

## Anything You Can Do ... *by* Randall Gordon Garrett



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## Reviews of the *Anything You Can Do ... by* Randall Gordon Garrett

Jode

Genre: science fiction thriller, apocalyptic, growing up saga

Sloppy writing and punctuation in many places, but the story was well-written otherwise.

Projected technology of the future is typical for 1963.

Garrett uses the compound verb "had had" too frequently. He writes flashbacks precisely the way I was warned not to in creative writing texts.

The philosophical arguments of Dr. George Yoritomo are interesting, but I fail to see where he got his information from.

Lanin

An alien comes to Earth ... but it's not E.T. Instead it's a rampaging intelligent horror with a worldview incompatible with humanity. But there's a man who can be rebuilt, made better than he was ... better stronger faster. Don't expect bionics but he is part of a long term plan to defeat the alien and the story, if dated, is still an interesting one.

Adorardana

Very good classic science fiction. Parts are a bit creaky but overall it has held up very well as a good read. And the price is right.

digytal soul

Anything You Can Do by Randall Garrett

Randall Garrett (1927-87) was a prolific writer; the majority of his works were published in American science fiction magazines during the period 1950 to 1970. His novel "Anything You Can Do" was first published as a two part serial in the May and June 1962 issues of Analog magazine. It was substantially expanded and published in hardbound by Doubleday in 1963. There have been two US paperback editions: Lancer 1969 and Leisure Books as "Earth Invader" publication date unknown. Fortunately readers interested in this title can download it for free from Project Gutenberg and read it on an e-reader. Used paper copies are available for sale on Amazon.

Readers of science fiction novels quickly become aware that most, but not all, stories tend to gravitate into broad categories such as: time travel, alternate histories, space adventures, or beings with extraordinary abilities. "Anything You Can Do" fit very neatly into those stories concerning an alien being loose in society. Usually the alien is masquerading as a human making detection nearly impossible but in this case author Garrett presents us with a three-foot alien with four eyes, a taste for human flesh that looks like a centipede . Further discussion of the plot would give away certain details that could spoil the pleasure of reading this book.

Credit the very talented Mr. Garrett for writing a clever take on a well used theme. The story kept my interest and the pages turning to see how it all shook out.

Saimath

Most stories of humans meeting aliens take one of two forms: they are vicious warlords or harmless tourists. That is the drama: marshalling our forces to repel the invaders, or being awed by the friends with space travel, new energy forms, chemistry, etc, etc. Not here. This tale suggests a recovering Earth trying to meet one perplexed alien.

The story shows scientists devote years of effort, not to mention human lives, in order to gain the alien's confidence. All this without disagreement or dissension, rather like the rigidity of command during the 'Manhattan Project'. Still, the story made me want to know whether humanity succeeded. Read this for a look at Science Fiction circa 1963.

Xar

Anything You Can Do was serialized in Analog in 1962 under the pseudonym "Darrell T. Langart" and was published by Doubleday in 1963. A paperback edition was issued in 1969, using Randall Garrett's name for the first time. The novel weaves three subplots together: the psychology of a deadly but knowledgeable alien who has crash landed on Earth, a government project intended to manufacture a superman, and the relationship between a pair of twins. I remember that the serial left me with the feeling that the relationship between the twins was overly sketchy and vague. The book version adds a number of scenes and expositional passages that makes the relationship clearer and which ties it to the other two subplots more effectively.

Yet even in book form, this relationship is not completely satisfying. The problem is that we are told by others what the relationship is, but we never actually see it dramatized until the last scene of the novel.

Another weakness of the novel, as Avram Davidson noted back in 1963, is the setting. Garrett tries to give us a sense that the Earth is not the same as ours. The Siberian tundra is now a preserve for Martian pulp trees, New York has been wiped out and has been replaced with Government City and a game preserve, and inertialess cars have made ships and bridges obsolete. But these details are sketchy. We are never given the sights and sounds of the new world. Government City is at one point described as having the same burroughs as New York. We don't really *feel* as though we are in a futuristic world.

Yet the novel has a number of strengths. One is Garrett's portrait of the Nipe, the alien who has great technological knowledge and near-perfect memory but whose behavior is superstitious and highly ritualistic. Another strength is the plot. By shifting from one subplot to another, Garrett manages to throw the reader a bit off-balance. He frequently does something unexpected. The action sequences are well handled, and the dialogue is crisp and snappy. The novel moves like a well-edited movie. If it is not a major piece of writing, it is a good piece of entertainment.

SING

Randall Garrett's *Anything You Can Do...* is an old favorite. I read it when I was 12 or 13 and I have very fond memories of it. I picked up an old paperback of it a few days ago and read it on the train before and after a book signing. Unlike a lot of early favorites it holds up. It's a "first contact" novel - in this case, the first contact goes horribly wrong. But I don't want to give the impression it's an alien invasion story. It's as much about future society (it's set roughly 100 years hence) as anything else, and it's surprisingly on-target about a lot of things politically despite having been written 45 years ago. It's also somewhat gruesome, though not in a "splatterpunk" way (Garrett leaves a lot to the reader's imagination).

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