



Grand Crusades: The Early Jack Vance, Volume Five

Jack Vance

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Avenues into the Future...

"Truth to tell, we're tourists, out to see the wonders of the universe."

--Paddy Blackthorn, *The Rapparee*

Grand journeys among the stars--pursuits, quests, explorations and encounters. These were very much science fiction and fantasy Grandmaster Jack Vance's stock in trade, whether to have Kirth Gersen roam the Oikumene and Beyond tracking down his five Demon Princes or to strand Adam Reith on far-off Tschai. Or, as in this present volume, to take Earthstyle opera to the nonhuman folk of distant Rlaru, to study the much coveted treepod dwellings on Iszm, to follow the clues in five gold bands to the knowledge that lets a handful of races control all space travel in the universe, or to endure servitude at the hands of ruthless alien overlords.

Just as Vance sought adventure and the joys of a fulfilled life by travelling the highways and byways of his own beloved Earth, so he had his heroes and heroines do the same on other worlds. The five early tales featured in "Grand Crusades: The Early Jack Vance, Volume Five" take us on a fascinating selection of such journeys, showing us how the future was in the earlier years of his writing career.

And inevitably, as with storytellers from Homer to Shakespeare, Dickens to Austen, Tolstoy to Twain, our Grandmaster also used his craft as something on which to hang personal preoccupations, fascinations and longings. For as with any good writer, the completions and payoffs of these otherworldly travels often deliver more than just a satisfactory conclusion to the affairs on hand and a few hours' pleasant diversion for the reader. Vance also put us in touch with things beyond the page, delivering an awareness of a universe and a future for humanity filled with possibility, leaving us--as the best writers, artists and makers always do--with feelings of connection with something larger.

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