



Zombies: The Recent Dead

Paula Guran (Editor), Steve Duffy, Max Brooks, Nik Houser, Andy Duncan, David J. Schow, Joe R. Lansdale, Neil Gaiman, more... Alice Sola Kim, Gary A. Braunbeck, Francesca Lia Block, Tobias S. Buckell, David Wellington, Tim Waggoner, Kit Reed, Brian Keene, Kelly Link, Gary McMahon, Scott Edelman, Kevin Veale, Michael Marshall Smith, Tim Lebbon, David Prill ...less

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You can't kill the dead Like any good monster, the zombie has proven to be ever-evolving, monumentally mutable, and open to seemingly endless imaginative interpretations: the thralls of voodoo sorcerers, George Romero's living dead, societal symbols, dancing thrillers, viral victims, reanimated ramblers, video gaming targets, post-apocalyptic permutations, shuffling sidekicks, literary mash-ups, the comedic, and, yes, even the romantic. Evidently, we have an enduring hunger for this infinite onslaught of the ever-hungry dead. Hoards of readers are now devouring zombie fiction faster than armies of the undead could chow down their brains. It's a sick job, but somebody had to do it: explore the innumerable necrotic nightmares of the latest, greatest, most fervent devotion in the history of humankind and ferret out the best of new millennial zombie stories:
Zombies: The Recent Dead.

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From Reader Review *Zombies: The Recent Dead* for online ebook

Deborah Replogle says

I've never understood the attraction of the zombie mystique. Dead people walking around for no real purpose. But I saw that several of my favorite writers had stories here, and so I couldn't pass it up. I'm still not entirely sure what the attraction of zombies is but the stories were intriguing and different than I expected. So all in all a pretty good read.

Ami Pendley says

Some of the stories in this collection are amazing. The authors explore many different aspects of the zombie idea. There are voodoo zombies, metaphorical zombies, ghouls, revenants, conscious zombies, and dangerous insatiable flesh eating zombies. The contributions from Neil Gaiman, Max Brooks, and Francesca Lia Block were among my favorites. Intriguing, thought provoking, occasionally disconcerting, Paula Guran made some excellent choices about what to include, but this collection suffers from poor editing of the actual text. Every story had a least one error, and as an English teacher, this kind of sloppiness is hard to overlook.

Bandit says

Excellent collection, very well edited, even preshamble (how clever is that) was interesting. In these stories zombie-ism was used as metaphors for various things, which was very interesting, though there was plenty of guts and gore that fans of zombie fiction are accustomed to. I only wish there were more original stories, since I've read a bunch of them before in different collections, but if you're relatively new to zombie or horror fiction, I highly recommend this collection as a starting point. This book is an excellent example of intelligent horror.

meeners says

based on her editor's introduction, i think paula guran is probably smarter than the majority of the authors in this collection. her introductions and commentary are really great, but i think she tends to be more generous in her evaluations than i would be. too many of the stories were simply *tedious* - either a little too earnestly bent on providing "social commentary" (without really understanding that social commentary doesn't work if you use zombies as a plot device or catalyst to force insight into the human characters - the point being that the zombies are human, too, or were, or may be...and therefore operate simultaneously as monsters AND as something more metonymic) or else a little too casually too-cool-for-school.

the neil gaiman story fit into this latter category for me, actually. i haven't read gaiman in ages, and this story reminded me why - he is a fantastic wordsmith, but his ideas are a little too self-consciously cool for me. maybe it's a bit unfair of me to say so - his story in here happens to center around an academic conference for anthropologists in new orleans, and i just happen to have been at an academic conference in new orleans myself (with anthropologists! along with scholars in other disciplines) fairly recently - but the whole thing just came across as lazy and inauthentic. lazy and inauthentic because the digs at academia are only there in service of the story, and don't say anything meaningful in and of themselves. not to mention how

"academia" is just shorthand for all the same old stereotypes you find anywhere else. i can forgive that as a rule, but not when the story depends on the stereotypes in order to work.

anyhow. i thought the kelly link story (which i'd read before, in *magic for beginners*) was one of the most outstanding pieces in here, but that should not surprise anyone who knows me and my reading preferences.

Jack says

8 Twisted, by Kevin Veale.
Ended too suddenly. Would have liked more.

5 The Things He Said, by Michael Marshall Smith.

9 The Naming of Parts, by Tim Lebbon.
Creepy, good.

Dating Secrets of the Dead, by David Prill.
WTF?

9 Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed, by Steve Duffy.

5 The Great Wall: A Story From the Zombie War, by Max Brooks.
Loved WWZ, but out of context this wasn't so great.

7 First Kisses from Beyond the Grave, by Nik Houser.
Kinda weird. I didn't get the ending.

6 Zora and the Zombie by Andy Duncan.

8 Obsequy, by David J. Schow.

10 Deadman's Road, by Joe R. Lansdale.
Awesome. Super awesome.

Bitter Grounds, by Neil Gaiman.
Listened to this in Fragile Things, so skipped.

8 Beautiful White Bodies, by Alice Sola Kim.

7 Glorietta, by Gary A. Braunbeck
Cool premise, did nothing with it.

5 Farewell, My Zombie, by Francesca Lia Block

5 Trinkets, by Tobias S. Bucknell.

7 Dead Man's Land, by David Wellington.
Crappy ending.

9 Disarmed and Dangerous, by Tim Waggoner.

7 The Zombie Prince, by Kit Reed.

8 Selected Scenes from the End of the World: Three Stories from the Universe of 'The Rising,' by Brian Keene.

8 The Hortlak, by Kelly Link.
Plain ending

5 Dead to the World, by Garry McMahon.

9 The Last Supper, by Scott Edelman.
Really cool take.

$145/20=7.25/10$ so 3.625, round up for the good ones.

Bogdan says

I must admit that I liked more the second volume of this series. Not that there are bad stories here, but I felt that the other ones were at a better level than those here.

I've enjoyed some of them, but surprisingly there weren't any texts out of the ordinary. Good ones, true, but not at the level I've been expecting it.

Mike says

There are some anthologies that aren't mixed bags, that actually have more good stories than bad ones, or more bad stories than good ones. This was not one such anthology. Full review to come.

Matty says

I reluctantly give this collection of short stories three stars, even though I was leaning towards two. Some of these stories, in simple terms, were pretty horrible. Nevertheless, there were some standouts - "The Things He Said", "Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed", "Deadman's Road". Of course you can't hate on a "World War Z" excerpt either. Was this collection worth the read? Yeah, I think the good stories were VERY good. And even some of the stories I would categorize as a little corny were pretty decent - i.e. I understood the meaning behind "Beautiful White Bodies". Yet, the three or four bad stories in this collection were truly horrible.

Daniel says

I like Zombies. I like Short Stories. Zombie short stories? Sure, why not? Yeah, I picked this book up

because I love zombie/post apocalyptic novels and feel that sometimes all you need is a short concise story. I wanted to like it, but.....

This book lurked in my list for a long time. I would read a story (I really only found one I tolerated) and then put it off to the side, coming back every so often to bite a small chunk off, get bored and then put it aside again. So I would say I slogged through this book. And this is short story compilation, it shouldn't be like this, where every bite was just not satisfying, but it was. But I rarely give up (from determination or hope, but I rarely quit anything once I started it, be it real life or reading) so I finally finished it (3 months later!).

I will say that the last story was one of the best, so it didn't finish on a truly sour note. But the best thing about this book? That I don't feel compelled to read it any more.

Anne Seeberger says

Great exposure to a multitude of science fiction writers

Shannon says

I'm gonna go one by one. I've read other anthologies and can't remember which I like and which I don't. So I'll do it this way for my future reference

* Twisted--Kevin Veale I've read this before in another anthology. Didn't like it.

** The Things He Said-- Michael Marshall Smith It was ok. Kinda weird and even before I got the twist I thought the guy was a creeper.

**Naming the Parts-- Tim Lebbon It was ok. I thought it was kinda long winded.

** Dating Secrets of the Dead-- David Prill It was a little better than the others. Kinda weird. Undead lovin and all.

*** Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed-- Steve Duffy this was good. Kinda creepy and is something I think about when I'm swimming anyway. Something grabbing me and pulling me under.

***** The Great Wall: A WWZ story-- Max Brooks Loved it! This the reason I got the book. I'm obsessed with all things WWZ.

**** First Kisses from Beyond the Grave-- Nik Houser I liked it a lot. It was funny and didn't try to make some kind of social message come through. I wish the ending had been different. I want to know what happened after he got home.

** Zora and the Zombie-- Andy Duncan I've read this before also. Didn't like it too much so didn't read it again.

*** Obsequy-- David J. Schow This was interesting. Coming back they put someone else in their spot. I felt like some story threads got dropped and were kinda dead ends.

* Deadman's Road-- Joe R. Lansdale I am not into Westerns at all. Had read this in another anthology so didn't read it.

** Bitter Grounds-- Neil Gaiman Another that I had read before. It's ok, kinda strange the way it flows. I was left a little confused. Was the guy dead? Zombie? Alive? Loser? And what happened to the real Anderton?

*** Beautiful White Bodies-- Alice Sola Kim Very interesting. It was good but it ended rather abruptly.

**** Glorietta-- Gary A. Braunbeck it was sad. But it was an interesting outlook on if zombies would ignore terminal patients.

**Farewell, My Zombie-- Francesca Lia Block This read like a mental patients fantasy world. Kinda interesting but too short.

***Trinkets-- Tobias S. Buckwell It was pretty good. Seemed like we were coming in to a story already in progress.

***** No Man's Land-- David Wellington Exactly what I've been wanting. A straight zombie story. Love the Wal-Mart/Home Depot angle.

*** Disarmed and Dangerous-- Tim Waggoner It was pretty good. Very different. Not really what I want from a zombie story.

*The Zombie Prince-- Kit Reed Didn't like it. As with another story it had a dream like quality that I found hard to follow.

***** Selected Scenes from the End of the World-- Brian Keene Really liked it. 3 short stories that give you a good idea of what happened. Oh yeah and smart zombies. I got to get my hands on The Rising.

* The Hortlak-- Kelly Link I have no idea what happened. This story made no sense to me at all.

****Dead to the World-- Gary McMahon Really good, sad though. Happens 10 years after zombies came back.

*** The Last Supper-- Scott Edelman Pretty good. Scary to think about being the last person on the planet.

Tara says

Like many collections of short stories, this one was a combination of hits and misses. I've realized that I'm a bit of a classicist when it comes to zombie stories. I want my zombies to be ZOMBIES; I don't want them to be seducing people in their bedrooms (are you kidding me, Kit Reed? If you want to write a vampire story, write a fucking vampire story), or having a teenage crisis about dating other zombies (no offense, David Prill, but what *was* that?), and I don't even want them to be maybe not really zombies at all, but just people who've lost all feeling or meaning in lives (a rare misfire for Neil Gaiman, sorry). I want them to be MINDLESS HORDES OF BLOOD AND DESTRUCTION, AND YOU BETTER GET YOURSELF TO A MALL OR AT THE VERY LEAST A NICE PUB AND HOPE LIKE HECK THE SWARMING MASSES DON'T OVERRUN YOU WITH THEIR SHEER POWER OF THEIR INSATIABLE HUNGER!

So what did I like? Well, I loved Tim Lebbon's Naming of Parts, a totally classic tale about a family

struggling to survive the apocalypse; I enjoyed Michael Marshall Smith's cracked survival tale, *The Things He Said*; loved the scare-tastic *Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed*, by Steve Duffy; and really adored Joe R. Lansdale's Western zombie fic, *Deadman's Road*.

Special kudos to Alice Sola Kim's *Beautiful White Bodies*, because despite being not a classic zombie story at ALL, I still loved it. Awesome little jab at the culture of worshipping beauty, and definitely made me think about what I would have done in this setting (especially in my sadly unpopular teenage years).

From a previous review of mine, it's probably obvious that I think Max Brooks' *WWZ* is totally overrated, so it's no surprise that I found his vignette to be pretty forgettable.

Negative kudos to David Wellington's *Dead Man's Land*, because a story that does nothing but create a world in which women are blissfully accepting of their role as a walking womb or choose to live a life entirely alone is an utter fail. What was his point? Dystopias are usually about a metaphor, but all I took from this was the idea that "all we need is a big enough crisis, and most women will happily accept being chattel again."

Those were pretty much the high and low points for me, with all the rest being various degrees of okay or not okay. Still an interesting read, and definitely worth it just for the ones that really stood out as gems.

Heather says

There's a ton of variety among these stories, with everything from classic terrifying zombies to humorous spoofs to social commentary. As is the case with almost every short story collection I've read (especially one with stories by different authors), I liked some stories more than others. For the most part, though, I enjoyed the collection. Zombie literature is popular right now, so authors are going to have to be creative to keep it fresh. This collection contains a lot of original ideas that indicate there are still plenty of ways for zombie stories to go before there's nothing left to write about.

StLorca says

Zombies: The Recent Dead is a seriocomic anthology about, well, zombies. The hefty tome (22 stories!) runs the gamut from the dead serious (an anthropologist researching santeria might have seen a real, undead zombie) to the lighthearted (*High School of the Dead* and *Young Zombies In Love*) to WTF (a group of drug addicts are convinced that staying high changes their smell enough so that the zombies don't notice them). I have to say that most of the stories were of excellent quality, even if the subject matter wasn't already done to death. Well worth your time.

Deedee says

Every single one of the stories was readable and entertaining, in a lighthearted zombie way. The one novella, Tim Lebbon's "Naming of Parts" was excellent, as was "Dating Secrets of the Dead" by David Prill, "Deadman's Road" by Joe Lansdale, "Trinkets" by Tobias S. Buckell and "The Last Supper" by Scott Edelman. Recommended for those who enjoy Zombie stories that are a little bit scary and only a little bit gory.

Jostalady says

Zombies are so in right now...and that is usually when I avoid something. This has a short story by Neil Gaiman so I HAD to check out his contribution. His story referred to an earlier story so I wound up reading that one too. These two have an interesting perspective on Zombies that I am unfamiliar with. Not that I am a Zombie expert, but I have seen the movies and killed my share of video game zombies. I suppose if I were totally into zombies, I would read the whole book, but I think I will walk away before I get pulled in too far.

Rashie Claiborne says

Thankfully the 2nd half of this book picked up considerably and while I still prefer the sequel, the stories in the last half helped make this book a pretty good read!

Eva Leger says

I'm going to rate this like I usually do with anthologies. Otherwise it'll all be forgotten. Here goes so far:

(2 stars) Twisted by *Kevin Veale* - Not so much. I liked the two main characters and I *think* I like the premise but the prose wasn't for me at all.

(3 stars) The Things He Said by *Michael Marshall Smith* - better than the first IMO and definitely a shocker and I again liked the premise.

(5 stars) Naming of Parts by *Tim Lebbon* - This may be the best one yet. Lebbon does a great job tackling feelings and the family aspect can't not tug at your heart. Loved the relationship between brother and sister. Definitely interested in more by him.

(4 stars) Dating Secrets of the Dead by *David Prill* - what can I say about this? I guess I can no longer claim to be new to the zombie genre. I am, however, still new to the zombie humor subgenre. I wouldn't have ever guessed I'd be interested but then again, I'd have said the same for any zombie book a few years ago. So... this is downright funny. I refuse to use the word 'realistic' but...

(4.5 stars) Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed by *Steve Duffy* - This has been the most terrifying for me so far. It may stay in first place. Zombies are a scary lot by themselves but throw in the water aspect and I'm done. I'm already scared shitless of any large body of water (this can be determined by whether I can stand and/or see bottom) and this is just a nightmare in writing. I may have been open to getting on a boat before... IF it wasn't going to be far from shore but definitely not now. I'll be thinking of this if anyone ever asks me.

(4.5 stars) The Great Wall by *Max Brooks* - anyone familiar with *World War Z* will feel right at home here. It's very, very short and made me want more. Like when I finished WWZ.

(4 stars) First Kisses From Beyond the Grave by *Nik Houser* - this was a lot like Dating Secrets for me and they both showed me I'm interested in more. Different from anything zombie related I've come across and there are numerous great aspects.

(5 stars) *Zora and the Zombie* by *Andy Duncan* - Wow. just wow. I was reminded of how very little I know about zombie fiction, folklore, etc. when reading this. For instance, I had never even heard of *Tell My Horse*. (Will be going out of my way to find that soon.) I'd love to read something full length by Duncan.

(4 stars) *Obsequy* by *David J. Schow* - I love the wide variety in all of these short stories. There are some that I wouldn't read an entire book about but that's personal taste. They're all so very different. This is another that tugs at your heart. Very scary to even imagine. I'm interested in maybe finding something else by Schow.

(n/a) *Deadman's Road* by *Joe R. Lansdale* - I skipped this. "Western" anything isn't my cup of teat so cowboy/zombie stories do nothing for me.

(2.5 stars) *Bitter Grounds* by *Neil Gaiman* - Even though I've never read any of Gaiman's books I've heard of him. I think you'd have to be living under a rock to have not heard of him. I've always related him to genres I don't really read so when I saw his name here I thought it may be one I'd skip. I didn't skip it and I did enjoy it but it wasn't one of the best for me. I think I just don't mesh well with his writing. I'm sure any Gaiman fan will adore the story.

(4.5 stars) *Beautiful White Bodies* by *Alice Sola Kim* - Whoa. This, if it hasn't already, would make an awesome full length book. I'm going to find out if it has been, or maybe will be. It's a crime to keep this a short story. I can't say much without giving the story away and I won't do that but it's definitely not one to be missed.

(3 stars) *Glorietta* by *Gary A. Braunbeck* - This one is very short, I'd have liked it to be longer. Some stories are easy to get a grasp of when they're this short and some aren't, this is an 'aren't' for me. I'd be more than willing to read the whole book of this if it's out there.

(4 stars) *Farwell, My Zombie* by *Francesca Lia Block* - Block is another author I've heard of but haven't read until now. I'd definitely read more. I like the main character in the story, Jane, and even as short as it is I really started to feel for her. Not an easy feat for a story all of 11 pages.

(4.5 stars) *Trinkets* by *Tobias S. Buckell* - Definitely, definitely would read the entire story. Would *love* to read an entire story here. I love the premise of a freed slave taking revenge on slavetraders. Love it. And I love the execution - it could have been pulled off in any number of ways but the manner here is just above and beyond.

(5 stars) *Dead Man's Land* by *David Wellington* - Awesome! I'd read an entire story around this in a second! Love the Wal-Mart aspect. Love the two main characters. This is a great addition to the anthology.

(3.5 stars) *Disarmed and Dangerous* by *Tim Waggoner* - This was a little too sci-fi for me. It's one of those stories where 50% of you loved it and 50% of you didn't. Papa Chatha and Matthew are great characters and I loved the twist with Maera butthere are some other parts that just didn't do it for me.

(2.5 stars) *The Zombie Prince* by *Kit Reed* - This was one of the stories I liked least. I can't put my finger on what made this so.

(2.5 stars) *Selected Scenes from the End of the World* by *Brian Keene* - This 'short story' consists of three even shorter stories. Maybe other people like this sort of thing but how can a story consisting of 3 pages pull me in? I saw the potential in each and I think I'm interested in reading more but I can't say for sure. A few paragraphs doesn't make a story for me, it makes a few paragraphs.

(4 stars) *The Hortlak* by *Kelly Link* - This is so, so different. When I started I was thinking I wouldn't like it much and it was fairly confusing for me, especially in the beginning. Eric and Batu make for some intense characters and even though the plot stayed somewhat confusing for me I was most definitely invested in the story.

(4.5 stars) *Dead to the World* by *Gary McMahon* - This is the kind of story that haunts me the most, the kind of story I gravitate towards in this genre. The personal, familial aspect pulls me like a magnet. That makes, IMO, this far more scary than any monster that could be thought up. This is another one I'd love to find a full length story about.

(4.5 stars) *The Last Supper* by *Scott Edelma* - Wow, I don't even know what to say about this one. It's shokeing to be sure. I don't want to say too much because it's a killer last story and I don't want to ruin it for anyone. It's one of the best for sure.

Overall this is a great collection of stories. This is only the second zombie anthology I've read and I'm eager to read more. I only wish that more of the shorts would be chosen from novels. If that were the case readers could then find the authors/stories they liked the best, seek them out, and commence to reading to their hearts content. It's not a great feeling to fall in love with a short and then hit a brick wall. But, such is life and this is something I must deal with.

I definitely recommend for zombie lovers who like short stories. If you're more into the entire story stay away, you'll only piss yourself off. Luckily I can go both ways right now. :-)

Kevin Veale says

The fast and dirty version is that I was entirely impressed with this anthology, and found it a thoroughly enjoyable read with some new and interesting spins on the broader zombie mythos.

Given that these are short-stories and I want to avoid spoiling anything, these are going to involve a short precis of what makes the story distinctive, before covering what I thought.

With that said, on to the details! In order of appearance, we have:

Introductory Sections

There is an introduction-in-three parts, comprising a "Preshamble" by Paula Guran that provides some crisply-written, useful context to how and where the points of tension and intersection between the modern zombie and the classical vodoun creature are. David J. Schow unpacks the concept further in his introduction, "The Meat of the Matter," which considers both a historical/literary history of zombies and modern popular culture, together with a life lived alongside the films and texts in question. A final "Deaditorial Note," also from Paula Guran, delves into the changes in the zombi-cultural landscape from 2003-2010, a period coming after the period considered in detail within Schow's piece.

I found these sections to be a very interesting start to the anthology, filling in all kinds of contextual details and references that I'd either missed or forgotten in my own encounters with the zombie mythos.

They are also clearly noted on the Table of Contents, so if you just want to skip to the stories they're hardly going to get underfoot. Personally, I found them well worth the time.

Twisted, by Kevin Veale.

This story is mine, and the fact I'm discussing it personally is a little weird. In terms of style/content, it's a 'gonzo' zombie story inspired as much by Hunter S. Thompson as by Romero or voodoo. All I can say is that I really enjoyed writing it, I was delighted to be included in this anthology, and that I hope you enjoy reading it.

The Things He Said, by Michael Marshall Smith.

A powerful story with a very tight focus about the daily routine of a survivor. This is one of the pieces I found very memorable when I was reading the anthology, and it does a very good job of presenting an experience of rising dread.

I've liked Michael Marshall Smith's work since I first encountered *Only Forward*, and this story is a little haunting.

The Naming of Parts, by Tim Lebbon.

A tale of a twelve-year-old boy witnessing domestic apocalypses swept away by external ones. I liked this story for the protagonist's voice, and the gnawing horror that even colour seems to be dying out of the world.

Dating Secrets of the Dead, by David Prill.

An unusually dreamlike story about two dead people dating - which is a mostly redundant statement from the title, but I can't think of a better way to put it. I was intrigued by this story because it's an ambitious approach that could easily go wrong, but I thought it paid off. It didn't grab me as much as some of the other stories, but I'm not sure that's anything about the story itself.

Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed, by Steve Duffy.

This was another one of the stories which stood out for me: a group of friends with their own internal frictions (another tasty zombie staple) go out for a night-trip off the Welsh coast. The characters are well rendered, and you can anticipate the ways in which external stresses are going to run right into the points of internal conflict at the worst possible time. It's also got a great tenor or rising dread, with events that are internally consistent, but have a nightmarishly inexplicable feel.

The Great Wall: A Story From the Zombie War, by Max Brooks.

I loved *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*, and thought this tale continues the dry tone which includes jibes at the failures of historical archivists for allowing the original treatise to be colloquially known as "World War Z." The story itself follows the creation and defence of the Great Wall of China from the perspective of a woman who is recording her memories for posterity.

It is a chillingly remorseless tale of exhaustion and desperation, yet also of cooperation and survival. Thoroughly recommended for any fans of WWZ. My only disappointment was that the story wasn't longer - not because it felt unfinished, but because I wanted to spend more time with it.

First Kisses from Beyond the Grave, by Nik Houser.

I really liked this story. It has a real energy to it, and an appropriately black comic tone for a story about a boy sent to a school for the dead due to a bureaucratic screw-up.

I also which to note that Roland the gangsta fetus is genius, as are the traditional highschool football games where the school of the dead is ridiculously outclassed at every turn...

Zora and the Zombie by Andy Duncan.

This is another one of the stories which did not grab me as much as some of the others, but where I can't quite pin down why. It's about Zora Thurston, a woman writing about the histories and myths of Haiti who finds herself drawn to exploring them herself. There's no reason for the story *not* to have grabbed me – the concept is interesting, and the writing crisp with dark humour.

Obsequy, by David J. Schow.

An excellent story with a vicious, slowly rising burn about what happens when the dead start coming back... and haven't forgotten a thing.

Deadman's Road, by Joe R. Lansdale.

Another story that made a lasting impression, "Deadman's Road" features an implacable, gun-toting, wild-west preacher of a vengeful Old Testament God who is driven to test his faith against the supernatural darkness of the world. It's imaginative, well-characterised and sharply written.

I was left wanting more of this story, and I think I can safely recommend it for any fans of Deadlands: The Weird West Roleplaying Game. Fortunately, Joe R. Lansdale has written other stories featuring the same protagonist, and they're being reprinted by Subterranean Press as *Deadman's Road*.

Bitter Grounds, by Neil Gaiman.

A melancholy, dreamlike and delicate story about someone left emotionally dead who finds himself pulled absently into occupying someone else's life. The details are excellent, from the detached narrative voice through to touches of life at an academic conference that can be all too accurate. As an additional bonus within a gently-written story, the understanding of what it might be to be a zombie is one of the creepiest I've encountered.

Beautiful White Bodies, by Alice Sola Kim.

This is a standout story within an anthology that's full of them: beauty seems to become infectious at a small-town school, and girls start to become so pretty that they hardly seem human anymore...

There is barbed humour here together with the genuine horror, a spiky self-awareness about the state of the media image machine, and some quotes that are perfect (and vicious) but which I'll let people find on their own.

Glorietta, by Gary A. Braunbeck

An imaginative story that comes as a real punch to the gut. I'm not sure I can summarise it in a way that will do the tale justice, but it's about zombies at Christmas.

Farewell, My Zombie, by Francesca Lia Block

A detective story featuring a woman working as a PI who is approached by someone convinced of a zombie-kidnapping – a problem only she can help with. A well-written story with onion-layer depths to it.

Trinkets, by Tobias S. Bucknell.

A historical story with a very neat concept, “Trinkets” is another story that isn’t quite what it seems. Unfortunately, it’s also another one that I can’t quite think how to describe in a way that isn’t going to ruin the fun. What I can say is that I think it’s well done, and I enjoyed it.

Dead Man’s Land, by David Wellington.

A true post-apocalypse story, “Dead Man’s Land” is set in a fallen America where the gigantic malls see themselves as the last islands of civilisation in an unclean land, and where the protagonist is hired to squire a princess from one fiefdom to another. It’s chilling for a wide number of reasons, and the different viewpoints on society it presents is one of them.

Disarmed and Dangerous, by Tim Waggoner.

An entertainingly noir tale about a zombie PI-of-sorts trapped in a parallel city of monsters. The concept is rich, the narrative voice fits both the protagonist and the overall vibe of the story, and I enjoyed the ending.

The Zombie Prince, by Kit Reed.

“The Zombie Prince” considers the zombie mythos from an entirely different lens, producing a supernatural encounter that feels very original. It also reminds me of the film *Shadow of the Vampire* in terms of how it raises questions regarding who, and what, the real monsters are.

Selected Scenes from the End of the World: Three Stories from the Universe of ‘The Rising,’ by Brian Keene.

This is a trifecta of shorter pieces that imply a larger whole rather than standing alone. They’re certainly evocative, and contain some of the more directly threatening zombies I’ve run into. However, I’m not sure how effective they are in this context at making readers interested in the wider narrative that they’re part of. I did like the final fragment, ‘The Viking Plays Patty Cake’ the most, because it’s the most human.

The Hortlak, by Kelly Link.

“The Hortlak” is a genuinely fantastic story, imaginative and poetic. It’s never entirely clear what’s happened to the world, only that the protagonists work at an all-night retail store on a highway, and that they try to serve the confused and incoherent dead who wander in. It is touching, funny, sad and feels like trying to explain a dream to someone else when you’re close enough to it that it all makes perfect sense.

Dead to the World, by Garry McMahon.

A particularly bleak tale about characters eroded by years of fleeing a zombie-infested world, worn-down to survival instincts and little else. The quality of the writing and the glimpses readers can see of who the characters used to be make the ending particularly striking.

The Last Supper, by Scott Edelman.

Another tale from a zombie’s point of view, and it is a coldly desperate look at how a hungry undead thing might understand – or fail to understand – time.

So there we have it! I don’t think there’s a badly written story in the piece, just variations to what extent a particularly story is my sort of fun. There’s enough variety here in terms of style and content that I think

anyone remotely interested in zombie stories will definitely find something they'll like here.

Nora Peevy says

Not my favorite zombie antho, but there were some great highlights. The writing is great; I just wasn't as interested in all the stories this time around. *Dating Secrets of the Dead* had me roaring in bed, which annoyed my husband late at night. Kudos for David Prill for making me cry with laughter at a zombie tale -- just doesn't happen that often. I also enjoyed Joe R. Lansdale's short, *Deadman's Road*, which is beautifully written. I recommend this for zombie lovers, but don't try to read it when you're tired. It's a big paperback!
