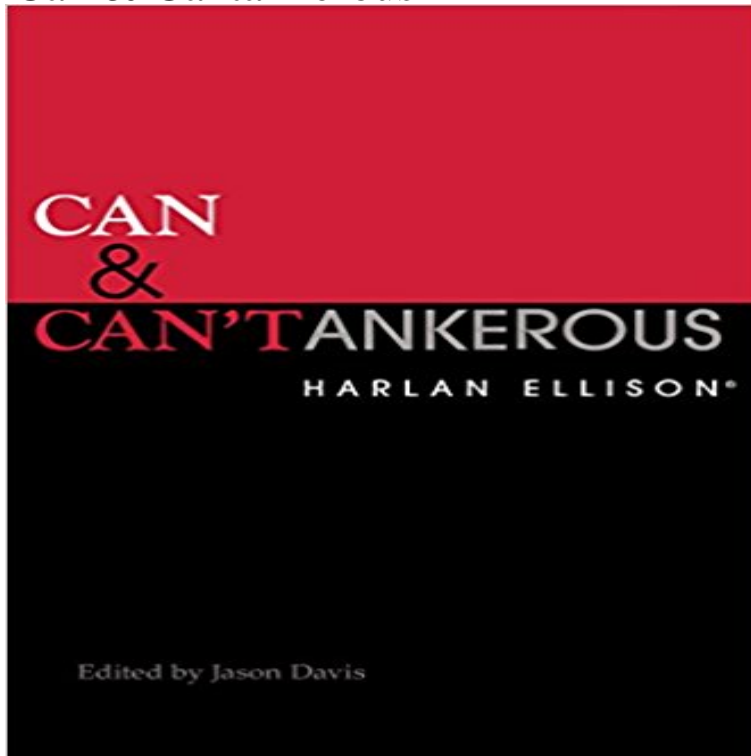


Can & Cantankerous



The great English writer Michael Moorcock and if his name does not leave you dumbstruck with awe, you should move on called Ellison a fox in the sf hen-coop whose presence will produce a brighter, faster hen, with improved survival characteristics, laying a tastier, more nourishing egg and went on to say Ellison was a brave and lively little beast, who makes a great show of himself to the hounds, but remains too wary ever to lead them to his lair. The brilliant novelist Joanna Russ, in admiring frustration, opined that Ellison's stories have an assault on you, but complained that they're not like a piece of sculpture that you can stop and walk around and look at from all sides. Ellison's reply: Absolutely not; I want them to grab you by the throat and tear off parts of your body. Ellison's a double agent who lures you into the bush, and when you blink, he's gone; you don't know whether to turn left or right, or just dig a hole. He crafts enigmas set to entrap you. When Ellison sees where a story is going, he figures since he's writing for the smartest readers alive you do, too. So he stops and turns left. Or right. Or widdershins. Or digs a cave with 200 tunnels. Can & Cantankerous gathers ten previously uncollected tales from the fifth and sixth decades of Harlan Ellison's professional writing career: a written-in-the-window endeavor that invites re-reading from the start before you've even finished it; a second entry in his (now) ongoing abecedarian sequence; a lost pulp tale re-cast as a retro-fable; a melancholy meditation for departed friend and fellow legend, Ray Bradbury; a 2001 revision of a 1956 original; an absurdist ascent toward enlightenment (or its gluten-free substitute); a 200-word exercise in not following the directions as written (with a special introduction by Neil Gaiman that weighs in at four times the word count of its subject); a fantastical lament for a

bottom-line world; the 2011 Nebula Award-winning short story; and Ellisons most recent offering, a fusion of fact and fiction that calls to mind Russ's frustration and Moorcock's metaphor while offering a solution to the story's enigma in plain view.

Strokes be damned! Ellisons still here! HEs still writing! And with more new books published in the last ten years than any preceding decade of his career, his third act is proving to be the kind of other living legends envy.

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