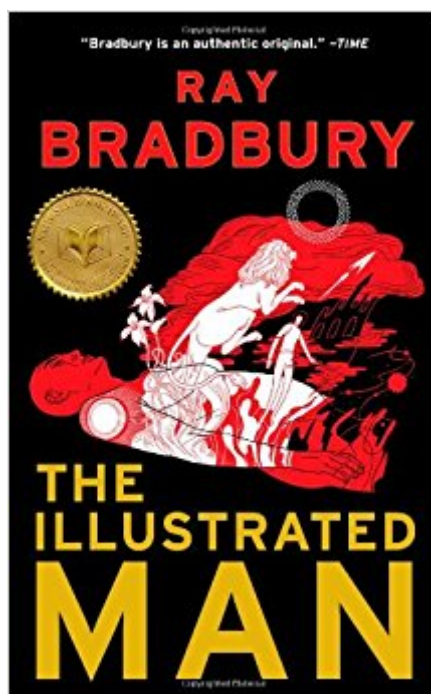


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The Illustrated Man



Synopsis

The Illustrated Man, a seminal work in Ray Bradbury's career, whose extraordinary power and imagination remain undimmed by time's passage, is available from Simon & Schuster for the first time. Ray Bradbury brings wonders alive. For this peerless American storyteller, the most bewitching force in the universe is human nature. In these eighteen startling tales unfolding across a canvas of tattooed skin, living cities take their vengeance, technology awakens the most primal natural instincts, and dreams are carried aloft in junkyard rockets. Provocative and powerful, The Illustrated Man is a kaleidoscopic blending of magic, imagination, and truth—as exhilarating as interplanetary travel, as maddening as a walk in a million-year rain, and as comforting as simple, familiar rituals on the last night of the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Conceptually, The Illustrated Man is brilliant from the get-go, including its novel premise of 18 stories as told through the moving tattoos on a man's body; in addition to weaving intricate webs, the Illustrated Man's body art predicts the future. And, oh, what stories are told. As a science fiction writer, it is no surprise that the majority of Bradbury's stories have to do with space and the future (heck, all of space was in the future when these stories were written in the early 50s). Additionally, the majority of the tales are pretty bleak, dealing with dark themes of revenge, futile searches for paradise, and Armageddon. However, save for their near-universal excellence, thought-provocation, and prescience, the similarities end there. Among them: Mars is colonized by black people who have

left Earth's prejudices, and await with apprehension the arrival of a white-piloted rocket ship from their former homeland; another planet's soldiers attack Earth and are surprised at the warm welcome they receive, only to learn that they can be conquered by Earth's lousy diet, sedentary ways, and shallow culture as easily as by the planet's military; an assembly of priests travels to Mars to learn about Martian sins, so as to spread God's word and earn converts of the Red planet; an entire city is built with the concept of vengeance in mind, by its citizens who were to perish before being able to exact that revenge themselves; the authors of classic tales of horror, whose works are banned on Earth, are themselves exiled to Mars and only kept alive by the few remaining copies not burned for censorship. There are a couple of lame ducks herein, but even those are salvaged by the beauty of Bradbury's writing. His metaphors and descriptive devices flow from the pages and grant a macabre beauty to even the most desolate of landscapes.

Sometimes it's hard to remember that Ray Bradbury approaches the art of the short story in a very unconventional way. His collections of short stories are often tied together by common sub-themes or settings, although each story could also stand on its own. Such is the case here, though the running theme to the *Illustrated Man* collection is mostly an abstraction. Apparently the stories here are told by a man's haunted tattoos, but don't worry about that too much. The true theme holding this group of stories together is examinations of human nature and mankind's place in the universe. Bradbury's frequent use of Mars (and occasionally other planets) as a setting, with the obligatory spaceships and technology, is merely his method of creating alternate realities to bring human nature into bold relief. Bradbury's classic examinations of the dark and melancholy side of humanity are well represented here as always, with his trademark poetic writing style and underlying sense of creeping dread. The classic virtual reality tale "The Veldt" is found here, with the typical misuse-of-technology theme presented in an unexpectedly haunting fashion. More evidence that the stock sci-fi themes are merely a thin backdrop can be seen in "The Other Foot," a chilling examination of race relations; or "The Rocket," which deals with the yearning of regular people to reach beyond the confines of Earth. Other winning stories include "Kaleidoscope" and "The Long Rain" which are haunting tales of how human nature can still undermine the greatest achievements of cold technology. So don't concern yourself with the typical sci-fi backdrop, and get in tune with what Ray Bradbury is really talking about.

A sad, decorated wandering man stumbles into the life of another drifter. The tattooed wandering man is a terrifying canvas of brilliant skin art and darkened dreams. A hated circus performer

"condemned to be free" as a morbid living gallery- each tatoo moves and glows animately; this anthology treats us to the best of the pulp Bradbury of the fifties. As Rod Serling told us in his TWILIGHT ZONE introduction we are transported from the depth of our fears to the heights of our imagination. Rocketing from the past to the future to the subconscious we are invited to a world where...A holographic Africa is so consuming that it...well... consumes. Time travellers from the totalitarian future must travel to 1938 for vacation only to find that they can never escape the future. An explosion rocks a spaceship... disgorging astronauts- making its crew satellites left to face their personal angst and collective end. An artificial sun provides respite from the grey rain world of Venus, but only if the spacewreck survivors are willing to pay a price finding it. A used rocket never travels to space but reveals the heart of a poor kind father, not the solar system, to his long suffering wife. A man heals and performs miracles in world after world, yet can only be met through faith not a rocket trip. A playground becomes a portal to the hell of childhood. A couple go to sleep on the last night of the world and forget to set the alarm clock. A man's robot duplicate has ideas of his own on where to vacation next. Poe gets revenge against future thought police from a die hard fan who manages to make others die. Long oppressed blacks find out that their former oppressors have nothing left to oppress. A psycho finds respite in the void of space...and meaning as well in a sci-fi replay of Sartre. A city lives beyond the lives of its former inhabitants to exact revenge. A highway in Mexico becomes a river of life at the death of the civilization to its north. Are childhood imaginary friends always imagined? The earth finds a new nemesis in a suburban front yard. This book is a rocket simmering in the red martian sun. A rocket that darts wildly between the height of man's imagination and the depths of his fears as we were warned by Rod Serling in his TWILIGHT ZONE monologue. A rocket which darts with zen efficiency between the inner life of the soul and the outer space of the future. In the end the tattoo canvas moves...

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