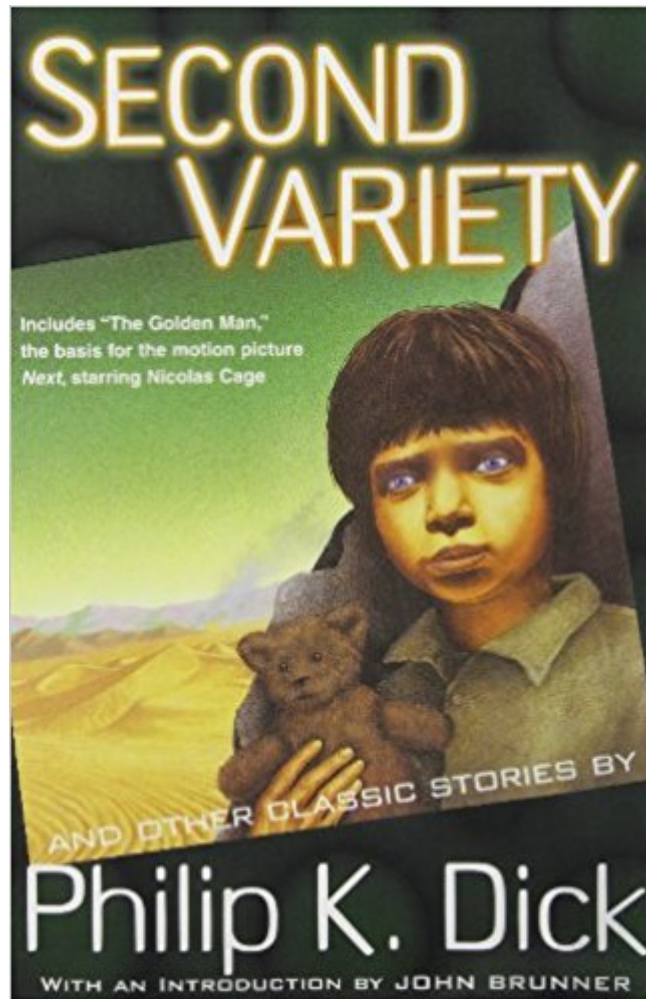


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Second Variety And Other Classic Stories



Synopsis

Many thousands of readers consider Philip K. Dick the greatest science fiction mind on any planet. Since his untimely death in 1982, interest in Dick's works has continued to mount and his reputation has been further enhanced by a growing body of critical attention. The Philip K. Dick Award is now given annually to a distinguished work of science fiction, and the Philip K. Dick Society is devoted to the study and promulgation of his works. This collection includes all of the writer's earliest short and medium-length fiction (including some previously unpublished stories) covering the years 1952-1955. These fascinating stories include *Second Variety*, *Foster*, *You're Dead* and *The Father-Thing*, and many others. "A useful acquisition for any serious SF library or collection". -- Kirkus "The collected stories of Philip K. Dick is awe inspiring". -- The Washington Post "More than anyone else in the field, Mr. Dick really puts you inside people's minds". -- Wall Street Journal

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There would be little point in giving a synopsis of each of the 24 stories in this book. That would give a false sense of repetition since many feature images of ash and overturned bathtubs -- the aftermath of nuclear war -- or struggles between mutants and normal humans, each fearing their extinction. But they don't seem any more repetitious than a skilled musician working variations on a theme for that is what many are. These stories, written in 1953 and 1954 -- with one exception, are arranged chronologically, so the student of Dick can see him play with an idea for two or three stories in a row. Along the way we get the humor, intricate plotting, and sudden reversals in our

moral sympathies characteristic of Dick. And there are the machines that so often are a force of death in Dick though they behave more and more like life. Such is the case with the title story, one of Dick's most paranoid and basis for the movie *Screamers*. When sophisticated weapons take on human guise and began to stalk man, what Dick calls his grand theme, knowing who is human and who only pretends to be, is starkly exhibited. Other famous stories are "The Golden Man" with its purging of mutants before they infect the human gene pool, "The Father-Thing" which is what a boy realizes has replaced his real father, and "Sales Pitch", a story which anticipates, with its all purpose android advertising its virtues through rather thuggish means, the work of Ron Goulart. There are some memorable stories not so well known.

This book, third in a set of five from Citadel Press (who are doing similar definitive collections of Robert Bloch & Theodore Sturgeon), collects all of Dick's short stories, the vast majority of them from the 50s - not coincidentally, the high-water mark of the sf pulps. All are introduced by later-era sf writers like Tom Disch, Norman Spinrad & this volume's John Brunner; unfortunately, all take pains to point out that the true value of these stories was in their raw wealth of ideas, which Dick later cannibalized and expanded upon in his novels. During his short-story tyro period, Dick wrote fast and furious (how does a story a week sound?) and the conventional wisdom states that these tales are too one-dimensional, formulaic and crudely-written to have much artistic quality on their own merits. I strongly disagree. While Dick's later novels are of course worth reading, these early stories literally SEETHE with fevered imagination: it's important to note that he does not employ recurring characters or settings here. He literally starts each story with a blank canvas, which only makes his prolific output that much more astounding. All of his obsessions and central themes are already present, but emerging as they did against the backdrop of the American 50s, the oft-noted 'flaws' in these small gems lend an eerily authentic surrealism and subversive power that his 60s and 70s work (when the world he lived in was already waist-deep in 'science fiction time', to use a Spinrad phrase) somewhat lack. Actually, Dick's *COLLECTED STORIES*, like much of the most resonant 50s sf, can be savored as much for their horror-story frissons, or their mythic and allegorical properties, as they can as pure speculative fiction.

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