**Chapter 10**

Billy Pilgrim was meanwhile traveling back to Dresden, too, but not in the present. He

was going back there in 1945, two days after the city was destroyed. Now Billy and the

rest were being marched into the ruins by their guards. I was there. O'Hare was there. We

had spent the past two nights in the blind innkeeper's stable. Authorities had found us

there. They told us what to do. We were to borrow picks and shovels and crowbars and

wheelbarrows from our neighbors. We were to march with these implements to such and

such a place in the ruins, ready to go to work.

There were barricades on the main roads leading into the ruins. Germans were stopped

there. They were not permitted to explore the moon.

Prisoners of war from many lands came together that morning at such and such a place

in Dresden. It had been decreed that here was where the digging for bodies was to begin.

So the digging began.

Billy found himself paired as a digger with a Maori, who had been captured at Tobruk.

The Maori was chocolate brown. He had whirlpools tattooed on his forehead and his

cheeks. Billy and the Maori dug into the inert, unpromising gravel of the moon. The

materials were loose, so there were constant little avalanches.

Many holes were dug at once. Nobody knew yet what there was to find. Most holes

came to nothing-to pavement, or to boulders so huge they would not move. There was no

machinery. Not even horses or mules or oxen could cross the moonscape.

And Billy and the Maori and others helping them with their particular hole came at last

to a membrane of timbers laced over rocks which had wedged together to form an

accidental dome. They made a hole in the membrane. There was darkness and space

under there.

A German soldier with a flashlight went down into the darkness, was gone a long time.

When he finally came back, he told a superior on the rim of the hole that there were

dozens of bodies down there. They were sitting on benches. They were unmarked.

So it goes.

The superior said that the opening in the membrane should be enlarged, and that a

ladder should be put in the hole, so that bodies could be carried out. Thus began the first

corpse mine in Dresden.

There were hundreds of corpse mines operating by and by. They didn't smell bad at

first, were wax museums. But then the bodies rotted and liquefied, and the stink was like

roses and mustard gas.

So it goes.

The Maori Billy had worked with died of the dry heaves, after having been ordered to

go down in that stink and work. He tore himself to pieces, throwing up and throwing up.

So it goes.

So a new technique was devised. Bodies weren't brought up any more. They were

cremated by soldiers with flamethrowers right where they were. The soldiers. stood

outside the shelters, simply sent the fire in.

Somewhere in there the poor old high school teacher, Edgar Derby, was caught with a

teapot he had taken from the catacombs. He was arrested for plundering. He was tried and

shot.

So it goes.

And somewhere in there was springtime. The corpse mines were closed down. The

soldiers all left to fight the Russians. In the suburbs, the women and children dug rifle

pits. Billy and the rest of his group were locked up in the stable in the suburbs. And then,

one morning, they got up to discover that the door was unlocked. The Second World War

in Europe was over.

Billy and the rest wandered out onto the shady street. The trees were leafing out. There

was nothing going on out there, no traffic of any kind. There was only one vehicle, an

abandoned wagon drawn by two horses. The wagon was green and coffin-shaped.

Birds were talking.

One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, 'Poo-tee-weet?'

**Chapter One**

When I was somewhat younger, working on my famous Dresden book, I asked an old

war buddy named Bernard V. O'Hare if I could come to see him. He was a district

attorney in Pennsylvania. I was a writer on Cape Cod. We had been privates in the war,

infantry scouts. We had never expected to make any money after the war, but we were

doing quite well.

I had the Bell Telephone Company find him for me. They are wonderful that way. I

have this, disease late at night sometimes, involving alcohol and the telephone. I get

drunk, and I drive my wife away with a breath like mustard gas and roses. And then,

speaking gravely and elegantly into the telephone, I ask the telephone operators to

connect me with this friend or that one, from whom I have not heard in years.

I got O'Hare on the line in this way. He is short and I am tall. We were Mutt and Jeff in

the war. We were captured together in the war. I told him who I was on the telephone. He

had no trouble believing it. He was up. He was reading. Everybody else in his house was

asleep.

'Listen,' I said, 'I'm writing this book about Dresden. I'd like some help remembering

stuff. I wonder if I could come down and see you, and we could drink and talk and

remember.'

He was unenthusiastic. He said he couldn't remember much. He told me, though, to

come ahead.

'I think the climax of the book will be the execution of poor old Edgar Derby,' I said.

'The irony is *so* great. A whole city gets burned down, and thousands and thousands of

people are killed. And then this one American foot soldier is arrested in the ruins for

taking a teapot. And he's given a regular trial, and then he's shot by a firing squad.'

'Um,' said O'Hare.

'Don't you think that's really where the climax should come?' 'I don't know anything

about it,' he said. 'That's your trade, not mine.'

As a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and

suspense and confrontations, I had outlined the Dresden story many times. The best

outline I ever made, or anyway the prettiest one, was on the back of a roll of wallpaper.

I used my daughter's crayons, a different color for each main character. One end of the

wallpaper was the beginning of the story, and the other end was the end, and then there

was all that middle part, which was the middle. And the blue line met the red line and

then the yellow line, and the yellow line stopped because the character represented by the

yellow line was dead. And so on. The destruction of Dresden was represented by a

vertical band of orange cross-hatching, and all the lines that were still alive passed

through it, came out the other side.

The end, where all the lines stopped, was a beetfield on the Elbe, outside of Halle. The

rain was coming down. The war in Europe had been over for a couple of weeks. We were

formed in ranks, with Russian soldiers guarding us-Englishmen, Americans, Dutchmen,

Belgians, Frenchmen, Canadians, South Africans, New Zealanders, Australians,

thousands of us about to stop being prisoners of war.

And on the other side of the field were thousands of Russians and Poles and

Yugoslavians and so on guarded by American soldiers. An exchange was made there in

the rain-one for one. O'Hare and I climbed into the back of an American truck with a lot

of others. O'Hare didn't have any souvenirs. Almost everybody else did. I had a

ceremonial Luftwaffe saber, still do. The rabid little American I call Paul Lazzaro in this

book had about a quart of diamonds and emeralds and rubies and so on' He had taken

these from dead people in the cellars of Dresden.' So it goes.

**Chapter Two**

Listen:

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has

walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back

through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he

says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

He says.

Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't

necessarily fun. 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.

Billy was born in 1922 in Ilium, New York, the only child of a barber there. He was a

funny-looking child who became a funny-looking youth-tall and weak, and shaped like a

bottle of Coca-Cola. He graduated from Ilium High School in the upper third of his class,

and attended night sessions at the Ilium School of Optometry for one semester before

being drafted for military service in the Second World War. His father died in a hunting

accident during the war. So it goes.

Billy saw service with the infantry in Europe, and was taken prisoner by the Germans.

After his honorable discharge from the Army in 1945, Billy again enrolled in the Ilium

School of Optometry. During his senior year there, he became engaged to the daughter

of the founder and owner of the school, and then suffered a mild nervous collapse.

He was treated in a veterans' hospital near Lake Placid, and was given shock

treatments and released. He married his fiancée, finished his education, and was set up in

business in Ilium by his father-in-law. Ilium is a particularly good city for optometrists

because the General Forge and Foundry Company is there. Every employee is required

to own a pair of safety glasses, and to wear them in areas where manufacturing is going

on. GF&F has sixty-eight thousand employees in Ilium. That calls for a lot of lenses and

a lot of frames.

Frames are where the money is.

Bill became rich. He had two children, Barbara and Robert. In time, his daughter

Barbara married another optometrist., and Billy set him up in business. Billy's son Robert

had a lot of trouble in high school, but then he joined the famous Green Berets. He

straightened out, became a fine young man, and he fought in Vietnam.

**Chapter Three**

He went home for a nap after lunch. He was under doctor's orders to take a nap every

day. The doctor hoped that this would relieve a complaint that Billy had: Every so often,

for no apparent reason, Billy Pilgrim would find himself weeping. Nobody had ever

caught Billy doing it. Only the doctor knew. It was an extremely quiet thing Billy did,

and not very moist.

Billy owned a lovely Georgian home in Ilium. He was rich as Croesus, something he

had never expected to be, not in a million years. He had five other optometrists working

for him in the shopping plaza location, and netted over sixty thousand dollars a year. In

addition, he owned a fifth of the new Holiday Inn out on Route 54, and half of three

Tastee-Freeze stands. Tastee-Freeze was a sort of frozen custard. It gave all the pleasure

that ice cream could give, without the stiffness and bitter coldness of ice cream.

Billy's home was empty. His daughter Barbara was about to get warned, and she and

his wife had gone downtown to pick out patterns for her crystal and silverware. There

was a note saying so on the kitchen table. There were no servants. People just weren't

interested in careers in domestic service anymore. There wasn't a dog, either.

There used to be a dog named Spot, but he died. So it goes. Billy had liked Spot a lot,

and Spot had liked him.

Billy went up the carpeted stairway and into his and his wife's bedroom. The room had

flowered wallpaper. There was a double bed with a clock-radio on a table beside it. Also

on the table were controls for the electric blanket, and a switch to turn on a gentle

vibrator which was bolted to the springs of the box mattress. The trade name of the

vibrator was 'Magic Fingers.' The vibrator was the doctor's idea, too.

Billy took off his tri-focals and his coat and his necktie and his shoes, and he closed

the venetian blinds and then the drapes, and he lay down on the outside of the coverlet.

But sleep would not come. Tears came instead. They seeped. Billy turned on the Magic

Fingers, and he was jiggled as he wept.

**Chapter Four**

So it goes.

Billy looked at the clock on the gas stove. He had an hour to kill before the saucer

came. He went into the living room, swinging the bottle like a dinner bell, turned on the

television. He came slightly unstuck in time, saw the late movie backwards, then

forwards again. It was a movie about American bombers in the Second World War and

the gallant men who flew them. Seen backwards by Billy, the story went like this:

American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from

an airfield in England. Over France a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards,

sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen. They did the

same for wrecked American bombers on the ground, and those planes flew up backwards

to join the formation.

The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers

opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires,

gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of

the planes. The containers were stored neatly in racks. The Germans below had

miraculous devices of their own, which were long steel tubes. They used them to suck

more fragments from the crewmen and planes. But there were still a few wounded

Americans, though, and some of the bombers were in bad repair. Over France, though,

German fighters came up again, made everything and everybody as good as new.

When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks

and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night

and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals.

Touchingly, it was mainly women who did this work. The minerals were then shipped to

specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground., to hide

them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again.

The American fliers turned in their uniforms, became high school kids. And Hitler

turned into a baby, Billy Pilgrim supposed. That wasn't in the movie. Billy was

extrapolating. Everybody turned into a baby, and all humanity, without exception,

conspired biologically to produce two perfect people named Adam and Eve, he supposed.

**Chapter 5**

Billy Pilgrim says that the Universe does not look like a lot of bright little dots to the

creatures from Tralfamadore. The creatures can see where each star has been and where it

is going, so that the heavens are filled with rarefied, luminous spaghetti. And

Tralfamadorians don't see human beings as two-legged creatures, either. They see them

as great millipedes with babies' legs at one end and old people's legs at the other,' says

Billy Pilgrim.

Billy asked for something to read on the trip to Tralfamadore. His captors had five

million Earthling books on microfilm, but no way to project them in Billy's cabin. They

had only one actual book in English, which would be placed in a Tralfamadorian

museum. It was *Valley of the Dolls,* by Jacqueline Susann.

Billy read it, thought it was pretty good in spots. The people in it certainly had their

ups-and-downs, ups-and-downs. But Billy didn't want to read about the same ups-anddowns

over and over again. He asked if there wasn't, please, some other reading matters

around.

'Only Tralfamadorian novels, which I'm afraid you couldn't begin to understand,' said

the speaker on the wall.

'Let me look at one anyway.'

So they sent him in several. They were little things. A dozen of them might have had

the bulk of *Valley of the* Dolls-with all its ups-and-downs, up-and-downs.

Billy couldn't read Tralfamadorian, of course, but he could at least see how the books

were laid out-in brief clumps of symbols separated by stars. Billy commented that the

clumps might be telegrams.

'Exactly,' said the voice.

'They *are* telegrams?'

'There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump of-symbols is a

brief, urgent message describing a situation, a scene, We Tralfamadorians read them all at

once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the

messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at

once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no

beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we

love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time.'

**Chapter Six**

Billy dozed, awakened in the prison hospital again. The sun was high. Outside were

Golgotha sounds of strong men digging holes for upright timbers in hard, hard ground.

Englishmen were building themselves a new latrine. They had abandoned their old latrine

to the Americans and their theater, the place where the feast had been held, too.

Six Englishmen staggered through a hospital with a pool table on which several

mattresses were piled. They were transferring it to living quarters attached to the hospital.

They were followed by an Englishman dragging his mattress and carrying a dartboard.

The man with the dartboard was the Blue Fairy Godmother who had injured little Paul

Lazzaro. He stopped by Lazzaro's bed, asked Lazzaro how he was.

Lazzaro told him he was going to have him killed after the war.

'Oh? '

'You made a big mistake,' said Lazzaro. 'Anybody touches me, he better *kill* me, or I'm

gonna have *him* killed.'

The Blue Fairy Godmother knew something about killing. He gave Lazzaro a careful

smile. 'There is still time for *me* to kill *you*,' he said, 'if you really persuade me that it's the

sensible thing to do.'

'Why don't you go fuck yourself?'

'Don't think I haven't tried,' the Blue Fairy Godmother answered.

The Blue Fairy Godmother left, amused and patronizing. When he was gone, Lazzaro

promised Billy and poor old Edgar Derby that he was going to have revenge, and that

revenge was sweet.

'It's the sweetest thing there is,' said Lazzaro. 'People fuck with me,' he said, 'and Jesus

Christ are they ever fucking sorry. I laugh like hell. I don't care if it's a guy or a dame. If

the President of the United States fucked around with me, I'd fix him good. You should

have seen what I did to a dog one time.'

'A dog?' said Billy.

'Son of a bitch bit me. So I got me some steak, and I got me the spring out of a clock. I

cut that spring up in little pieces. I put points on the ends of the pieces. They were sharp

as razor blades. I stuck 'em into the steak-way inside. And I went past where they had the

dog tied up. He wanted to bite me again. I said to him, "Come on, doggie-let's be friends.

Let's not be enemies any more. I'm not mad." He believed me.'

'He did?'

'I threw him the steak. He swallowed it down in one big gulp. I waited around for ten

minutes.' Now Lazzaro's eyes twinkled. 'Blood started coming out of his mouth. He

started crying, and he rolled on the ground, as though the knives were on the outside of

him instead of on the inside of him. Then he tried to bite out his own insides. I laughed,

and I said to him, "You got the right idea now. Tear your own guts out, boy. That's me in

there with all those knives."' So it goes.

'Anybody ever asks you what the sweetest thing in life is-' said Lazzaro, 'it's revenge.'

When Dresden was destroyed later on, incidentally, Lazzaro did not exult. He didn't

have anything against the Germans, he said. Also, he said he liked to take his enemies

one at a time. He was proud of never having hurt an innocent bystander. 'Nobody ever

got it from Lazzaro,' he said, 'who didn't have it coming.'

**Chapter Seven**

Billy Pilgrim got onto a chartered airplane in Ilium twenty-five years after that. He knew

he was going to crash, but he didn't want to make a fool of himself by saying so. It was

supposed to carry Billy and twenty-eight other optometrists to a convention in Montreal.

His wife, Valencia, was outside, and his father-in-law, Lionel Merble, was strapped to

the seat beside him.

Lionel Merble was a machine. Tralfamadorians, of course, say that every creature and

plant in the Universe is a machine. It amuses them that so many Earthlings are offended

by the idea of being machines.

Outside the plane, the machine named Valencia Merble Pilgrim was eating a Peter Paul

Mound Bar and waving bye-bye.

The plane took off without incident. The moment was structured that way. There was a

barbershop quartet on board. They were optometrists, too. They called themselves 'The

Febs,' which was an acronym for 'Four-eyed Bastards.'

…

Billy, knowing the plane was going to crash pretty soon, closed his eyes, traveled in

time back to 1944. He was back in the forest in Luxembourg again-with the Three

Musketeers. Roland Weary was shaking him, bonking his head against a tree. 'You guys

go on without me,' said Billy Pilgrim.

The barbershop quartet on the airplane was singing 'Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nelly,'

when the plane smacked into the top of Sugarbush Mountain in Vermont. Everybody was

killed but Billy and the copilot. So it goes.

The people who first got to the crash scene were young Austrian ski instructors from

the famous ski resort below. They spoke to each other in German as they went from body

to body. They wore black wind masks with two holes for their eyes and a red topknot.

They looked like golliwogs, like white people pretending to be black for the laughs they

could get.

Billy had a fractured skull, but he was still conscious. He didn't know where he was.

His lips were working, and one of the golliwogs put his ear close to them to hear what

might be his dying words.

Billy thought the golliwog had something to do with the Second World War, and he

whispered to him his address: 'Schlachthöf-funf.'

Billy was brought down Sugarbush Mountain on a toboggan. The golliwogs controlled

it with ropes and yodeled melodiously for right-of-way. Near the bottom, the trail

swooped around the pylons of a chair lift. Billy looked up at all the young people in

bright elastic clothing and enormous boots and goggles, bombed out of their skulls with

snow, swinging through the sky in yellow chairs. He supposed that they were part of an

amazing new phase of the Second World War. It was all right with him. Everything was

pretty much all right with Billy.

**Chapter 8**

'Tell me a story,' Montana Wildhack said to Billy Pilgrim in the Tralfamadorian zoo

one time. They were in bed side by side. They had privacy. The canopy covered the

dome. Montana was six months pregnant now, big and rosy, lazily demanding small

favors from Billy from time to time. She couldn't send Billy out for ice cream or

strawberries, since the atmosphere outside the dome was cyanide, and the nearest

strawberries and ice cream were millions of light years away.

She could send him to the refrigerator, which was decorated with the blank couple on

the bicycle built for two-or, as now she could wheedle, 'Tell me a story, Billy boy.'

'Dresden was destroyed on the night of February 13, 1945,' Billy Pilgrim began. 'We

came out of our shelter the next day.' He told Montana about the four guards who, in their

astonishment and grief, resembled a barber-shop quartet. He told her about the stockyards

with all the fenceposts gone, with roofs and windows gone-told her about seeing little

logs lying around. These were people who had been caught in the firestorm. So it goes.

Billy told her what had happened to the buildings that used to form cliffs around the

stockyards. They had collapsed. Their wood had been consumed, and their stones had

crashed down, had tumbled against one another until they locked at last in low and

graceful curves.

'It was like the moon,' said Billy Pilgrim.

The guards told the Americans to form in ranks of four, which they did. Then they had

them march back to the hog barn which had, been their home. Its walls still stood, but its

windows and roof were gone, and there was nothing inside but ashes and dollops of

melted glass. It was realized then that there was no food or water, and that the survivors,

if they were going to continue to survive, were going to have to climb over curve after

curve on the face of the moon.

Which they did.

The curves were smooth only when seen from a distance. The people climbing them

learned that they were treacherous, jagged things-hot to the touch, often unstable--eager,

should certain important rocks be disturbed, to tumble some more, to form lower, more

solid curves.

Nobody talked much as the expedition crossed the moon. There was nothing

appropriate to say. One thing was clear: Absolutely everybody in the city was supposed

to be dead, regardless of what they were, and that anybody that moved in it represented a

flaw in the design. There were to be no moon men at all.

American fighter planes came in under the smoke to see if anything was moving. They

saw Billy and the rest moving down there. The planes sprayed them with machine-gun

bullets, but the bullets missed. Then they saw some other people moving down by the

riverside and they shot at them. They hit some of them. So it goes.

The idea was to hasten the end of the war.

**Chapter 9**

Here is how Billy Pilgrim lost his wife, Valencia.

He was unconscious in the hospital in Vermont, after the airplane crash on Sugarbush

Mountain, and Valencia, having heard about the crash, was driving from Ilium to the

hospital in the family Cadillac El Dorado Coupe de Ville. Valencia was hysterical,

because she had been told frankly that Billy might die, or that, if he lived, he might be a

vegetable.

Valencia adored Billy. She was crying and yelping so hard as she drove that she

missed the correct turnoff from the throughway. She applied her power brakes, and a

Mercedes slammed into her from behind. Nobody was hurt, thank God, because both

drivers were wearing seat belts. Thank God, thank God. The Mercedes lost only a

headlight. But the rear end of the Cadillac was a body-and-fender man's wet dream. The

trunk and fenders were collapsed. The gaping trunk looked like the mouth of a village

idiot who was explaining that he didn't know anything about anything. The fenders

shrugged. The bumper was at a high port arms. 'Reagan for President!' a sticker on the

bumper said. The back window was veined with cracks. The exhaust system rested on the

pavement.

The driver of the Mercedes got out and went to Valencia, to find out if she was all

right. She blabbed hysterically about Billy and the airplane crash, and then she put her car

in gear and crossed the median divider, leaving her exhaust system behind.

When she arrived at the hospital, people rushed to the windows to see what all the

noise was. The Cadillac, with both mufflers gone, sounded like a heavy bomber coming

in on a wing and a prayer. Valencia turned off the engine, but then she slumped against

the steering wheel, and the horn brayed steadily. A doctor and a nurse ran out to find out

what the trouble was. Poor Valencia was unconscious, overcome by carbon monoxide.

She was a heavenly azure.

One hour later she was dead. So it goes.

Billy knew nothing about it. He, dreamed on, and traveled in time and so forth. The

hospital was so crowded that Billy couldn't have a room to himself. He shared a room

with a Harvard history professor named Bertram Copeland Rumfoord. Rumfoord didn't

have to look at Billy, because Billy was surrounded by white linen screens on rubber

wheels. But Rumfoord could hear Billy talking to himself from time to time.

Rumfoord's left leg was in traction. He had broken it while skiing. He was seventy

years old, but had the body and spirit of a man half that age. He had been honeymooning

with his fifth wife when he broke his leg. Her name was Lily. Lily was twenty-three.

Just about the time poor Valencia was pronounced dead, Lily came into Billy's and

Rumfoord's room with an armload of books. Rumfoord had sent her down to Boston to

get them. He was working on a one-volume history of the United States Army Air Corps

in the Second World War. The books were about bombings and sky battles that had

happened before Lily was even *born*.

'You guys go on without me,' said Billy Pilgrim deliriously, as pretty little Lily came

in. She had been an a-go-go girl when Rumfoord saw her and resolved to make her his

own. She was a high school dropout. Her I.Q. was 103. 'He scares me,' she whispered to

her husband about Billy Pilgrim.

'He bores the *hell* out of *me*!' Rumfoord replied boomingly. 'All he does in his sleep is

quit and surrender and apologize and ask to be left alone.' Rumfoord was a retired

brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve, the official Air Force Historian, a fun

professor, the author of twenty-six books, a multimillionaire since birth, and one of the

great competitive sailors of all time. His most popular book was about sex and strenuous

athletics for men over sixty-five. Now he quoted Theodore Roosevelt whom he

resembled a lot:

'I could carve a better man out of a banana.'