



From These Ashes: The Complete Short SF of Fredric Brown

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A collection of all 118 short science fiction and fantasy stories of one of the masters of the vignette, all his short works except two which were rewritten into parts of a novel. Introduction by Barry N. Malzberg.
Dustjacket art by Bob Eggleton.

From These Ashes: The Complete Short SF of Fredric Brown Details

Date : Published February 2001 by Nesfa Press

ISBN : 9781886778184

Author : Fredric Brown , Ben Yallow (Editor)

Format : Hardcover 693 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy



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From Reader Review From These Ashes: The Complete Short SF of Fredric Brown for online ebook

An Odd1 says

<http://aneyespy.blogspot.com/2012/03/...>

because GoodReads cannot post over 20K characters or auto-post to my blog since 2011. Spoiler-less Preview:

Mystery, humor, all 111 tales (SF irrelevant) 1941-65, from life 1906-72. Longer consideration percolates ratings up, even to 5*. My 4* personal preference for happy twists to his superb surprise endings punishes the messenger author for his clear sight into the basic cruelty of human nature. Some slip past my understanding at first, such as Runaround #5 with hidden lesson: running away can conquer the biggest baddest monster; others stay incomprehensible. Faves: #1 Armageddon, 24 Crisis 1999, 32 Honeymoon in Hell, 42 The Gamblers.

1. Armageddon - Little Herbie Westerman, Safety Cadet, ready with five-and-dime water pistol when Bijou Theatre's Gerber the Great heats up.4*
2. Not Yet the End - Cruel Kandor aliens test intelligence of sample 5-fingered Earth bipeds for mine slaves.3*
3. Etaoin Shrdlu - Animated linotype, created by Little Guy With The Pimple LGWTP drives newspaper setter mad, until retired narrator Walter teaches it philosophy. 2*
4. Star Mouse - Small grey mouse Mitkey sent in moon rocket by small grey Viennese Herr Professor Oberburger in Connecticut. 2*
5. Runaround - Smaller life constantly flees last Tyrannosaurus Rex, starving over a century.1->5*
6. The New One - In WW2, Valhalla of saints, heroes and gods, need new idol for patriotic Wally to battle demon-encouraged pyromania.2*
7. The Angelic Angleworm - Charlie, typesetter with coin hobby, misses his wedding after strange events: an angel-worm, sunburn when angry, ether, duck replaces silver Chinese coin in exhibit, lei on golf course, and Rumanian copper coin in lye box is final clue.2*
8. The Hat Trick - After a horror movie double date, Bob teases Walter into pulling a rat demon from a hat.1*
9. The Geezenstacks - Sam Walters fears odd wax doll family predicts his own family actions, so wife Edith gives them to witchy woman.2*
10. Daymare - Lt Rod Caquer's first murder on Calisto has 5 different demises reported for Deem. That night, everyone arms, sleepwalks, returns to bed. Another Deem dies, then arrives as an off-planet investigator.2*
11. Paradox Lost - During boring 1963 lecture, student Shorty McCabe follows a vanished buzzing bluebottle

fly into a time bubble with crazy quasi-philosophical conversation, while 1968 prof in same classroom asks out cute red-head.1*

12. And the Gods Laughed - On Ganymede, alien parasites animate dead humans via gold (ear)rings, says tall tale from last visitor, narrator Hank, on ship to Earth.3*

13. Nothing Sirius - New-found planet in erratic Sirius orbit named by narrator Captain, inhabited by old carny pal, luscious movie star ideal of rigid young pilot, and cockroaches.3*

14. The Yehudi Principle - Pal Charlie demonstrates headband invention, for narrator trying to write story; he blurs while (explained by imaginary Yehudi) obeying command super-fast.2*

15. Arena - Scoutship pilot Bob Carson, part of Earth armada ready against invading unseen Outsiders, wakes naked under hot dome of blue sand, separated from red box-shape alien by super-Entity created force-field.2* Unlike original Star Trek version.

16. The Waveries - Alien sort of radio waves consume electricity and revert 1950s technology and lifestyle.4*

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<http://aneyespy.blogspot.com/2012/03/...>

Dragonfruit says

Ok so I haven't read all of the short stories in here, but I still highly recommend the book.

Jon. says

An engaging collection of short stories. Brown covered a lot of sf's sub-genres, from "hard" science fiction (spaceship battles, undiscovered planets) to stories that verge on horror, or that just have one or two fantastic elements. He had an O. Henry-esque gift for the twist ending, and could incorporate those twists into some very short stories - some in this volume were less than a page long. Includes the justifiably famous "Answer," as well as "Etoain Shrdlu," which has been widely anthologized.

Blynn says

One of the best short story writers I have ever read, and not just Sci-Fi. He has the ability to immerse you in a story quickly. Some of the best in this anthology are only 3 and 4 pages long and by the end you feel with the characters.

R.E. Conary says

Fantastic short story collection.

Bret Quinn says

One of my favorite Golden Era science fiction writers, Brown penned "Arena," later adapted for the Star Trek original series episode. There is much more here. Brown is a writer of considerable stature and his stories bite and sting, some with the ferocity of the best of Robert Bloch.

Joshua Buhs says

Frederick Brown is probably the epitome of the mid-century pulp writer.

He wasn't as good as the best, at least not consistently, though he could be; he was never as bad as the worst. He played with a number of different genres--detective fiction (no out-n-out noir, however), science fiction, fantasy--though, again, not everything: no romance, or war, or straight adventure. But he was diverse, and could operate in any of them comfortably.

There are the usual problems with fiction from this era: sexism (plus a completely naive understanding of women as people), causal racism (though not so much here as in other examples), dialogue that works so hard toward exposition as to sound fake (everybody talks in high generalities, in an attempt to quickly explain the logic of some action), an inordinate amount of drinking.

But the stories are almost always clever--Brown had a good sense of humor, and was great at word play. His best stories are the short-shorts, which cut out everything extraneous so as to highlight the punchline. (Some of the worst stories are just long-winded wind-ups to the punch line.) There are, though, some of his later works that are mid-length (8-10 pages), which are dense and precise and suggest he could have done an excellent mainstream novel, had he put his mind and attention to it. (Brown suffered from depression, and drank way too much.)

The book is copy-edited well--there are a few mistakes, but hardly noticeable in a tome this length--and there are some inclusions I cannot fathom: this is supposed to be all of his science fiction and fantasy work, but a few of the stories are straight detective tales, or just straight yarns. It is arranged chronologically, which makes sense, but also means the book is weakest at the beginning, when Brown had not yet developed his chops.

If you have the slightest interest in 20th century pulp, this should be on the shelf for casual browsing, at the very least.

Max says

Fredric Brown is a master of suspense, a genius with a twist and a virtuoso of the punchline. I loved his nightmare stories and all of the ones he wrote in 1954. I think he was more of a writer of mysteries than of sf, but certainly great at intriguing endings. The stories from the last few years tend to be more of the horror variety, I wonder why. If it hadn't been used yet, an alternative title for this wonderful collection might have been Tales of the Unexpected. Highly recommended

Stephen says

I'll be a while reading through this HEFTY collection of well over 100 science fiction short stories, but the thought of it makes me smile and gives me a full on happy. Fredric Brown was a true artist of the short fiction format. Often called the **O. Henry** of science fiction because of his penchant for the "trick ending," Brown's stories are simply delightful to consume. Always well-written, they alternate between "toe tapping" fun to "nail-biting" suspense and most of the stories also have something clever or insightful to say about the human condition.

With so many entries in the collection, I think it would be a novel in itself to try and do a detailed review of each story. Therefore, I am simply going to breakdown the stories I have read so far a place them in one of four groups (according to my level of appreciation for them) and then toss a blurb about the story (this will of course be revised as I get through more of the stories).

THE SUPERBEST

Armageddon: A smart, funny story about a little boy and the end of the world.

The New One: An original, imaginative story about the power of belief.

Paradox Lost: Simply brilliant short piece about sanity, insanity and dinosaurs.

The Weapon: Genius and very powerful piece about War.

Arena: Brown's most famous story (thanks to the Star trek episode of the same name). Selected as one of the top 20 all time SF Short Stories of All Time).

THE EXCELLENTNESS

Runaround: A beautiful, poignant story about the last T-Rex as seen through the dying creatures on eyes.

Not Yet the End: A great ending highlights this comical tale about aliens, monkeys and man's place in the universe.

The Angelic Angleworm: Smart, meaningful and humorous novelette with another classic ending.

The Geezenstacks: One of FB's more famous pieces about a family of dolls that are much more than they appear.

THE VERY GOODIE TO THE BARELY GREAT

Etaoin Shrdlu: Another great ending highlights this tale of a sentient linotype machine.

The Hat Trick: Terrific, intelligent story about the inability of people to "see" the fantastic.

THE RESTEST***So far these have been at least decent.*

Star Mouse Not a bad story about a smart little critter, but my least favorite so far.

Daymare Neat novelette about a Martian policeman investigating a very bizarre murder.

**TO BE CONTINUED

Ben says

As interesting for it's distinctive 1950's perspective on "the future" as for the Twilight Zone-ish twists in most of the stories.

Cheryl says

I read everything I can by Brown. His flash fiction packs more of a punch than O. Henry; his longer work is more accessible and not quite as dark as P.K. Dick, and everything is juicy and meaty and surprising. Several of his stories have been Twilight Zone episodes. I even read his detective novels. I even re-read stories that I know the exact plot of, because the writing style itself is good, too.

Many of these stories have been collected elsewhere, but this is a particularly nice volume and I highly recommend it... especially to fans of SF, TZ, Dick, Asimov's shorts, and dark humor.

Eric says

Well done for the most part but I think I prefer the crime stories over the straight sci-fi stories. Loved the humorous stories though. Often just bizarre beyond belief.

Eric says

I enjoyed nearly every one of the over 100 stories in this book. The stories are all short and most have some kind of twist to them. Highly recommended early sci-fi.

James says

There are a number of short stories in here that are far from perfect -- but you can't criticize a collection labeled "complete" for mixing up the one-star and five-star stories.

Back when I was a SF-addicted adolescent, Brown was one of my favorite writers. Unlike many of the authors I loved back then, though, Brown holds up from an adult perspective. In fact, many of his stories read better now than they did when I was mid-pubescent.

The famous classics are here, as are the non-famous classics, and plenty of stuff that was written for the paycheck and shows it. Even most of those show off his flair for turns of phrase. A few stories play like they were written to produce a rim-shot at the end.

A thorough pleasure.

Ron says

science fiction genius
