Free Trial Version

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut. © Vonnegut, 1.All this happened, more or less. The dates, for example, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really did threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. I was a prisoner of war in Dresden when Dresden was firebombed to the ground. I went back there with an old buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare, to see what it was like now. It was like Dayton, Ohio, or Omaha, or Lincoln, or Des Moines, or any other place that was not bombed to smithereens in the Second World War. Dresden was a beautiful place before it was firebombed. It was full of baroque churches and palaces and opera houses and museums and zoos. It was a city of music and art and science. It was a city of children, too, and of old people who were too feeble to flee from the firestorm. There were no military targets in Dresden worth mentioning. There was no quarter of the city that was more important than any other quarter. The firebombing was a terror bombing, pure and simple. It was a war crime, pure and simple. The Germans had made soap and candles and lampshades and other useful things out of the corpses of their victims, and they had made a lot of corpses. While I was in Schlachthof Fünf, I had to help with the disposal of the corpses of my friends who had died in the firebombing. I was a prisoner of war in a slaughterhouse for American cattle, and we made friends with a cab driver, who took us to the slaughterhouse where we had been locked up at night as prisoners of war. His name was Gerhard Müller. He told us that he was a prisoner of the Americans for a while. We asked him how it was to live under Communism, and he said that it was like living in a slaughterhouse. Gerhard Müller died in the Second World War twenty-three years ago. I thought I would be able to find his grave in Dresden, but I didn't know what his last name was. There are a lot of graves in Dresden now, and I don't know which one is his. Poo-tee-weet? 2 Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy was born in 1922 in Ilium, New York, the only child of a barber there. He was a gummy-looking child who became a gummy-looking youth-tall and weak, an optometrist's nightmare. He was a prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany, during the firebombing of Dresden. He survived the firebombing in a slaughterhouse for American cattle. After the war, he married a fat, ugly, and stupid girl for her money. He fathered children and became a rich optometrist himself. He bought a big, ugly, expensive house in a suburb of Ilium. He and his family were the only people who lived in that suburb who had not been bombed by the Germans. Dresden was a city of refugees, and Billy's parents were two of the refugees who had fled there from their home in Poland. Billy's parents were killed in a head-on collision by a drunk driver when Billy was a student at the Ilium School of Optometry. Billy survived the crash, but he was crippled and had to walk with crutches for the rest of his life. Billy's crutches were made of aluminum, painted sky blue. Billy's wife, Valencia, was killed by a cancer in her breast when Billy was in a prisoner-of-war camp. Valencia died of her cancer in the Ilium Lying-in Hospital, on the same night that her husband was firebombed in Dresden. Billy married her in the Ilium Lying-in Hospital. Billy married her because she was the daughter of the founder and owner of the school, and then suffered a mild nervous breakdown. Billy's daughter Barbara was upset. She and her mother hated each other. Barbara was a student at Ilium Junior College. Her mother was a student there, too. Her mother was majoring in Billy. Billy's son Robert was a student at the Ilium Military Academy. Robert was majoring in Billy. Billy's son Robert had a crush on Barbara's girlfriend Mary Mo. Mary Mo was majoring in Billy. Billy promised to take Barbara and Mary Mo and Robert and himself and his wife on a pleasure trip to the planet Tralfamadore in their spaceship. Billy had seen a movie about Tralfamadore, and he had read a little about it in a magazine. Billy was a movie buff and a reader of magazines. Billy was a movie buff and a reader of magazines because he was a veteran who had trouble with his memory. Billy had trouble with his memory because he had been in the Dresden firebombing. Billy had been in the Dresden firebombing because he had been a prisoner of war there. Billy was a prisoner of war because he was a chaplain's assistant in the Army of the United States of America. A chaplain's assistant is customarily a figure of fun in the Army. A chaplain's assistant is customarily a figure of fun in the Army because he is a coward who refuses to carry a weapon. Billy was a coward who refuses to carry a weapon because he was a dreamer who had dreamed that he was able to travel through time. Billy had dreamed that he was able to travel through time because he was a victim of the firebombing of Dresden. Billy was a victim of the firebombing of Dresden because he was a prisoner of war there. Billy was a prisoner of war because he was a chaplain's assistant. Billy was a chaplain's assistant because he was