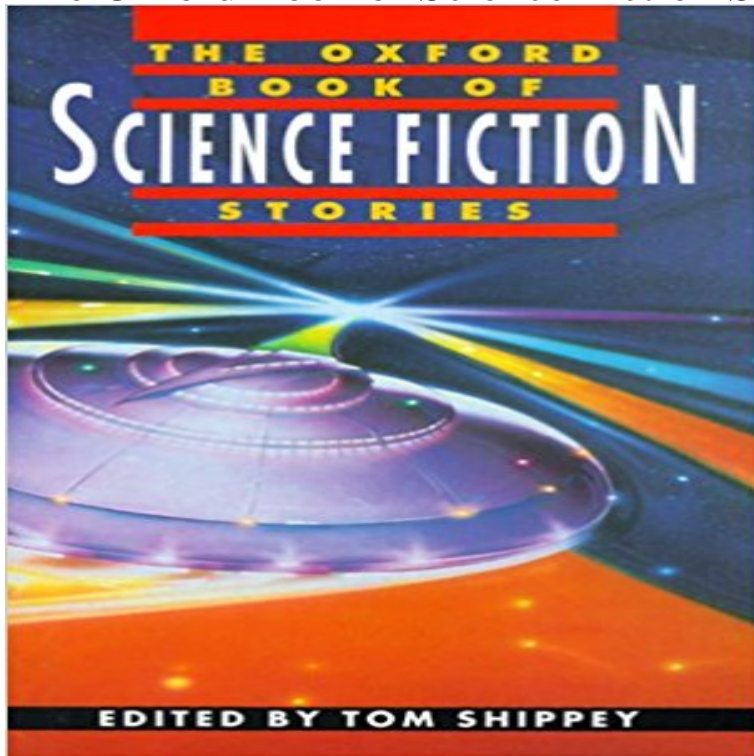


The Oxford Book of Science Fiction Stories



In *Swarm*, Bruce Stirling takes the reader inside the Nest, a vast honeycomb of caverns within an asteroid orbiting Betelgeuse, peopled by hundreds of thousands of large, insectlike aliens, including eight-legged, furred workers the size of Great Danes, and horse-sized warriors with heavy, fanged heads. In *The Screwfly Solution*, Raccoona Sheldon creates a world much like modern America, except that something--an insect virus, a mass religious delusion, or an alien--is infecting men worldwide, converting their sexual drive into homicidal rage against women. And J.G. Ballard in *Billennium* portrays the end result of unchecked population growth, a claustrophobic city of 30 million people, where by law the unmarried must live in cubicles four meters square. These three tales, though strikingly different, have one thing in common--each evokes a world that is uniquely the authors own. Indeed, to read any science fiction writer is to enter into another world. It may be a world far off in space or time, or it may be right here, right now, but with a twist--an invention, or event, or visitor--that suddenly changes everything.

In *The Oxford Book of Science Fiction Stories*, Tom Shippey has brought together thirty classic science fiction tales, each of which offers a unique vision, an altered reality, a universe all its own. Here are some of the great names in science fiction--H.G. Wells, Arthur C. Clarke, Frederik Pohl, Brian Aldiss, Ursula K. Le Guin, Thomas Disch, Bruce Sterling, William Gibson, and David Brin. To give readers a sense of how the genres range, vitality, and literary quality evolved over time, Shippey has organized these stories chronologically. Readers can sample H.G. Wells 1903 story *The Land Ironclads* (which predicted the stalemate of trench warfare and the invention of the tank), Jack Williamson's *The Metal Man*, a rarely anthologized gem written in 1928, Clifford

D. Simak's 1940s classic, *Desertion*, set on the howling maelstrom that was Jupiter, Frederik Pohl's 1955 *The Tunnel Under the World* (with its gripping first line, *On the morning of June 15th, Guy Burckhardt woke up screaming out of a dream*), right up to the current crop of writers, such as cyberpunks Bruce Sterling and William Gibson, whose 1982 story *Burning Chrome* foreshadows the idea of virtual reality, and David Brin's *Piecework*, written in 1990. In addition, Shippey provides an informative introduction, examining the history of the genre, its major themes, and its literary techniques. Here then is a galaxy of classic science fiction tales, written by the stars of the genre. Anyone with a serious interest in science fiction--and everyone who has entertained a curiosity about the genre--will find this volume enthralling.

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