



## The Butterfly Kid

*Chester Anderson*

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## **The Butterfly Kid** Chester Anderson

This is the first novel in the "Greenwich Village Trilogy." Anderson's semi-autobiographical novel has a main character named after himself, and a supporting character named after his roommate at the time. Aliens are supplying a new kind of drug, known as "Reality Pills," which cause your LSD hallucinations to become physically real.

## **The Butterfly Kid Details**

Date : Published December 1967 by Pyramid Books (first published 1967)

ISBN :

Author : Chester Anderson

Format : Mass Market Paperback 190 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction

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## From Reader Review The Butterfly Kid for online ebook

### Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

Times have certainly changed. This book was written back in the days when spiking your roommate's orange juice with LSD could be considered just a practical joke, instead of what it is today: a criminal offense. On the other hand, in those days publicly smoking pot could net you some serious jail time, while today the green stuff is legal in various states. Drugs of all kinds were perceived by many as new, exciting and fun, instead of being the daily bread of their grandchildren who, in the new millenium, think nothing of putting their elementary kids on antidepressants, or taking them themselves for years on end.

A companion piece to The Unicorn Girl, I found Anderson's volume of the Greenwich Village Trilogy better written and more engaging than Kurland's attempt. Huge blue lobsters from an alien galaxy are bent on taking over the Earth. It's up to Anderson, Kurland, and their flower-powered friends to save the planet, the day and the New York City water supply. Unfortunately, I have yet to unearth a copy of The Probability Pad, not even online, so I'll never know how it all turned out.

(By the way--ever notice how all extraterrestrials refer to our planet as Terra, in every sci-fi movie, book or comic you've ever seen? Do you suppose other life forms speak Latin?)

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### Caseyazalea says

A group of tripped-out hippies in the flower-power heyday of Greenwich Village are all that stands between Earth and an invasion of polite but sadistic alien blue lobsters. Chester and his two best hippie buddies (three real guys, the other two published sequels to this book) lead the motley crew of pacifists against the alien invasion.

An underground, little-known classic of the late 60's-early 70's era of hippies and cheap paperback science fiction. Original cover price on my rare, second-hand copy is a whopping 60 cents. And am I ever happy to have stumbled upon this copy in a used paperback book store, because it's out of print and apparently hard to find now.

This was a re-read; I think the last time I read it was in the early 80's. I love this little book to pieces. Hippies are my spirit animal, mythical beings that I aspire to become more like (but never will, because, among other things, they tend to be social and communal by nature, and I am not either of those things). In spite of its inherent early-70's sexism, I loved hanging out with these guys, and I would like to live in their world, at least for a while. Minus the 7-foot-tall blue lobsters, of course. But that's nothing a few hippies toked up on Reality Pills can't handle.

Groovy.

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### mingfrommongo says

Straight-up history of Greenwich Village in the mid '60s, after the tourists started coming, but before the rents got too high. That time and place that gentrifiers everywhere have tried (and failed) to re-create since.

The scene is laid out here in all its glory, or something; the music the clothes, the creativity, the chemical recreation, the paranoia, the man, all are sent up equally. It seems now as if that's what they were all there for. Maybe blue lobsters didn't actually try to take over the planet using the Village as their base, and maybe the assorted longhairs and heads didn't fend them off with their own weapons, but it probably felt that way on some days.

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### **Craig says**

When it first appeared, this was a wonderfully imaginative counter-culture new-wave vision of sf, with lots of humor and sly observations of traditional tropes of the genre. It had a terrific cover by Gray Morrow, and was just the thing to read in your beanbag chair under your groovy peace and love posters with The Doors cranking on the turntable. It's now interesting primarily from a historical perspective, but holds up remarkably well.

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### **Aggie says**

Vintage hippie fiction. A fun, fast read about a gaggle of Greenwich Village freaks who try to save the world from alien blue lobsters who have come to conquer Earth.

A silly , cheesy book , but nonetheless entertaining. It made me happy.

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### **DoctorM says**

A strange and clever and funny little novel from that lost (or just maybe wholly imaginary) world of Greenwich Village in the mid-1960s. It has...psychedelics, aliens, hippies, a hovercraft bus, chocolate egg creams, and Handel's "Water Music". (Yes, I read this as a junior high kid and wanted to go to Anderson's Greenwich Village--- and I desperately wanted to try a chocolate egg cream) It all comes off a bit precious now, but it does hold up as a sci-fi comedy and as a memory of Other Days. If you can find a copy, read it and laugh aloud and remember when St. Marks was...groovy.

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### **Glenn Amspaugh says**

When the going gets weird, the weird save the world. This is such a fun what-if from from the Summer of Love. There's a beautiful sweetness to it, even as the characters and writers know the summer will end. I was lucky; my high school library had a copy. Looking at the library number stamped on the card (early 80's tech), it was apparent I was the only one reading this book, several times a year. Was bummed at my 10 year reunion: someone had already stolen it from the library.

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## Joy says

Immense fun. I still get an inner laugh when I think of it.

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## Glenn Russell says

Chester Anderson's *The Butterfly Kid* is listed as the number one weirdest science fiction novel ever written. With the likes of such bizarre sf whoppers as *Dr. Bloodmoney*, *Ubic*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *The Eleven Million Mile High Dancer*, *A Voyage to Arcturus*, *Panda Ray*, *Flesh and Gold*, *Dhalgren*, *Time Snake and Superclown*, to name just several (I'm sure avid sf fans could list many other out of sight titles), that's really saying a mouthful.

I suspect *The Butterfly Kid* got the nod for its combination of hallucinations from acid trips materializing to create pandemonium all through New York City, giant blue alien lobsters speaking impeccable English, and a torture machine that forces its victims to watch the complete adventures of Donald Duck on a wide screen with full sensory participation.

And that's just for starters. Once this groovy (THE all-purpose adjective - keep in mind the novel published in 1967), supercool Greenwich Village hippie hipster narrator gets going, there's no stopping him. *The Butterfly Kid* makes for one fabulously fun read with the following flashing, swirling strobe light highlights:

CHESTER: None other than author/musician/hip philosopher Chester Anderson is the narrator and main star of this literary show. That's right, Chester wrote himself into his own novel. Interestingly, it's Chester's observations on human nature that prove key to his understanding the ways he can take action to deal with menacing outer space aliens.

One of my favorite Chester quotes from when he realizes the orchestra playing Handel's *Water Music* behind him in the hallway is his own personally drug induced hallucination: "Every now and then a false note rang out through the otherwise exceptional ensemble. Not a wrong note, mind you, just a slightly out of tune one. Bassoon, from the sound of it. This bugged me mainly because, the orchestra being merely an external figment of my own imagination, the false notes were my fault. The implications were humiliating."

THE DUDES: Chester also wrote good friend Michael along with a few other of his pals into the novel. Michael is one of the heroes in this tale (once he roused himself from snoring in his sleep, that is). Also worth noting, Michael J. Kurland is a prolific author of science fiction and wrote *The Unicorn Girl*, sequel to *Butterfly*. The third volume in this modish Greenwich Village Trilogy is *The Probability Pad* by T.A. Waters.

THE BUTTERFLY KID HIMSELF: Fresh from Fort Worth, Texas, young guitar playing Sean manifests all varieties and sizes of butterflies right there in broad daylight in Washington Square Park. Turns out he isn't a magician; he dropped a super colossal LSD-type hallucinogenic "reality pill." Too bad the John Voight character also fresh from the state of Texas didn't likewise have "reality pills" courtesy of aliens in the 1969 film, *Midnight Cowboy* - if he did, he and Ratso Rizzo could have had some real fun in the Big Apple.

**HORNEY HONEY:** Of course, being a hippie in Greenwich Village involves getting nude, getting stoned and having loads of great sex. Sativa is a singer in Chester's rock-n-roll group *The Tripouts*. Sativa is lovin' the sex with her new sweetie pie – none other than the aforementioned tall, handsome, blonde Sean who crashes in Chester's pad. Chester figures all those wild sounds Sativa is making in the next bedroom with Sean are good for her singing voice. That's the way to put a positive spin on it, Chester!

**STRANGERS FROM A STRANGE PLANET:** As the book's author, our main man shifts his imagination to overdrive in coming up with those aliens who plot to take over the world with the help of "reality pills." Not little green men from Mars but ten foot lobsters who can change colors, from blue to pale green to iridescent. And the way the head lobster speaks, I bet he has a British accent.

**THE BAD GUY:** There's Laszlo Scott the poet wannabe who is in league with the aliens. Our Greenwich Village author gives Laszlo the ultimate wicked quality for the villain – he stinks like a skunk on a bad day. And Laszlo's loft looks like a trash heap with loads of misspelled anarchist slogans scrawled on the walls. Laszlo's redeeming qualities are . . . well, sorry to say, he has none. The dude changed his name from an all-American kinda name to Laszlo Scott when he came to NYC cause he thought it was cool. If Laszlo only knew his ultimate fate, I suspect he would have spent his time bathing and reading quality literature rather than planning the conquest of the human race. What some no-talent poets won't do to grab the spotlight.

**SAVING THE WORLD:** : Would you believe the climax to this hippie novel features dozens of groovy, far-out technicolor hallucinations creating an upbeat 1960s version of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*? Dig it, baby, with the future of the human race on the line, Chester and his band of stoned longhairs come through with flying Peter Max psychedelic colors.

**FUN FACTS:** Chester's hippie bus in *The Butterfly Kid* (see below quote) predates that famous bus of Ken Kesey and his band of Merry Pranksters by exactly one year since Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* was published in 1968. Hippie buses and vans were the thing back in those swingin' sixties. A second fun fact: although Chester sets his novel in the late 1970s, the language, attitudes, fashion and culture all belong uniquely to the sixties.

"That was our most treasured possession, that bus. It was an old Army surplus ground-effect troop carrier, made in 1969 or so and obsolete before delivery, that we'd converted into a mobile rock-n-roll dream pad. It could seat sixteen and sleep dozens, depending on how friendly they were, and was equipped with hot and cool running everything. . . . We toured the Midwest in it last summer." - Chester Anderson, *The Butterfly Kid*

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## Leftjab says

Not great literature by any means, but kinda zany and fun, especially if you don't get annoyed by the late 60s hippie vibe. Oh it's here. Big time.

I did not live through the 60s, but there seems to be three distinct periods: The pre-60s, right up to JFK's assassination, which was a world of folk singers, beat poetry, and post-bop jazz. You know, when jazz stopped being dance music and became art. Then you have the 60s proper, where the Beats of the 50s discovered LSD, Ken Kesey drove the magic bus, the whole thing climaxing with the Summer of love in 67,

Sgt Pepper and the like. Then around 69, the optimism wore off (though Woodstock was in 69, that was the last stand in a way, well symbolized by Jimi playing the National Anthem to a dwindling crowd of mud-soaked hippies probably still tripping), the media went from SDS and student protests to serial killers and drug addicts. Hopes were assassinated. The cities declined, the Beatles got super ironic and then split up, and we've descended into the nice comfortable suburban commodified haze of the 70s-80s-90s up through September 11th.

I read a book about the freak folk movement that traced its origins in 60s folk – not the Inside Llewyn Davis, Dylan before going electric, Dave Van Ronk/Greenwich Village Coffeehouse folk but the later hippie folk of Incredible String Band, The Fugs, and Pearls Before Swine.

I bring up Pearls Before Swine because their (his) first album – One Nation Underground, from 1967 – feels to me a bit like The Butterfly Kid. I think Tom Rapp was still a teenager when he got a bunch of hippies into the studio and came up with One Nation Underground – a collection of earnest, silly, and a little ripe-on-the-vine songs (there's one where they spell out F-U-C-K using Morse Code!). Tom Rapp would go on to record several more albums that would grow in stature and maturity (I like The Use of Ashes) before Rapp followed his left-leaning inclinations and became a successful Civil Rights Attorney.

Anyway, that sense of innocence and hippie know-how permeates The Butterfly Kid (which seems to be set in a then-future 1970 though it came out in 1967.) which is fun, light (though the nonchalance with which all of the characters discuss LSD seemed a bit off to me), and sometimes makes little sense, but when the basic plot involves blue crab aliens trying to dose the Croton Reservoir with a powerful hallucinogen, and it's up to our author and his friends (all on various substances) to stop them, you aren't going here for a deep meditation on life, the universe, what have you.

If the 60s hep-speak doesn't completely turn you off, then it's a worthwhile curio. Don't say you haven't been warned, though it is a groovy trip, daddy-o.

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## **Brian says**

A fun read. It reminded me of my teen years, and walking and driving around the city, doing things teens do (nuff said about that).

The author writes with quick, quirky humor.

Anderson puts himself in the story – metafiction. The characters take “reality pills,” an interesting concept, where hallucinations produced by the mind become reality until the drug wears off. It reminds me of Stay-Puff in Ghostbusters but in a mass quantity and a large population of creators.

The climax hinges on a battle based on the ability to hallucinate reality, which gives a new definition to “psychological warfare.” It read like a humorous B-rated movie.

The quick wit reminds me of David Gerrold in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, who wrote for Star Trek (including “The Trouble with Trebles”) and “The Martian Child.” In his short stories he uses this kind of humor, which I enjoy.

He also reminds me of P.K. Dick with the weirdness but lighthearted, not so deep and serious.

The book read like an acid trip (I assume, based on insinuations in the narrative), which I have never

personally experienced.

Thank you to my dear Goodreads friend for sending me this pleasurable read!

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### **Dorian says**

I haven't read or even seen a copy since I read it and I still remember laughing out loud reading it. Kind of embarrassing on the bus on the way to work.

Just found a used copy and decided to reread to see if it held up for me.

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### **Robin says**

It's been years since I read this quirky book, but thought of it today while reading some list of the 100 best SF books. The Butterfly Kid was not on the list, but it got me thinking of my personal favorites and here we are. I have fond memories of it and need to hunt down a copy and read it again. See if nostalgia and reality match up.

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### **Chris says**

Giant blue alien lobsters come and introduce a psychedelic drug in 1967 that makes your hallucinations real. They plan to use it for world domination. The village hippies are all that stand in their way and there is a kid who can create living butterflies. I have already said too much.

I had never heard of Chester Anderson prior to purchasing this book, but if everything he writes is this gonzo bizarre and crackling with imagination I may have found a new favorite author.

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### **Margaret Anne says**

I read this book in the early 70's at the height of sex n drugs n rock& roll and loved it -- not sure how, forty years later, I would feel about it. It suddenly pooped into my head this morning - and I googled "book with giant blue lobsters giving humans LSD" and here it is!!!

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