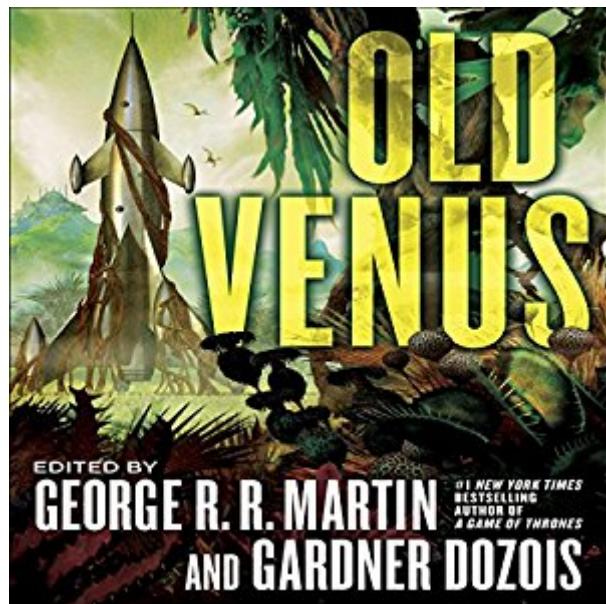


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## Old Venus



## Synopsis

Sixteen all-new stories by science fiction's top talents, collected by best-selling author George R. R. Martin and multiple-award-winning editor Gardner Dozois. From pulp adventures such as Edgar Rice Burroughs' Carson of Venus to classic short stories such as Ray Bradbury's "The Long Rain" to visionary novels such as C. S. Lewis' Perelandra, the planet Venus has loomed almost as large in the imaginations of science fiction writers as Earth's next-nearest neighbor, Mars. But while the Red Planet conjured up in golden-age science-fiction stories was a place of vast deserts and ruined cities, bright-blue Venus was its polar opposite: a steamy, swampy jungle world with strange creatures lurking amid the dripping vegetation. Alas, just as the last century's space probes exploded our dreams of Mars, so too did they shatter our romantic visions of Venus, revealing, instead of a lush paradise, a hellish world inimical to all life. But don't despair! This new anthology of 16 original stories by some of science fiction's best writers - edited by number-one New York Times best-selling author George R. R. Martin and award-winning editor Gardner Dozois - turns back the clock to that more innocent time, before the hard-won knowledge of science vanquished the infinite possibilities of the imagination. Featuring all-new stories by: Eleanor Arnason Elizabeth Bear David Brin Tobias S. Buckell Michael Cassutt Joe Haldeman Matthew Hughes Gwyneth Jones Joe R. Lansdale Stephen Leigh Paul McAuley Ian McDonald Garth Nix Mike Resnick Allen M. Steele Lavie Tidhar And an Introduction by Gardner Dozois

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I intentionally waited to write about Old Venus until I'd gotten a look at the real

thing by reading *Pirates of Venus* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Burroughs' *Old Venus* gets namedropped in the jacket copy of *Old Venus*, along with Ray Bradbury's *The Long Rain* and C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Dozois' introduction highlights Planet Stories from 1939-1955 and suggests C.L. Moore and Leigh Brackett may have written the best Venus stories. This is decidedly Retro SF, because the era of Venusian sword and planet died on December 14, 1962 when an American probe passed over Venus and confirmed it is too hot to support life. So how does *Old Venus* stack up to old Venus? First off, there is only one story in *Old Venus* that really runs in the Burroughs vein (not by accident my favorite), so maybe I didn't pick the best book to compare and contrast. None of the stories are outright bad, but they lack that spark of vitality that *Pirates of Venus* has. My biggest complaint may that the stories with the exception of *The Tumbledowns of Cleopatra Abyss* by David Brin aren't very inventive. *Old Venus* is still a pricey hardcover, but you certainly get your money's worth in quantity. At 608 pages, Martin and Dozois pack in 16 stories that run more toward novelette length than short story (there is a full list of the stories below). They're not bad stories, but they are conventional, in pretty much every way. They stick to modern sensibilities and lack any real sense of wonder. The multitudes of Venusian-native species aren't usually much more interesting than dwarves and elves. The Soviets show up frequently. The stories lean heavily toward the exploration-side of pulp. The action-side isn't well represented. It's the general dullness of modern short speculative fiction that drags the volume down, not the politics of it, as you might expect. Those only really harm two stories. *Pale Blue Memories* should be a powerful tale of a man dragged back down into the nightmares of his history, but is hobbled by the protagonist's tendency to talk like a critical studies professor. *The Heart* Filthy Lesson may still be the best story in the anthology (and definitely has the best name). But there is a nasty, out-of-place edge to it that pulled me partway out of a story otherwise full of pathos and exploration and bioorganic power suits and swamp-tigers. "two lies, six taloned legs, and an indiscriminate number of enormous daggerlike teeth in a four-hundred-kilogram body, . . . striped violet and jade [with] long, slinky bodies . . . and . . . whisker-ringed mouths hinged open wide open enough to bite a grown person in half." The stories get better as they go along. *Living Hell* by Joe Haldeman was the first one I really enjoyed. It's technically proficient (more than proficient), has some cool speculative elements, and has a nice pop to the ending. *By Frogsled and Lizardback to Outcast Venusian Lepers* is a great adventure yarn, but the ending a bit flat (it also

has the second best name). The strong but flawed stories by Buckell and Bear show up in the second half, as does my favorite story, The Wizard of the Trees. The final story, Botanica Veneris was the surprise of the collection, riffing on mannerpunk as a daughter of the gentry tracks down her dissolute brother through the shadier side of Venus. It's sneaky good. The Wizard of the Trees by Joe Lansdale is that single story in the Burroughs vein. It's a hell of a lot of fun. A Buffalo soldier, killer of Johnny Ringo, and actor in Wild Bill's Western Show finds himself transported to Venus. He's a hero in the vein of both John Carter and Bass Reeves. What follows is very much similar to what I imagine the Barsoom books to be. In fact, I demand a series. Thanks for the highlight, George and Gardner, but I think I'll look to the source material before I work my way around to Old Mars.

TOC: Introduction: Return to Venus by Gardner Dozois

Frogheads by Allen M. Steele

The Drowned Celestial by Lavie Tidhar

Planet of Fear by Paul McAuley

Greeves and the Evening Star by Matthew Hughes

A Planet Called Desire by Gwyneth Jones

Living Hell by Joe Haldeman

Bones of Air, Bones of Stone by Stephen Leigh

Ruins by Eleanor Arnason

The Tumbledowns of Cleopatra Abyss by David Brin

By Frogsled and Lizardback to Outcast Venusian Lepers by Garth Nix

The Sunset of Time by Michael Cassutt

Pale Blue Memories by Tobias S. Buckell

The Heart's Filthy Lesson by Elizabeth Bear

The Wizard of the Trees by Joe Lansdale

The Godstone of Venus by Mike Resnick

Botanica Veneris: Thirteen Papercuts by Ida Countess Rathangan by Ian McDonald

Sub-genre: Venus

Literary conflict: Man vs. Man, Man vs. Martian

GOOD: Solid editing/polish: ✓

Fun characters: ✓

Thought provoking: ✓

BAD: Rapid head-hopping: no

Unbelievable moments: no

Aliens won't retreat 'til their dead are piled 5 meters high: no

Too many characters: no

This nostalgic collection of short stories fills that void left after the true nature of Venus' atmosphere was discovered and so many of the older books fell out of print. George R.R. Martin has co-edited the book, lending his household name to this project. I found some of the stories completely engrossing, and I hope you do as well. My only complaint is that the good ones end all too soon. I would rather have seen fewer and longer stories. One story in particular, The Sunset of Time by Michael Cassutt, deserves a few hundred pages to accommodate its majestic/sweeping scope. This story alone makes the read worthwhile. The last story let me down slightly. It was of obvious quality, but not what I was looking for, so the book didn't finish strong (for me at least).

A fine collection and worthy companion to *Old Mars* but the stories don't quite match the level of that earlier set of retro-SF. If you're a fan of classic Heinlein, Burroughs (Edgar not William), and Bradbury then you'll like both volumes. The stories in this collection just felt a bit more shallow and, well, rushed than those of *Old Mars*. But still a solid 3 to 4 star collection with a few gems.

The first science fiction writers knew of Venus as a cloudy, oceanic planet; and so their stories were of a jungle world. NASA flybys established that it is a dry barren planet. Old Venus is a retro visit to that oceanic jungle planet, which teems with life- both native and Earth-invasive. Russians and Americans vie for the planet's valuable resources, and in one sort of alternate history story Hitler's space Nazis shoot down the American ship. In a humorous story, two Brits somehow stranded on Mars are saved by their Butler, Greeves - very Twenties style story. Most stories are of adventure and exploration.

Hard to pin down using the options above since it's an anthology of Venus stories. Fills my need for old fashioned space opera. Some stories grabbed me, others not so much. Overall, great read.

This a collection of short stories about a fictional Venus. Usually, this Venus is a wet version of Earth and most of the stories are fairly standard adventure stories. The stories are well written and I enjoyed reading them. As with any story collection, some of them are better than others. Being a Jeeves fan, I especially enjoyed one story that was a PG Wodehouse parody. I thought it was entertaining.

As an old fan of Venus, I was very much surprised how this modern anthology resurrects the old steamy jungles of by gone pulp adventures. True, no vampires feasting off beauty, but much more in these stories. Thanks again George and Gardner for another home run for fantasy fans worldwide.

A great collection of short stories based in a fantasy world of what Venus might be like in different visions of different authors. Some great reads hidden inside, ones that are rich in both sci-fi and human emotions. Recommended for light reading.

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