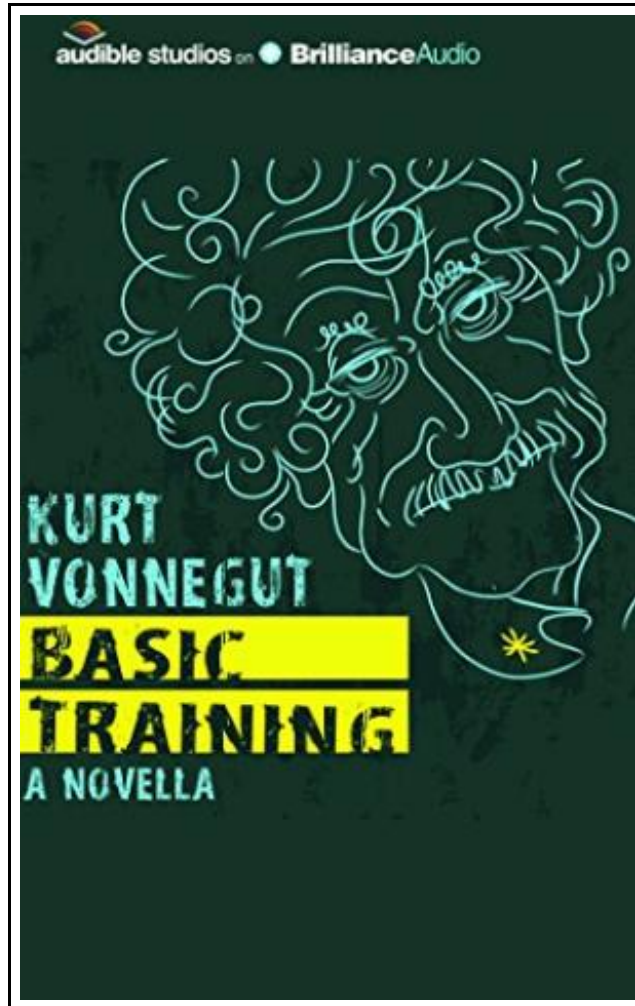


Basic Training: A Novella



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Reviews

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(Arnold Nienow)

BASIC TRAINING: A NOVELLA



Audible Studios on Brilliance, United States, 2015. CD-Audio. Book Condition: New. Unabridged. 142 x 127 mm. Language: English . Brand New. Written to be sold under the pseudonym of Mark Harvey, this 20,000-word novella was never published in Vonnegut's lifetime. It appears (from the address on the manuscript, a suburb of Schenectady, New York, and from the style and slant) to have been written in the late 1940s. Vonnegut was working at that time in public relations for General Electric and used pseudonyms to protect himself from the charge of moonlighting. He was trying to sell to the so-called slick magazines of the time, like *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, while resisting the lure of science fiction a tension throughout his professional career. *Basic Training* is a bitter, profoundly disenchanted story that satirizes the military, authoritarianism, gender relationships, parenthood, and most of the assumed mid-century myths of the family. Haley Brandon, the adolescent protagonist, comes to the farm of his relative, the old crazy who insists upon being called The General, to learn to be a straight-shooting American. Haley's only means of survival will lead him to unflagging defiance of the General's deranged (but oh so American, oh so military) values. This story and its thirtyish author were no friends of the milieu to which the slick magazines advertisers were pitching their products. Another unexpected writer's influence underlies this story: J.D. Salinger. Throughout the 40s and before his move to New York, Salinger had produced short stories whose confused or slightly deranged young protagonists (most of them around the age of Haley Brandon) stumbled through pre- and postwar Manhattan and military service, experiencing mild disaffection, alienation, and then terrible anger. All of them came to learn that the people who ran the show were...



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