Slaughterhouse-Five: Or The Childrens Crusade, A Duty Dance With Death (25th Anniversary) by Kurt Vonnegut

Not Just A Fantasy

Kurt Vonneguts absurdist classic Slaughterhouse-Five introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes unstuck in time after he is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all phases of his life, concentrating on his (and Vonneguts) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden. Dont let the ease of reading fool you--Vonneguts isnt a conventional, or simple, novel. He writes, There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick, and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces. One of the main effects of war, after all, is that people are discouraged from being characters... Slaughterhouse-Five (taken from the name of the building where the POWs were held) is not only Vonneguts most powerful book, it is as important as any written since 1945. Like Catch-22, it fashions the authors experiences in the Second World War into an eloquent and deeply funny plea against butchery in the service of authority. Slaughterhouse-Five boasts the same imagination, humanity, and gleeful appreciation of the absurd found in Vonneguts other works, but the books basis in rock-hard, tragic fact gives it a unique poignancy--and humor.

Where to begin? I feel that many of the reviewers have already captured the essence of this novel, but I also feel compelled to add to it. after all, how can one not?

Typically, I have not been a fan of science fiction/fantasy books, but let me assure those of you who have not yet read this due to its label, it is far beyond and separated from novels in such a genre. I had heard of Kurt
Vonnegut, but much to my present dismay, had distanced my literary choices from his work. That has forever changed.

Billy Pilgram has left an impression on me that I may not be able to properly describe. He is painted to be such a simple and almost uneventful character, that youd imagine this person to bore you to tears. However, you will learn that his life is far from simplicity and holds the burdens of heartbreak, insanity (or perhaps, just an overactive imagination that bleeds into his human character?), tolerance of negativities, and nonchalance (if I may create a word here), that entices the reader to feel those emotions as if their own. Billy Pilgram does not ever seem to be confused, regardless of his travels through time and the experiences he is driven to live. He is comfortable with what he is presented with, most likely due to the fact that he learns about fate and its inevitability. Youll find yourself questioning your previous interpretation on time, war, imagination/dreams, love...

Although, coined into an anti-war mindset, it is not a novel that attempts to draw you into any specific stance. That aspect alone, is masterfully done. I wish authors of current affairs would be able to so delicately yet so simply describe their feelings without judgment, persuasion, or controversy.

This tale will make you smile, laugh, frown, scratch your head. The Works. Youll be pulled into another planet, a war, a marriage... and may come to the conclusion that time is what we make of it. Its an entity that we both take for granted and still ponder upon what to do with it. Fate, destiny, they are much larger than our ability to control, and often times, fighting it or attempting to counteract it, will only yield the same result in the end, after all. And so it goes. ;-

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