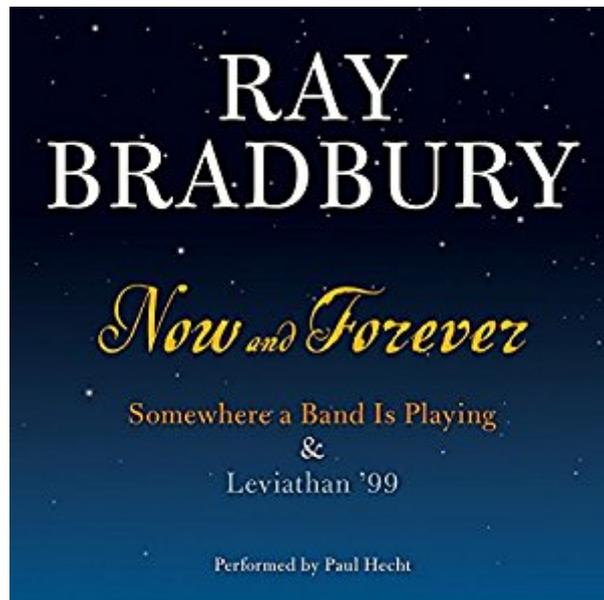


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Now And Forever: Somewhere A Band Is Playing & Leviathan '99



Synopsis

A journalist bearing terrible news leaps from a still-moving train into a small town of wonderful, impossible secrets.... The doomed crew of a starship follows their blind, mad captain on a quest into deepest space to joust with destiny, eternity, and God himself.... Now and Forever is a bold new work from an incomparable artist whose stories have reshaped America's literary landscape. Two bewitching novellas - each distinctly different yet uniquely Bradbury - demonstrate the breathtaking range of his undimmed talent and the irrepressible vitality of the mind, spirit, and heart of America's preeminent storyteller.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The two stories in NOW AND FOREVER are not new. In fact, "Somewhere a Band Is Playing" was begun over 40 years ago. "Leviathan '99" began life as a radio play script that was never produced as television started to grow. Aged though they may be, this is the first they have seen the light of day, finally dusted off, polished and presented to the reading world. As with most of what Ray Bradbury delivers to us, they are gems --- beautiful gifts of wonder and humanity that pull and lure until we, as mere readers, are within the story and seeing it side by side with the characters. "Somewhere a Band Is Playing" is a tale of eternal youth, of ghost towns and havens, perhaps even heavens, for those fortunate enough to find their way. Sumerton, Arizona isn't found on any map. It is a quiet town in the middle of the desert, soon to fall under the coming onslaught of time and industry as the Interstate will bury it under concrete. James Cardiff arrives in Sumerton to

warn its residents, though he does not know why he chose to come or what he can really do. While there, he begins to find a world he never imagined --- a world without death, of cemeteries filled with gravestones bearing birthdates but no mortal dates, an existence with no children, of long-lost stories of history that have been archived for all eternity. Katharine Hepburn was the inspiration for the story and for its character Nef, who never ages. In his introduction, Bradbury says that he worked on the tale for years, finding inspiration in movies and life, hoping one day to have it ready for Hepburn to star in on stage or screen. She would not see it completed, and Bradbury's admission colors the story with more sorrow and more beauty.

NOW AND FOREVER is a collection of two novellas, "Somewhere a Band Is Playing" and "Leviathan '99", from American master-writer Ray Bradbury. The stories are not actually new stories by Bradbury because as he explains in the introduction, he has been working on them in one form or the other for nearly 40 years. In "Somewhere a Band Is Playing", a newspaperman named James Cardiff, from out East, travels to the mystical town of Summerton, Arizona. He brings with him news of the small city's impending doom with the recent approval of a new interstate schedule to be built right through the middle of the town. Summerton is a quaint, quiet, and peaceful place and as Cardiff soon finds out the people there are full of mysteries of their own. He becomes torn between the people he grows to love there and of his former life back East. The story evokes memories of a more simple time and era and is full of threads of nostalgia. As Bradbury explains in the introduction, the story was originally begun as a project for Katherine Hepburn, but he never was able to get the proposed stage play or screenplay adapted before her death. Whereas "Somewhere a Band Is Playing" evokes warm memories of the past, "Leviathan '99" is a story that looks to the future when humankind has conquered parts of space and is actively engaged in exploring more. Originally intended as a radio play and conceived while Bradbury was writing the screenplay for MOBY DICK, "Leviathan '99" is set in the year 2099 and is told by astronaut Ishmael Jones. Jones is assigned to the jewel starship Cestus 7. The ship is captained by a veteran commander who went blind many years ago while trying to capture a great white comet called Leviathan.

If there is something you can take away from this book, then let it be that some stories aren't just cranked out of the typewriter, word processor, or whatever method the author uses to put them onto paper. They are often the product of constant revision and framing that takes place over years, or even decades before the author is satisfied with the final draft. Take for example the two novellas featured in Now and Forever: "Somewhere a Band Is Playing" and "Leviathan '99". The genesis for

the former came from 1926 Tucson, Arizona. And the latter story's roots came from the days in which radio was the main source of entertainment. In "Somewhere a Band Is Playing", a reporter named James Cardiff finds himself mysteriously drawn to the unmapped town of Summerton, Arizona. At first, he doesn't completely understand why he is here of all places. But the more he stays, the stranger the truth is and the clearer his understanding becomes. For instance, there are no children in the town. Even more shocking is how in the town's cemetery, the tombstones have the names and dates of birth engraved upon them; but where the date of death should be is blank, unetched stone. I am reminded of a cross between a much less sinister version of Bradbury's own "Mars is Heaven" and James Hinton's *Lost Horizon: A Novel*. Cardiff is in many ways like Hugh Conway, particularly how both of them are torn between paradise and the less perfect world that the rest of us live in. Yet Bradbury infuses the story with more than enough originality and flair, so it is its own unique entity.

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