



Total Recall

Philip K. Dick

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The inspiration for the upcoming film Total Recall, starring Colin Farrell and Kate Beckinsale, and directed by Len Wiseman. This ebook-only edition of Philip K. Dick's classic short story tells the story of Douglas Quail, an unfulfilled bureaucrat who dreams of visiting Mars, but can't afford the trip. Luckily, there is Rekal Incorporated, a company that lets everyday stiff believe they've been on incredible adventures. The only problem is that when technicians attempt a memory implant of a spy mission to Mars, they find that real memories of just such a trip are already in Quail's brain. Suddenly, Quail is running for his life from government agents, but his memories might make him more of a liability than he is worth. Originally published as "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale."

Total Recall Details

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Author : Philip K. Dick

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From Reader Review Total Recall for online ebook

Kandice says

I love any of Dick's mind blowing stories and this is one of his best. It's short so even more of a treat because he sets it up, breaks it down and then sets it up all over again in less than 25 pages.

I think everyone is familiar with the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie version of this tale. Who didn't love that? My kids even love this movie. The newer version...not so much. The first movie works because of the shtick, but the story works because of Dick's genius way of creating a literary ouroboros. He does it over and over throughout his career, but this was my first experience with it.

I may have been 9 or 10 when I first read it, but you never forget your first mind fu*k.

Bradley says

Classic novelette by PKD that was the basis for the first adaptation of Total Recall. :)

Aside from some of the later nuttiness of the movie, I was very surprised how faithful the film was to the original story. :) So many great aspects carried over. :)

Gotta love classic PKD! This is just plain fun.

Bill Kerwin says

First published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1966), "We Can Remember it for You Wholesale" is one of Philip K. Dick's richest and most complex short stories, philosophically more nuanced than the two films adapted from it (both entitled *Total Recall*, 1990 and 2012).

The protagonist Douglas Quail first appears as a "Walter Mitty" type, an average man hectored by a bad-tempered wife and dissatisfied with his boring unexciting job. Longing to travel to Mars, and wishing he were a secret agent, Quail visits the office of the company REKAL which offers to implant a counter-factual memory which he will treasure forever. He begins to undergo the procedure, but then a problem arises: it turns out Douglas Quail—although some of his memories have been erased—really has been to Mars, really has been a secret agent after all.

Great plot for a movie, yes? As far as it goes. And this the only part of the plot that either movie version used.

But the original short story is cleverer, more subversive than this. Without going into details, beyond this typical adventure fantasy (similar to those found in the brain of the teenage boy or the the frustrated middle-aged man), there is another, more primitive fantasy rooted in Douglas Quail's psyche, something almost too dumb for the most exploitative pulp science fiction. Yet it is here that the key to Quail's character and destiny is to be found. And perhaps the fate of the world, and of mankind.

This is a classic piece of science fiction, recommended to readers of all genres.

Alina says

The basis of both Total Recall movies (1990 and 2012), the story is short and interesting, a fast read, with a nice twist at the end.

P.S. Had no idea that so many movies have Philip K. Dick's stories as inspiration.

Eric says

I read this in preparation of watching the film remake, and the reality is that only two or three scenes of either movie could be taken from this story's pages. However, the fact that these thirty-or-so pages could inspire not one, but two sprawling science-fiction movies says a lot for Philip K. Dick's imagination, even if the movies did miss the mark at points. But, that goes without say, as Dick has also had *Blade Runner*, *Minority Report* and *A Scanner Darkly* adapted from his works. Back to the story, there is not too much that can be said without spoiling anything, although I will say that working two twists into such a short work was quite impressive. Also, despite both movies featuring a scene with a three-breasted woman, the short story is strangely silent in this area.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

The motherload of PKD stories and novels has been released over the past year, as observed on SFF Audio's new releases podcasts.

I decided to take a quick listen to Total Recall, which is actually the short story "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale," which was then adapted into the movie Total Recall. The story itself hasn't changed, so I'm not sure why they renamed it for this release, except for name recognition.

Phil Gigante does a great job as narrator, making the interesting decision of portraying Douglas Quail with two different voices - one is the main guy who thinks he is an average joe who can't afford a vacation to Mars, and the other is the secret agent hiding in his head.

I haven't seen the movie, so I'm not sure of the intricate differences between the two, but the audio book is 1 disc and a quick listen.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

3.5 stars. The other night I dug up copies of two classic Philip K. Dick short stories that were later the basis for a couple of blockbuster movies, this one and *Minority Report*. "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" is better known as the movie *Total Recall* and, like *Minority Report*, the movie and the original story have only a nodding acquaintance with each other.

Douglas Quail is a boring man with a low-grade, boring job and a contemptuous wife who criticizes him daily. He has a dream: to go to Mars and see the "wonderful craters with every kind of plant-life growing deep down in them," lol (it's a 1966 story, okay?).

His wife seems oddly disturbed by the idea and tries to dissuade him, but Quail thinks he's found a way to have his unaffordable dream: He visits Rekal, Incorporated to purchase a fake memory that will be implanted in his mind, entirely realistic and indistinguishable from actual memories. If anything, the fake memories are better! And while he's at it, he orders a module that also makes him a secret agent for Interplan. But when the Rekal technicians put him under, there's a surprise in store for everyone involved ...

It's an action-packed, highly creative story, especially for its time. I just wasn't really into the twist at the ending, but it's definitely a change from the movie! I would say this story is more fun than deep. I found a free online copy [here](#).

Brian says

The original story formed the basis for "Total Recall." The movie follows the outline. I think I will like Mr. Dick and I anticipate further reading.

Jen says

Wow. SO much better than the movie! Hollywood ought to be ashamed of itself! 5, holy cats that was amazing, stars. It's a short freebie online and completely worth it!

Zeljka says

I love this story - in just a few pages it is a prime example of Philip K. Dick's inexhaustible inventiveness and wittiness. Here especially I was delighted by the story twist(s). Although paranoia as an omnipresent theme of his stories sometimes enervates, in this story that didn't bother me an iota :)

Karen says

My very first Philip K. Dick story! Off to find more.

Amy says

My husband found out the other day that I'd missed quite a lot of classic movies of the '80s and early '90s thanks to an overly-sheltered childhood. Included was the movie "Total Recall" which was based on this story. So we rectified my pop culture deficit by reinstituting an intallment of our long-lost Sci-Fi Night and watching the 1990 and the 2012 version of "Total Recall". The two movies and the original story differ vastly. I have to say that I like the ending of the story better. It's a little sillier and completely fails to mention

a tri-bosomed lady (imagine that), but it's more satisfying.

After watching *Total Recall* for the first time, I woke up the next morning having had a dream in which, like Quaid/Quail, I woke up as someone else. *Whose house did I wake up in? Oh, wow; this is what it feels like to not have sciatic nerve pain. Nice legs for a short skirt. Where do I take the kids to school? Is there a manual somewhere to tell me how to do my job?* Since then, I've found myself, when dozing off, trying to figure out how I really would navigate such a situation. If I told someone I was really someone else, they'd assume I was crazy. But it wouldn't take long for the family to figure out I was an imposter. Would I stick around for a while for a little vacation? I could try calling my own telephone number and hope that the person I'd switched with was now "me" Then maybe I could figure out what to do day by day. Would we switch back just with the wrong faces? How would that go? It's strange how a story can affect you on that level. I guess that's why it inspired 2 movies.

After watching "Total Recall", I accidentally stumbled upon the television series called "Ringer" in which a girl takes on her sister's identity and tries to live her life. This situation was even better-explored in the New Zealand series (which was *supposed* to have been remade by ABC) "This is Not My Life" in which a man wakes up to a family and life not his own in a utopian world that wasn't quite what it seemed. Eerie concepts. I think it might be fun in the short-term, but not in the long-term. Besides, you have to take on the other person's problems.

I really like the list of books GoodReads recommends for those who like this story, including favorites such as *A Choice of Gods*, *All You Zombies*, and *The Martian Chronicles*. They've got this story pegged. Now I'm going to have to check my husband's bookshelves to see if we have any of the other suggested titles because this is right down my alley.

Kate says

In this (very) short story about memory, Douglas Quail dreams of visiting Mars. He also knows he'll never get there on his own intellect or money, so he opts for the second-best thing and visits Rekal, Incorporated, a business that is able to plant false memories into a person's brain. With Rekal's help, Douglas hopes to put his spirit at ease by "remembering" a glorious past mission to Mars that never took place. But when Rekal's technicians go to plant memories in Douglas' brain, everyone is in for a big surprise.

A Short Story with Little to Offer

Philip K. Dick is an odd one. When I read his fiction, I often come away feeling rather unimpressed by, well, *everything*. Still, I can't deny that, for many, there must be something to Dick's dated, minimalistic writing, as so many of his short stories lead to full-length feature film adaptations, some of which have even been good. Having never watched the two *Total Recall* films that "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale" apparently inspired, I entered this short story free of expectation and assumption. So when I say I came away frustrated by poor characterization and clichéd plot twists, it has nothing to do with comparing or contrasting this story to the films.

When reading old science fiction—"We Can Remember" was first published in 1966—you should always expect the content will feel dated. Of course, this step back into science fictional history is part of what's interesting, and the best stories manage to remain relevant by having stellar characters and/or plots.

"We Can Remember" just isn't good enough to push through the dusty film time places on it. It strongly represents its era: It's got quirky, retrofuturistic terms, like "vid-aud tape" and "microtape phone book," and the only two women in the short story exemplify a 1960s view of women in the forms of the harping,

conniving bitch (Douglas' wife, Kirsten) and the mostly passive sexual object (the *topless receptionist* of Rekal, who naturally has the hots for Douglas). "We Can Remember" doesn't overcome such shortcomings with its characters or plot, both of which fall victim to one trope after another, so I question whether it has much modern value.

I wasn't surprised by anything Dick had planned. However, it occurs to me that this is perhaps an odd testament to his writing. Perhaps I've seen these tropes so many times, partly *because of* this story. After all, ideas become clichés only because we love them enough to revisit them. But is that the case here, or is the explanation much simpler—that "We Can Remember" sported a stale plot even in 1966? I really don't know.

Carmen says

This short story (We Can Remember It For You Wholesale) of Dick's was the basis for TOTALL RECALL.

I'm sure I'm not the only person who remembers running around as a kid, yelling "Get your ass to Mars!" in a fake Austrian accent.

Five stars, not only because Dick is an amazing writer, but because it brings back SO MANY good nostalgic memories for me.

Estelle says

"Ironically, he had gotten exactly what he had asked Rekal; Incorporated for. Adventure, peril, Interplan police at work, a secret and dangerous trip to Mars in which his life was at stake - everything he had wanted was a false memory.

The advantages of it being a memory - and nothing more - could now be appreciated."

This one was great! Very short, but masterfully written and constructed. I particularly enjoyed the humor and irony of the ending.
