



Destination: Universe!

A.E. van Vogt

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Collection of short stories. First published in 1952. It contains the following stories:

Far centaurus (1944)
The Monster (1948)
Dormant (1948)
The Enchanted Village (1950)
A Can of Paint (1944)
Defence (1947)
The Rulers (1944)
Dear Pen Pal (1949)
The Sound (1950)
The Search (1943)

Destination: Universe! Details

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Author : A.E. van Vogt

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From Reader Review Destination: Universe! for online ebook

George says

The book that made me an avid science fiction reader

Ippino says

Libro discreto.

Penso che Van Vogt sia molto più a suo agio con gli scritti brevi, piuttosto che con i romanzi.

Infatti, i racconti qui presenti sono tutti molto godibili, mentre quello che affossa la media sono i due romanzi brevi.

"L'assedio degli invisibili" è sufficiente, con un'idea di base carina ma nulla più; "Gli uomini ombra" invece è noioso, arzigogolato senza essere convincente, e alla fine si perde al momento delle spiegazioni, un pò troppo raffazzonate.

In conclusione quindi, la metà del libro migliore è quella dei racconti, mentre i due romanzi brevi sono trascurabili.

Amanda Nuchols says

Make that 3.5 stars, hovering on 4. I did really enjoy this collection of short stories, but because there were a few that I found too dated and/or a little silly, I chose to rate it at 3 stars/3.5 stars.

All of the stories in this collection are from the 1940's up to 1950 and the collection was released in 1952.

Most of the original tales were published in 'Astounding Science Fiction,' among others. The copy I read was a paperback release from 1964.

In general, van Vogt is a huge influence on science fiction writers that came later, in the 60's to today. After reading this collection, I could certainly see his influence over such shows as Star Trek, the Twilight Zone, etc. and his hand touching the words of people like Harlan Ellison and Phillip K. Dick. That's a pretty far-reaching influence, considering that Ellison and Dick are also primary influences on many contemporary science fiction authors. I think it would be worth more people's time to go back and read more of the 'founding fathers' of science fiction.

My favorite story in the collection was "The Enchanted Village." Written in 1950, it plays with what would later become a meme among shows like The Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, etc. by placing a single protagonist in an impossible situation and then solving it with an unexpected twist.

"A Can of Paint" is also an interesting story, and I think was left undone in many ways. It feels rushed and incomplete, but the underlying idea is fantastic. I'm surprised I haven't seen that idea of 'paint' repeated in other science fiction.

Several of the stories also belie the post WWII trauma that weighed heavily on the American psyche. Stories like "The Monster," "Dormant," and "Defense" play upon post-war fear and paranoia in many ways while lightly exploring the Nature of Man and cultural understanding.

Overall, the collection presents an excellent opportunity to read excellent 'vintage' science fiction and revel in the aspects of it that have influenced modern literature, the aspects that are humorously dated, and enjoy the moments of brilliance.

Stephen says

4.0 stars. I have only read the first four stories in the collection so the rating/review below will be for the stories listed (I will update the rating/review as I read additional stories). Overall, I was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed these stories as I did not think I was going to like them as much as I did (my guess going in was 2 or 3 stars). It certainly exceeded my expectations and I would recommend this collection and intend to read more short fiction by A.E. Van Vogt.

Far Centaurus (4.0 stars): Great short story that describes the 500 year journey of four astronauts from Earth to Alpha Centauri, accomplished by means of an "Eternity Drug" that puts the crew to sleep for 50 years at a pop and from which the awake periodically to check the instruments before returning to sleep. The first half of this story was really amazing and would have gotten 5 stars as the atmosphere created by Van Vogt of the 500 year journey to Alpha Centauri was superb. The end of the story was a little weaker but still good enough to get 4 stars overall.

The Monster (3.0 stars): Pretty cool story about an alien race visiting a long dead Earth and finding more than they bargained for.

Dormant (5.0 stars): This was a brilliant short story that is hard to describe without giving spoilers so I will just say it is about aliens, war, communication and the dangers of atomic weapons. I loved it.

Enchanted Village (3.5 to 4.0 stars): Another surprisingly good short story about the last survivor of the first manned expedition to Mars. I kind of saw the ending coming, but it was still a very good story.

J. Weichsel says

Destination: Universe is a collection of late 40's/early 50's hard science fiction short stories by A.E. Van Vogt. The prose is clumsy and the plotting is often second rate, but the ideas are so far out and crazy that it's worth a read. Most of the stories originally appeared in John W. Campbell's Astounding.

John says

This book made a huge impression on me as a youth.

Simon Hedge says

In his brief (one page) introduction to this volume, Van Vogt states: "Science fiction, as I personally try to write it, glorifies man and his future." He was surely one of the most 'Campbell-ian' authors.

The edition I read (Panther Science Fiction 1972 reprint) didn't contain any bibliographic information, so I'm going to put that in here just for my own reference.

Far Centaurus - 4/5

Astounding Science Fiction - January 1944.

Excitement blazed inside me: and consciousness came of the glory of this trip we were making, the first men to head for far Centaurus, the first men to dare aspire to the stars.

A group of brave pioneers set out on the first interstellar voyage. The five hundred year journey drives some of them insane! 4 out of 5

The Monster - 4/5

Astounding Science Fiction - August 1948.

The two-legged one's adjustment to a new situation, his grasp of realities, was abnormally rapid. No Ganae could have equalled the swiftness of the reaction.

Visitors to a long dead earth decide to revive one of its 'primitive' lifeforms before they occupy the planet. They might regret it... 4 out of 5

Dormant - 3/5

Startling Stories - November 1948.

Maynard pictured himself walking along this monster-inhabited, night-enveloped island. And the shuddery thrill that came was almost pure unadulterated pleasure.

Van Vogt's glorified men meet Lovecraft-ian horror. Who will come out on top? 3 out of 5

The Enchanted Village - 4/5

Other Worlds Science Stories - July 1950.

The village had to adjust to him. He doubted if he could seriously damage it, but he could try. His own need to survive must be placed on as sharp and hostile a basis as that.

The first mission to Mars crashes on arrival. The only survivor finds salvation in an abandoned martian village. Of course, it is set up to sustain martian life, so some adjustments will need to be made... 4 out of 5

A Can Of Paint - 2/5

Astounding Science Fiction - September 1944.

Great things were expected of Venus. But not so great as this. Kilgour stopped his pacing. A race that could develop a perfect paint. *anything* perfect, was going to prove worth knowing.

Lightly comic tale of misunderstandings and mistakes. 2 out of 5

Defence - 2/5

Avon Fantasy Reader - 1947.

So the little boogies have got you at last, pal. Can't take the tension of the first attempt to land on the moon. Relax, boy, relax. We're almost there.

A short-short story of misplaced confidence. 2 out of 5

The Rulers - 2/5

Astounding Science Fiction - March 1944.

'Science,' the plump man was saying, 'has made such strides since the war that it's already possible to foresee a time when everything we do, or use in any way, will be either completely artificial, artificially enhanced, supernatural, or better than the original.'

Espionage, derring-do and futuristic mind-control drugs. 2 out of 5

Dear Pen Pal - 3/5

The Arkham Sampler - Winter 1949.

I wouldn't say that we're a superior race. We have certain qualities which apparently your people do not have.

Predictable story of alien correspondence with ulterior motives. 3 out of 5

The Sound - 4/5

Astounding Science Fiction - February 1950.

The Yards were a suburb of Solar City, and that massive metropolis in its artificial tropical setting was a vision that had no parallel in the human-controlled part of the Galaxy. Its buildings and its parks extended to every hazy horizon.

The most archetypal Van Vogt entry in this collection - young male protagonist faces near-insurmountable odds among some inventively askew world-building. 4 out of 5

The Search - 4/5

Astounding Science Fiction - January 1943.

'Mind you' - the admission came almost reluctantly - 'they've got some wonderful things. The government isn't kidding when it says that after this war we're going to live like kings and queens.'

A man trying to discover the cause of his amnesia gives Van Vogt opportunity to have a lot of fun with mixed up time-lines. Possibly my favourite story in the book. 4 out of 5

Janjohn says

I read random articles in Wikipedia while I'm at work, and that's how I learned about A.E. van Vogt. I'm not a big fan of science fiction, but I wanted to try other genres for a change. When I found this book in a used books store, I bought it.

There are some stories in this book that I really enjoyed. My favorites are Dear Pen Pal and Far Centaurus. A Can of Paint was also interesting. Some of the stories, nah. I can't even remember what happened in some of those stories.

Maybe sci-fi is just not for me.

Cole Schoolland says

A wonderful collection of short stories by Van Vogt. Many of them clearly set the stage for themes or characters in Null-A and the War Against the Rull.

Chris says

I think this is one of the first SF books I ever read. We were staying at a cottage near the beach and someone had left this book on the shelf. It's a collection of A E van Vogt's short stories, some are a bit dated but most still have interesting premises. Consider "Far Centaurus" where a crew flying 500 years through space in suspended animation arrives at their destination only to find that it's been colonized by humans for hundreds of years. Or what happens when an AI robot bomb suddenly remembers what it is? Fun stuff and it got me hooked on SF

Christopher Obert says

This book is a collection of ten short science fiction stories by A.E. van Volt. Each story is a stand-alone story and can be read in any order. I was not very familiar with van Volt's writing and did not know any of these stories but I enjoyed them very much. Each story was very different from each other and very creative. I found it to be a great introduction to van Volt's fiction.

Joe says

An interesting collection of short stories by Van Vogt written with his customary simple writing but great ideas and a flair for making things stand off the page. Every story makes you think it'll go one way and it

does, in its own way.

Not many authors could craft a story about an alien tin of paint and be interesting; Van Vogt manages it just fine.

Nathan Leigh says

A succinct introduction penned by A.E van Vogt himself, heralding Science Fiction as the platform upon which the future is built as well as the means by which we can break free from the constraints of modern society. An inspiring commentary that pushes you firmly into the first story...

Far Centaurus

(1944)

4/5

A team of astronauts set out to be the first to travel to Alpha Centauri but, upon arriving, discover that others had made it there first.

The 500 year long journey, made possible due to an experimental drug, is punctuated by brief episodes that form the first half of the story. These episodes, reminiscent of Ridley Scott's vision of space travel, lead us to Alpha Centauri and the realisation that the crew hadn't got their fast enough.

Far Centaurus is a great introduction to the work of Vogt

The Monster

(1948)

3/5

An alien race descends on a planet only to discover that the beings that once lived there have been destroyed. By re-animating the bodies of the inhabitants, the visitors are able to question the long dead individuals and gauge whether the planet will be safe to colonise.

During their attempt to find out what caused the global extinction, the guests awaken something far more dangerous than they had planned for.

Dormant

(1948)

3/5

Military forces come across a mysterious object during a mission on a remote island and decide to take a closer look. After it badly injures one of lieutenant Keith Maynard's squad they leave no closer to understanding what it is. The object is struggling to understand them as well.

An interesting narrative in which A.E van Vogt channels the fear of the atomic age.

The Enchanted Village

(1950)

3/5

The first manned mission to Mars crashes on arrival, leaving the sole survivor to start across the desert in search of refuge. With dwindling provisions, he comes across an abandoned Martian village. He must find a way to survive.

A fun story in a mysterious location with a twist ending that I should have seen coming.

A Can of Paint

(1944)

2/5

After spending a year travelling through space, the first explorer to set foot on Venus stumbles across a can of paint in the meadow he lands his ship. He soon discovers that the Venusian paint is nothing like that of Earth and gets himself into a sticky situation.

A humorous story about discovery and resourcefulness, which, despite being the weakest in the collection, is still a good read.

Defence

(1947)

4/5

500 miles from the surface, two astronauts look out at the surface of the moon, one of them swears he saw something.

A very short story, spanning just two pages, that still deserves its place in this collection.

The Rulers

(1944)

3/5

A typical Washington dinner party debates whether the artificial will triumph over the natural. After one of the guests asks for a substitute for the human brain, Dr Latham recalls his encounters with the H drug.

A fast paced jaunt through the 'future' in which the young Dr Latham has to be quick on his heels in order to escape an unknown enemy.

I would have given this a 4/5 but the ending seemed a little too convenient.

Dear Pen Pal

(1949)

2/5

The Interstellar Correspondence Club makes it possible for an Earthman to exchange letters with Skander, an Aurigaen prisoner, with ulterior motives.

A predictable tale told through the letters received from Skander. Still worth a read though.

The Sound

(1950)

4/5

A young boy in search of The Sound, encounters a couple of strangers that he believes to be Yevd. He must remember his training, however, and placate the shape-shifting enemy even if it means revealing the secrets of The Yards.

One of the strongest narratives in this collection, exhibiting AE Van Vogt's world-building skills. The Yevd are an inventive threat that proves as terrifying to the reader as to the young protagonist.

The Search

(1943)

5/5

After waking up in hospital with amnesia, a travelling salesman sets off in search for his memory.

Tracing his steps to Piffer's Road, he learns more about the weeks before his hospitalisation but nothing could have prepared him for where it would lead him this time around.

This is my favourite entry in the anthology, with lots of fun to be had in discovering the past, and the future, with Vogt's salesman.

Amanda Ure says

These are the only A E van Vogt stories I've read. The author wrote in 1500-word chunks and made sure something gripping happened in each one, which is likely to be a fruitful approach although I haven't tried it. He's also been described as "a midget using a giant's typewriter", in that he uses scale in terms of space and time to wow his readership but in the end it's all fluff and doesn't mean anything. It's like he's gone through a history book, changed all the names to something spacy-sounding and added a nought to the end of the dates. Having said that, it's quite memorable and has a few interesting ideas which have stayed with me.

Kim Clarke says

This book is a collection of short stories from the 1940s so my three star rating is an average for the book.

Fascinating to see how the future was imagined so long ago. We have the video phones which show up in several stories but I am still waiting for my flying car damnit.
