanted to fill her with babies. He tells her that if it didn't, he would be arrested for fraud. Maggie believed him. She asked him if she might put them in a book someday and he replied that everything that happened to him got put in his books. She said she better be careful what she said, and he told her that God was listening too, and that on Judgment day he was going to recap all she'd said and done, and if she'd done bad things, she'd burn forever. Maggie believed that, too, and was petrified. He laughed so hard that some salmon roe flew into her cleavage.

Topic Tracking: Humor 17

The barbershop quartet, "The Febs," sang "That Old Gang of Mine." The song upset Billy, who had never had a gang. He felt like he was being tortured. He could not explain it; only that he had some big secret inside himself and could not imagine what it was. He assured Valencia that he had not seen a ghost and told Kilgore Trout that no, he had not seen the past or future through a time window. He absent-mindedly gave Valencia the ring, which he had meant to present in front of everybody, and she thanked him gushingly.

Everybody was already impressed with the jewelry he had gotten her. He had the partial denture in a drawer with his collection of cufflinks. He had one pair with antique Roman coins and another that were a compass and a thermometer.

He recovered and moved about normally. Kilgore Trout followed him suspiciously, hoping to gain novel material. He asked Billy if he had ever seen a dog stand on a full-length mirror. The dog realizes that there is nothing under him, and jumps a mile. Trout told Billy he looked like that reaction. The barbershop quartet started up again and Billy fled upstairs. He locked himself in the bathroom with the lights off, where he found his son Robert, the future Green Beret, on the toilet with his pink electric guitar. He went into his bedroom. He turned on the vibrating bed and saw his dog Spot. He thought about the effect of the quartet. He did not travel back in time, but remembered it clearly. He was in the meat locker when Dresden was destroyed. The bombs sounded like giant



footsteps walking and walking. Only the Americans were there; the guards were at home being killed with their families. So it goes. The girls he had seen naked were killed too. So it goes. A guard checked every once in a while, but it was not safe to come out until noon the next day. The air was black with smoke and the sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was reduced to minerals, like the moon. Everyone else was dead. So it goes. The guards drew together, mouths open like a barbershop quartet.

He remembered when Montana, pregnant and rosy, asked him to tell her a story. She demanded small favors from time to time. He told her about the destruction of Dresden-- the guards, the buildings, and dead people. So it goes. He told her it was like the moon.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 18

Topic Tracking: Death 15

The guards told them to march back to the slaughterhouse. Only the walls remained. They realized that there was no food or water, and that the survivors would have to climb around on the face of the moon. They found that the curves of the moon were not smooth up close, but jagged and hot, unsteady. Everyone was dead. There were no moon men. American fighter planes flew over, looking for movement, which they shot at. They shot at Billy and the rest and missed. They shot at others and hit them. So it goes.

Billy's story ended in an unharmed inn. The family running the inn knew about Dresden, but they still opened to see who would come. There was no great flow of refugees from Dresden. The guards told them they had not seen another living soul. The innkeeper invited them to stay the night in the stable, and fed them.



Chapter 9

Billy was unconscious in the hospital after the plane crash. Valencia drove up hysterically in the Cadillac and had an accident, but was unhurt. The Cadillac, however, was a mess in the back, and the narrator describes the trunk like the gaping mouth of a village idiot. The exhaust system had broken off. Valencia drove off. She arrived at the hospital and a doctor and a nurse came out and found her "a heavenly azure", dead of carbon monoxide poisoning. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Death 16

Billy knew nothing of it. He shared a hospital room with a Harvard history professor named Bertram Copeland Rumfoord, who was suffering from a broken leg from a skiing accident, and who heard Billy talking to himself. He was seventy, but had a young body and spirit. He was honeymooning with his fifth wife, Lily, who was twenty-three. Around when Valencia was pronounced dead, Lily came in with an armload of history books for Rumfoord, who was writing about battles that had happened before she was born. She was a high-school dropout. Billy scared her. Rumfoord roared that he bored him. He was a prolific author, professor, retired brigadier general in the Air Force, a historian, a multi-millionaire since birth, and a competitive sailor. He had written a book about strenuous sex for men over sixty-five. He looked at Billy and quoted Theodore Roosevelt, saying that he could carve a better man out of a banana. Lily brought him Truman's announcement of the dropping of the atomic bomb. He ordered her to read it, which she pretended to do, since she couldn't read much. The report described the bomb, which had two thousand times the blast of the largest bomb ever used. He said the Japanese were punished for Pearl Harbor and would continue to be punished. He described the bomb as a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. He went on about how they were going to obliterate Japan's power to make war.

Another book was about the destruction of Dresden. Rumfoord knew many of the men who had contributed to the book. One, an Englishman, criticized how people weeped about the death of enemy civilians but not their own, for as Germans were dying at Dresden, bombs were falling on England and concentration camps were killing people too. He acknowledged the deaths in Dresden, but remembered that Germany started the last war and found it necessary to destroy Nazism once and for all. So it goes.

Another man, an Air Marshal, wrote that the air-bombing of Dresden was unfortunate, but a military necessity. Those who approved it were not wicked or cruel, though they were too removed from the harsh realities of war to realize the full destructive power. He mentioned the death tolls in Tokyo and Hiroshima as well. So it goes.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 19

Billy piped up with a random fragment of memory, speaking Wild Bob's collective invitation to visit him in Cody, Wyoming. Lily shuddered and pretended to read.



Barbara came to visit, glassy-eyed as Edgar Derby before his execution. She was on pills so she could deal with her dead mother and broken father. So it goes. She tried to talk to Billy, but he was ten years back, examining the eyes of a ten-year-old Mongolian idiot.

Then he was sixteen, in the waiting room with an old man who could not control his gas and tells him he did not know that getting old would be this bad. He opened his eyes again to see Robert, his son, decorated with war medals. Robert had flunked high school, been an alcoholic at sixteen, and run with a bad crowd, and been arrested for tipping tombstones. He was straightened out now. Billy closed his eyes again.

He missed Valencia's funeral. He was believed to be a vegetable, but his mind was preparing to reveal everything thrilling he had learned on Tralfamadore. Rumfoord thought he was a vegetable and said frightful things in front of him, like asking Lily why they wouldn't let Billy just die. Once, he told her about the bombing of Dresden. He was writing a book which would be a readable version of the twenty-seven-volume version the Air Force had published. There was no mention of Dresden in this volume. It was kept secret from the American people, but the narrator clarifies that it was no secret from the Germans, or from the Russians who occupied Dresden after the war, and still do.

Rumfoord told her that they kept it a secret out of fear of a lot of bleeding hearts. Billy said he was there. Rumfoord didn't take him seriously, since he considered him a non-person better off dead. Rumfoord said he had echolalia, which, the narrator explains, is a mental disease where the patient repeats what they hear. But Billy was telling the truth. "Rumfoord," the narrator explains, "was thinking in in military manner: that an inconvenient person, one whose death he wished for very much, for practical reasons, was suffering from a repulsive disease." Chapter 9, pg. 192

No one took Rumfoord seriously because they thought he was cruel and spiteful and often said that weak people should die, whereas they believed that weak people should be helped as much as possible.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 20

Billy waited until there was nothing to echo, then told Rumfoord again that he was there in Dresden. He told him that they didn't have to talk about it, but he just wanted him to know. He closed his eyes and traveled to two days after the end of the war, when he and other soldiers were going back to the slaughterhouse to get souvenirs of war. Billy was happy in the warm, food-filled wagon, with his souvenirs. The owners of the house had heard that the Russians were coming, destroying and raping, and had fled. Billy did not see any Russians; only an old man pushing a baby buggy full of his own souvenirs.

Billy stayed in the wagon as the others looked for souvenirs. The Tralfamadorians later told him to focus on the happy moments of his life and ignore the unhappy ones, and he would have chosen this moment in the sun. He snoozed, armed against whatever might be on the surface of the moon. He had a ceremonial sword that he had extracted from a



pole they drove by. There was an eagle and a swastika on the hilt. He woke to hear a couple speaking German with pity. It reminded him of the tones that might have been used when Jesus was taken from the cross. They were crooning at the horses, whose mouths and hooves were in terrible shape. The Americans treated the horses no better than machines.

They approached Billy, who they did not fear. They were both obstetricians, but had no children. They spoke nine languages between them, and when they found English, they scolded him about the horses. When Billy finally saw them, he burst into tears.

Topic Tracking: Humor 18

The narrator explains that the epigraph of the book, "*The cattle are lowing,/ The Baby awakes./ But the little Lord Jesus/ No crying he makes,*" Chapter 9, pg. 197 is there because Billy makes no noise when he cries. He traveled back to the hospital in Vermont, where Rumfoord was slowly becoming interested in him. Billy told him about the horses, and that finally the Russians came and arrested everyone but the horses. Billy was shipped home on a ship named after a dead suffragette. So it goes.

Rumfoord insisted that the bombing had to be done. Billy was not arguing. He spouts a piece of Tralfamadorian wisdom: "Everything is all right, and everybody has to do exactly what he does." Chapter 9, pg. 198

Later, his daughter took him home and turned on the Magic Fingers. There was a nurse to observe him, but he snuck out to New York City to tell the world of Tralfamadore.

He checked into a hotel and looked over the balcony at the people like jerky little scissors. The French doors reminded him of his honeymoon. He watched TV for programs on which he could appear, but it was too early for people with strange opinions; it was early evening, explains the narrator, time for shows about silliness or murder. So it goes.

He saw a dirty bookstore. In the window, covered in fly shit and dust, were books by Kilgore Trout. He went in. The narrator describes the porn images, with the stereotypical vulnerable and dumb-looking females and the taut, erect males. Billy, though was attracted to the novels. He re-read a story he had seen in the hospital, about creatures on a planet called Zircon-212 who told their Earthling captives they had invested a million dollars for them, which they had to manage so they would get it upon returning to Earth. It was fake, just a series of stimulants so they would amuse the crowd.

Another novel was about a time machine which took a man back to Jesus' carpentry shop. Two Roman soldiers had them build an execution device. So it goes.

The bookstore was run by five short, bald men who looked alike, chewing wet, unlit cigars. They and Billy were the only ones in the store without hard-ons. A clerk told Billy that what he wanted to be looking at was in the back. Billy moved back, but only further into the story. The time-traveler wanted to find out if Jesus had died on or off the cross.



He determined with a stethoscope that it was while he was on. So it goes. He, Lance Corwin, measured Jesus at five feet and three inches tall.

The clerks thought Billy a pervert when he wanted to buy the books. He laughed at one magazine headline which asked what became of Montana Wildhack because he knew she was on Tralfamadore. The magazine thought she had been sealed in cement in California. So it goes. He saw some dirty pictures that were supposed to be her, and a film of her on a bed peeling a banana. The clerk showed him a picture, identical to the one Weary had, of a woman attempting sex with a pony.

Billy made it onto the radio, mistaken for one of the literary critics that was supposed to be there. He was supposed to discuss whether or not the novel was dead. So it goes. The critics had much to say about the novel. One thought that people couldn't read well enough to process print into exciting situations. When Billy was allowed to speak, he went on and on about the saucers, etc. He was gently expelled and returned to his hotel, where he traveled to Tralfamadore. Montana, breast-feeding their child, asked where he had time-traveled to. He told her of his adventures in New York. She was not enthusiastic about Kilgore Trout. He mentioned her obscene movie, and her guilt-free response was that she heard about what a clown he was in the war and the obscene movie Edgar Derby made with the firing squad. There was a silence. There was a silver chain around Montana Wildhack's neck. A locket hung between her breasts. It contained a dim photo of her alcoholic mother. Engraved were the words: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom always to tell the difference." On the opposite page, there is an illustration of the locket and her breasts.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 21

Chapter 10

The narrator tells that Robert Kennedy, whose summer home is eight miles from his own home, was shot two nights ago. So it goes. Martin Luther King was shot a month ago. So it goes. Every day his Government sends him a count of corpses created by military science in Vietnam. So it goes. His father died of natural causes. So it goes. He was sweet and left him his guns, which rust.

Topic Tracking: Death 17

Billy Pilgrim says that on Tralfamadore, they do not have much interest in Jesus Christ, but do greatly admire Darwin, who taught that those that die are meant to, and that corpses are improvements. So it goes.

Kilgore Trout has a book where flying saucer creature asks about Darwin and also golf.

"If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadoreans is true," writes the narrator, "that we will all live forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still--if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice." Chapter 10, pg. 211 One of the nicest moments was his trip to Dresden with his old war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare. They were served good food on the plane and were not told to fasten their seat belts. The passengers spoke many languages and were enjoying themselves too. The narrator imagined dropping bombs on the lights and villages and cities and towns below in East Germany.

He and O'Hare had never expected to be rich. He tells O'Hare lazily that if he is ever in Cody, Wyoming, to ask for Wild Bob.

O'Hare had a notebook in which he wrote key facts about the world. He was looking up the population of Dresden when he came across the statistics for average world daily birth and death. So it goes. The projected population for the year 2000 was seven billion people. The narrator says wistfully that he supposes they will all want dignity.

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 22

Meanwhile, Billy Pilgrim was returning to Dresden in 1945, two days after it was destroyed. The authorities found them at the blind innkeeper's stable and gave them tools. Germans were not allowed into the ruins, or as the narrator says, the moon.

Prisoners of war were made to dig for bodies. Billy dug with a Maori with tattoos on his face. The materials were loose and there were avalanches. They found a hole in the rubble and a German went down with a flashlight and found dozens of unmarked bodies. The superior ordered the hole enlarged and the bodies brought out. This was the first corpse mine.



There were hundreds, which didn't smell bad at first, but which did when they began to rot. They smelled like mustard gas and roses. The Maori died from throwing up too much from working in the stink. So it goes. They devised a new technique of incinerating the bodies, throwing a flamethrower down into the holes. Sometime Edgar Derby was caught with a teapot, arrested for plundering, and shot. So it goes.

In the springtime, the corpse mines were shut down and the German soldiers left to fight the Russians. The workers were locked up in a stable. One morning, they woke to find the door unlocked and World War II over in Europe. They wandered out into the street, where there was nothing going on. Birds were talking and one says to Billy Pilgrim, "Poo-tee-weet?"

Topic Tracking: Death 18

Topic Tracking: Anti-War 23