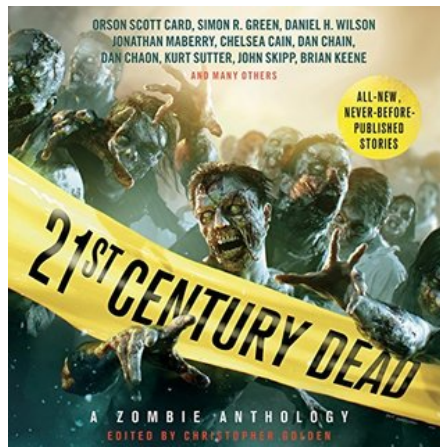




21st Century Dead

Christopher Golden (Editor) , Amber Benson (Contributor) , Brian Keene (Contributor) , Caitlin Kittredge (Contributor) , Jonathan Maberry (Contributor) , John M. McIlveen (Contributor) , Mark Morris (Contributor) , John Skipp (Contributor) , more... Thomas E. Sniegowski (Contributor) , Stephen Susco (Contributor) , Kurt Sutter (Contributor) , Duane Swierczynski (Contributor) , S.G. Browne (Contributor) , Rio Youers (Contributor) , Daniel H. Wilson (Contributor) , Ken Bruen (Contributor) , Chelsea Cain (Contributor) , Orson Scott Card (Contributor) , Dan Chaon (Contributor) , Stephanie Crawford (Contributor) , Cody Goodfellow (Contributor) , Simon R. Green (Contributor) ...less

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The Stoker-award winning editor of the acclaimed, eclectic anthology *The New Dead* returns with *21st Century Dead*, and an all-new lineup of authors from all corners of the fiction world, shining a dark light on our fascination with tales of death and resurrection... with ZOMBIES! The stellar stories in this volume includes a tale set in the world of Daniel H. Wilson's *Robopocalypse*, the first published fiction by *Sons of Anarchy* creator Kurt Sutter, and a tale of love, family, and resurrection from the legendary Orson Scott Card. This new volume also includes stories from other award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling authors, such as: Simon R. Green, Chelsea Cain, Jonathan Maberry, Duane Swierczynski, Caitlin Kittredge, Brian Keene, Amber Benson, John Skipp, S. G. Browne, Thomas E. Sniegowski, Hollywood screenwriter Stephen Susco, National Book Award nominee Dan Chaon, and more!

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Author : Christopher Golden (Editor) , Amber Benson (Contributor) , Brian Keene (Contributor) , Caitlin Kittredge (Contributor) , Jonathan Maberry (Contributor) , John M. McIlveen (Contributor) , Mark Morris (Contributor) , John Skipp (Contributor) , more... Thomas E. Sniegowski (Contributor) , Stephen Susco (Contributor) , Kurt Sutter (Contributor) , Duane Swierczynski (Contributor) , S.G. Browne (Contributor) , Rio Youers (Contributor) , Daniel H. Wilson (Contributor) , Ken Bruen (Contributor) , Chelsea Cain (Contributor) , Orson Scott Card (Contributor) , Dan Chaon (Contributor) , Stephanie Crawford (Contributor) , Cody Goodfellow (Contributor) , Simon R. Green (Contributor) ...less

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From Reader Review 21st Century Dead for online ebook

Theo says

I won an Advanced Reading Copy of this anthology through the Goodreads First Reads giveaway program. I have to be honest and admit that I'm not a big zombie fan. I was mostly interested in this anthology because I had just read Robopocalypse, and I wanted to read more by Daniel H. Wilson (his story closes the anthology). While I wasn't too excited by the zombie concept, I was intrigued by the various authors takes on the monster. There are traditional depictions, but there are also many new takes (at least to me).

Some of the standouts:

"A Mother's Love" by John McIlveen--a great creepy factor, but with human element.

"Devil Dust" by Caitlin Kittredge--a compelling look at a wife's revenge. It had a gritty edge that rooted it in the here and now.

"All the Comforts of Home: A Beacon Story" by John Skipp and Cody Goodfellow--I loved the world-building in this one, it was a believable aftermath story.

"The Happy Bird and Other Tales" by Rio Youers--explores the emotions of both perpetrators and victims of war and genocide. Haunting.

Angela says

I won this book as a early reviewer through Goodreads, and I am so glad! What a great anthology. Often times I am disappointed in anthologies as I enjoy only half of the stories, but with this one there were no weaknesses. "Biters" was a excellent choice to begin the journey! "Down and Out in Dead Town" was a masterful short piece that touched your sentiments and reminded me of the homeless in our urban city. I did not want "Ghost Dog and Pup " to end. "Tender as Teeth" was delicious, and "Parasite" finishes the anthology with a fantastic apocalyptic last line. Wonderfully edited, fantastic stories and a book I will hold onto to read over again.

Andrew says

This is as the book of short stories all sharing the same theme - no real points for picking that little gem up. However the real point is the variety of the material - its most certainly varied. It has different perspectives, interpretations and even styles. Without giving any of it away there are some really quite clever stories here, taking the zombie them and not just giving it a twist, but a shake, squeeze and a rattle.

I thought that I had pretty much seen every use for the undead both physically and metaphorically but this book caught me out a few times. Yes like an anthology there are the good and the bad after all I didn't choose the content but I must admit on the whole I would say I am pleased and I certainly would take a look at the companion volume "The New Dead"

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

What would zombies look like in the 21st century? Instead of hiding them or destroying them, could we normalize them? Teach our children how to live in a zombie-occupied world? Watch for signs of infection the way we watch for sneezes and fever? The stories in this anthology of recent zombie fiction ask these questions and more.

A few highlights:

Biters, by Mark Morris, has young children bringing baby zombies home for a school project. I think I'd prefer the baby wets-a-lot or a sack of flour over a "child" that ate rotten flesh.

Why Mothers Let Their Babies Watch Television: A Just-So Horror Story, by Chelsea Cain, may be the shortest story in the anthology but packs a punch. Also, I'm seriously never having children.

Ghost Dog & Pup was way too long and hardly about zombies, probably my least favorite!

Jack & Jill by Jonathan Mayberry had this line, making an existential crisis out of becoming a self-aware zombie:

"The need to not be devoured, even though you already are."

Little things like that make me laugh.

I listened to the unabridged audio for these stories, read by a large cast. It was enjoyable since each change in reader helped put me into a different present-day zombie universe.

Overall, zombies are gross. I am not sure what possessed me to listen to these stories in the first place. But if they are more your thing, you would probably enjoy this anthology quite a bit.

P. Aaron Potter says

It's not the zombies' fault.

This was something of a disappointment. I can respect what Golden was trying to do here: having taken a (relatively minor) role in the renewal of interest in the zombie trope with his prior anthology, *The New Dead: A Zombie Anthology*, Golden felt compelled to revisit the well just ONE too many times with this rehash. The problem is that his particular charge in this collection was apparently to present atypical zombie stories. Thus, rather than shambling (or leaping) flesh-eating, soulless dead-eyed brain-munchers, we get zombie babies, Zombie mercenaries, thoughtful zombies, empathic zombies, zombies which are just projected mental images of lost loved ones, zombies which are a manifestation of a pseudo-benevolent god's resurrection theology, etc., etc., etc.

Sprinkling one or two such slantwise takes in the collection might well be a way to freshen an overused trope. But not *every* *blood* *story*. The authors here seem to be struggling to find something new to say about the zombie menace, and in doing so they lose what Romero in film, and Skipp and Spector in *Book of the Dead* understood so brilliantly. The zombie is scary because it is a metaphor for the mindless consumer

herd. It's that part of us. Wander too far from that, and it's not scary, nor even interesting, any more. Just obscure.

Amongst the dross, three stories merit attention:

- 1.) "A Mother's Love," by John McIlveen. This was the best of the lot by far, fully realizing the horrific possibilities inherent in the original zombie trope, while taking them in a new, yet logical, direction. Stellar work.
 - 2.) "The Dead of Dromore," by Ken Bruen. This is pure crap. Why this guy got work in print, when there are children starving in Africa, is a humanitarian crime. It's bad, BAD writing. Beyond juvenile.
 - 3.) "Carousel," by Orson Scott Card. Card is a bit on the defensive these days, as well he should be if this is the type of sorry-ass apologetics he thinks he can publish as though it were anything other than sorry-ass apologetics. Grow up, Orson.
-

Utterly Undead Reads says

While I know some of the names behind the stories in here, some were new to me. Most of the stories are 3 or 4 star stories in my book, but there's some 5 stars in there, and a two star short story or two. Overall, a very good collection. There were no stories that I was sorely tempted to pass by unfinished, as sometimes happens in anthologies.

My favorites-

'Biters' by Mark Morris- It's the first story in the book and it deals with a situation long after the outbreak, when people have re-established themselves and life goes on. While parts of it are very poignant, in the end, we're left with hope.

'Reality Bites' by S.G. Browne- I'm a huge 'Breathers' fan, and he didn't disappoint with this one. His characteristic dark humor and snark's all over this one. Loved it!

'A Mother's Love' by John M. McIlveen- Short, but packs a real punch. The horror in this one is less the zombies and more...well, something else (I won't spoil it!)

'Ghost Dog & Pup:Stay' by Thomas E Sniegowski- While this one only loosely fits into the zombie genre and feels more like a ghost story at heart, it's well worth the read. If you've ever enjoyed the companionship of a good dog that would do anything for you, this one's a tear-jerker. I hate to admit it, but I found myself tearing up as I read it. It really made me miss our german shepherd we lost four years ago. Even if you're not a 'dog person', this one's a wonderful story.

'Jack and Jill' by Jonathan Maberry- This one takes us back to world of 'Dead Of Night', which is one of my favorite zombie reads ever. While the characters and set-up are fresh, the idea about the zombies is the same. Well-written and thoughtful as always, and probably my favorite story in the book. It whets my appetite for his upcoming release, a full-length sequel to 'Dead of Night.'

And the ones I really didn't care for:

'Why Mothers Let Their Babies Watch Television' A Just-So Horror Story' by Chelsea Cain- Meh. This one is super short, only one page, front and back, and it fits solidly in the zombie theme, but it just wasn't my thing. While beautifully written, it's written in the style of a fable, which was not what I was looking for. I can recognize it's a well-crafted, sharp story even though I personally didn't care for it. Just not for me.

'The Drop' by Stephen Susco- I still am not quite sure what I read in this one. It has nothing to do with zombies, save one girl unexpectedly back from the dead for reasons I never understood. This one is a horror, but more in the sci-fi vein, IMO. Not my favorite, I didn't really care for it. Probably a two star from me.

The other stories were all okay or good, but not mind-blowing. Brain Keene's story was good, but not of the caliber I've come to expect from him. I enjoyed it, I just expected more.

Be sure not to skip the introduction by Christopher Golden. Nothing earth-shattering there, but interesting enough that I actually read it instead of just skimming it, as I often do with intros.

Kimberley doruyter says

it's a bit of a strange mix.
some storys don't even have zombies as we know them in it.
most arn't scary and some are just strange.
but if you like just one of the storys in the book it's worth it.
and i had at least 5 i really liked.

Fran Jacobs says

This is a real mixed bag. Most of the stories are entertaining and enjoyable, with different takes on the idea of zombies, from those who take a drug to bring it about, to disease, intentional and unintentional infestation, some are healed zombies, others are not. A real good mix of all sorts of things. A couple of the stories are brilliant, and a couple really suck.

A mother's love: This was one of the really great stories, disturbing, dark, and horrible, in a good way. I enjoyed this a lot.

Jack and Jill: I really enjoyed this too, it was so sad, it captured the sadness, the frustration of a dying boy all the way through, with a sense of hope right at the end.

The ones that sucked, in my opinion:

The drop: Personally, no idea what the hell was going on. I really didn't. I read it a couple of times, still didn't get it. Just too much techno info flung at me and nothing that made any real sense

GHost dog and pup: I was bored. I couldn't finish it. And it was just ridiculous, for me at least, a chosen dog and his boy? for no reason, and with no knowledge until it was needed? Na.

The dead of Dromore. It was an okay story, but the formatting, the style, just made it hard for me to read. In the end i was left with nothing.

Biters: it wasn't a bad story, but it was unclimatic, there was no real end, and it felt like two stories just shoved together. Something about a zombie baby, something about a zombie father. just meh for me

So yeah. Most were okay, most were interesting, a couple were brilliant and a few more were not.

H.G. Gravy says

Biters by Mark Morris - In a world where the zombie virus is close to being cured, a young girl is charged with caring for a zombified infant. Through a series of unfortunate mistakes, the young girl learns secrets which change her life. As the opener for the anthology, "Biters" wasn't as strong a story as many of the others in the rest of the anthology. While it wasn't a bad story in any shape or form, it is quickly overshadowed by most of which comes ahead.

Why Mothers Let Their Babies Watch Television by Chelsea Cain - A Two-page short story about a mother whose frustration with her baby leads her to shake it to death. However, the baby doesn't quite stay dead. Being with how short it is, this story doesn't leave much of an impact on the reader. It is easily forgettable and doesn't pack quite the punch a short story like this should.

Carousel by Orson Scott Card - In this world, the living and the dead coexist and Cyril, the main character isn't happy about this. His wife returns from death and makes it very clear she wants her children to join her. Against Cyril's wishes, his wife helps to end the lives of their children and they appear to be much happier. Cyril leaves his home and finds himself at a carousel where he is able to speak with God about the current state of affairs. Once again, it isn't a bad story but it also doesn't seem to jump out at me either as being super good. Once more, another forgettable story.

Reality Bites by S.G. Browne - Zombies are now the stars of reality television but oversaturation of the market has made them not so interesting anymore. However, Evan Carter, an independent producer, has come up with a brand new idea of a television show revolving around Ted, a zombie who can actually think, speak, and feel. A satire on the entertainment industry and Hollywood, this story doesn't take itself seriously at all and it is wonderful because of this. While this story is limited to simply the idea of pitching a television show about a sentient zombie, it is also a commentary on today's culture, television programs, and the idea that audiences are braindead.

The Drop by Stephen Susco - Honestly, I don't really know what this is even about. I read it and got something about a video game, a woman coming back from the dead, and then a guy in an apartment closet. Unfortunately, this is probably the weakest story of the entire anthology. Maybe I missed something but it didn't make any sense to me and didn't hold my interest much.

Antiparallelogram by Amber Benson - In a futurist dystopian world, society is divided by colored implants placed under their wrists. A poor, nameless protagonist dreams of escaping the fate of the orange ID, which means they will be exterminated within one year of being marked. Hoping to land a job in a store which offers the incentive of hazard-pay, the nameless protagonist hangs around the store awaiting the chance to gain employment. However, the protagonist isn't the only one who has been watching the store. A chemically zombified man kidnaps the protagonist and offers him a chance to escape his fate if only he will steal a hidden batch of chemicals inside the store in which he wanted to work in. This is easily one of the best stories in the anthology and brings something completely unique and interesting to the table.

How We Escaped Our Certain Fate by Dan Chaon - In this world, zombies aren't much of a threat as they are a nuisance. A father and son have a strained relationship especially after the son is forced to kill someone who attempted to rob his father's store. While their relationship is returning to normal, his zombified wife starts coming around their home at night which would further complicate their relationship. While his story attempts to hit an emotional string in the reader, I think it ends too soon to have the intended impact. Once again, it wasn't a bad story at all, but it also didn't bring anything memorable to the table.

A Mother's Love by John McIlveen - Marissa must feed her son Cedric during a zombie apocalypse. Problem is Cedric is a zombie and humans are starting to become harder to find in the world of the living dead. A bit of a cliché at this point but the story itself was entertaining.

Down and Out in Dead Town by Simon R. Green - When the dead start returning from the grave, there is nothing about them resembling their former selves. They don't eat people. They don't do anything other than exist. These undead are placed inside dead towns and forgotten about much like the main protagonist in the story. He's a man who has lost his job, his family, and his home. He decides to visit one of these dead towns and finds he has much more in common with the dead than the living. The comparison between the homeless and the living dead is effective and makes you stop to pause and think. Great story with a social message.

Devil Dust by Caitlin Kittredge - Lizzie is hospitalized after a horrible car accident which left her husband dead. The circumstances immediately become clear that this wasn't a car accident and Lizzie sets out to get revenge against those who wronged her and her husband. One of the better stories in the anthology with a satisfying conclusion and an excellent take on a different type of zombie story.

The Dead of Dromore by Ken Bruen - An elite squad of mercenaries is sent into zombie infested area to rescue the daughter of a very rich man. Obviously, things don't go as planned and these badasses aren't so badass by the end. While this one isn't breaking any new ground in the zombie genre, it does meet the need of having an military action story in between all the other stories which try to branch out in different directions. Entertaining and brief.

All the Comforts of Home by John Skipp and Cody Goodfellow - In a world reborn after the end of the previous one, a man recalls the chaos and madness in humanity's final days and the actions he took which led to his survival. Another one of the better-crafted stories in the anthology. It tells a story of survivor's guilt and having to continue living with one's sins.

Ghost Dog and Pup Stay by Thomas E. Sniegowski - Murphy the dog dies protecting his young owner, Mitchell, from a dark entity which is uncovered during a hurricane. His soul is returned to Earth after he is told by the Old Dog and Old Man in the sky that Mitchell is a special boy who could cause either massive chaos with guidance from the dark entity or aspire the world to greatness. Murphy was his guardian and must now guide the replacement puppy, Jack, to save Mitchell from the corruption. As much as this sounds like a children's horror story, it was easily my most favorite of the anthology.

Tic Boom: A Slice of Life by Kurt Sutter - A man with turrets syndrome drives a school bus around and speaks to headless corpses. He is one of the only survivors of the zombie apocalypse because of his condition but he isn't all right in the head. He kills humans and zombies alike. Another story where the protagonist feeds humans to zombies. While the concept is interesting, the story is much too short and the clichéd ending didn't help it much either.

Jack and Jill by Jonathan Maberry - Jack Porter is dying of cancer. There is a massive storm coming and its predicted to be one of the worst to hit his area. With the storm come the zombies and it is a fight for survival for the terminally ill child and his family. My second favorite story of the anthology. It draws upon confronting the concept of childhood death and accepting fate. Truly a page turner and certainly makes me want to read more from Maberry.

Tender as Teeth by Stephanie Crawford and Duane Swierczynski - Justine was having a drink at a bar when suddenly she is knocked off her chair and awakens in the hospital to discover its months later. Then the horrible news is broken to her. She was a zombie, she ate an infant, and it was captured in a photograph which had gone viral. Carson, the photographer, and Justine embark on a journey to take another photo to show she has been cured. This is also one of the best stories in the anthology. It explores the idea of acclimating to being human once more and dealing with the struggle of having committed atrocities while

not actually remembering them.

Couch Potato by Brian Keene - Adele is a little girl with a drug-addicted mother who neglects her. A breakout of Hamelin's Revenge, the virus which came from rats and turned people into flesh-eating zombies, doesn't change much for Adele's situation. Her mother still neglects her and sits on the couch watching television until her drugs run out. Being familiar with Brian Keene's catalog of work, it was nice to see another appearance of Hamelin's Revenge in a short story. After having read Dead Sea and Entombed, I'm certain Adele's fate was not going to be good regardless of whether she survived this story or not. Overall, it is what I expected of Brian Keene which is always enjoyable to read.

The Happy Bird and Other Tales by Rio Youers - Two years after a war which tore apart his life, Raif Cerić is still coping with the loss of his family, his town, and the general devastation. A warmongering dictator forced his soldiers to take drugs which made them immune to feeling or even caring about the atrocities they were committing. Raif manages to capture one of the soldiers responsible for the death of his family and attempts to bring him back from the abyss of the unfeeling and uncaring. A wonderful story about the trauma and horrors of war and the aftermath in which the common person is left to pick up the pieces of their broken lives. Excellent work and certainly makes me want to read more from Rio Youers.

Parasite by Daniel H. Wilson - Unfortunately, this story closes out the book and I don't think it should have. I had no idea what was happening and didn't understand it. There was a war, there were metal spiders, and the narrator was dead but his spirit was still alive. I don't know and I'm not going back to see if I can figure it out either. The previous story should have closed out the book.

Overall, this anthology like many others is a mixed bag. Some stories are great, many of them are okay, and then there are some real stinkers in the pile. If you are looking for stories which try to branch out from the typical "Walking Dead" type of zombie formula, 21st Century Dead is a good book for this. If you are looking for more zombie stories, I suggest reading "The Living Dead" anthology by John Joseph Adams

Piggie says

Short stories are still not my thing. And like all short story collections, I have a hard time giving an over all rating. I think that each story needs its own number. So, the rating I'm giving this is the over all reading experience. I think the best thing about this collection is that it isn't your usual zombie stories. Each one of the short stories is unique and has an unusual approach; enough so that I'm not sure I'd call all of them zombie stories.

Here's what I thought of the various stories:

***Biters by Mark Morris

*****Why mothers let their babies watch television : a just-so horror story by Chelsea Cain

This gets 5 stars for 2 reasons. The first is because it is so unique. I have not read anything quite like it.

Secondly, because I think it gives a good sense of the dread that would come from your baby being a zombie with an eventual fatalistic giving up to the absurdity of it.

**Carousel by Orson Scott Card

**Reality Bites by S.G. Browne

**Drop by Stephen Susco

***Antiparallelogram by Amber Benson

**How we escaped our certain fate by Dan Chaon

*****Mother's love by John McIlveen

This gets 5 stars because it is probably the most disturbing short story I have ever read. It really captures the horror genre that zombies usually reside in.

*Down and out in dead town by Simon R. Green

**Devil dust by Caitlin Kittredge

**Dead of Dromore by Ken Bruen

**All the comforts of home : a beacon story by John Skipp, Cody Goodfellow

*****Ghost dog & pup : stay by Thomas E. Sniegowski

Not sure this is really a zombie story. There are some zombies in it, but it's really a ghost story. It's told from the POV of a dog and it's done well. A touching story, cute and rather fluffy to be in this collection.

*****Tic boom : a slice of love by Kurt Sutter

A great story of crazy. Zombies are served on the side. This is an excellent character sketch.

*****Jack and Jill by Jonathan Maberry

This is the best story in the book. It is a more complete story than most shorts. It reaches beyond the telling of zombies and digs deeply into death and dying. Excellent story.

**Tender as teeth by Stephanie Crawford, Duane Swierczynski

**Couch potato by Brian Keene

**Happy bird and other tales by Rio Youers

****Parasite by Daniel H. Wilson

Donald says

21st Century Dead, edited by Christopher Golden, is the followup to his 2010 anthology **The New Dead**, which has garnered generally positive reviews. I can't comment beyond that as I haven't read it. I did read this one, though, and I imagine it'll receive similar reviews. I personally found it fairly middling, but to be fair I don't know if that's truly a reflection on the quality (or lack thereof) of the stories or simply that I'm getting burned out on zombies.

There were a couple of standouts, and chief among those is "Ghost Dog & Pup: Stay" by Thomas E. Sniegowski. Zombies actually play a fairly minor role in this story and I would not have included it in a zombie anthology, but I'm glad Golden did because I doubt I would have read it otherwise. More than anything it's a story about a dog's love and devotion to his boy. I dare anyone that's ever had a dog to read this and not get just a little misty-eyed. This is a powerful story and I am going to be keeping an eye on Mr. Sniegowski going forward.

"Tender as Teeth" by Stephanie Crawford and Duane Swierczynski was the other standout story. It takes place sometime after a cure for zombie-ism is developed and tries to answer the question of how people would treat someone that was once a zombie but is a normal human again.

If you're itching for zombie tales, then **21st Century Dead** will certainly scratch that itch. However, I think it's quite telling that the best stories in this anthology feature zombies only on the peripheral plot elements rather than having them front and center. Some might argue that this demonstrates the evolution of the zombie tale, but I think it just underscores the fact that zombies, like vampires before them, are on their way out.

Eva Leger says

(3 stars) Biters by Mark Morris - This took me a bit to get into and I ended up liking the ending much more

than the beginning. It's a short story but the 'why' of what the kids were doing wasn't explained clearly enough. I also thought they talked like elementary school-aged children when in fact I learned they're 13. Seemed off...

(1 star) Why Mothers Let Their Babies Watch Television by Chelsea Cain - This sucked huge donkey d#*\.. I don't know what else to say and I'm seriously. That's my complete thought on the story. What. The. Fuck. If I hit another like it the book ends for me there.

(2.5 stars) Carousel by Orson Scott Card - I don't know. Something's there but the whole "God" thing didn't ring for me.

(2 stars) Reality Bites by S.G. Browne - Again, something *might* be here. It's the typical twist on reality shows with zombies. Meh.

(1 star) The Drop by Stephen Susco - I read a page or two and skipped the rest. I don't know what the author thought he was writing - I'm all for intelligent stories - but really? Did we have a dictionary close by? I want zombies, not a frigging English lesson.

This book isn't shaping up real great. I'll probably give up soon if these don't get better.

(1 star) Antiparallelogram by Amber Benson - Skipped it.

(3 stars) How We Escaped Our Certain Fate by Dan Choan - This is a good one. Not the best but definitely good. I wish the rest were more like it.

(5 stars) A Mother's Love by John McIlveen - Best so far. I'd read more in a second. I'll definitely look for more by this author.

(3 stars) Down and Out in Dead Town by Simon R. Green - Not sure how I feel here. The writing's good and I the story is more "realistic" than most, which I appreciate. I'd wager Green might have a book I'd enjoy. My sympathy for the homeless is almost non-existent though. (By "homeless" I mean the people who are able-bodied and mentally aware and could work but want to take my money to buy drugs and alcohol. In my experience this is most if them.) I think this may have lowered my emotions during reading.

(4.5 stars) Devil Dust by Caitlin Kittredge - I enjoyed this almost as much as 'A Mother's Love'. The feelings the wife is going through after losing her husband are completely relatable. I think I could get to that point if it happened to me. The scheme she pulls is off the wall crazy but still, somehow, realistic. Possibly because of the meth association. No matter, it's a damn good story regardless.

(2.5 stars) The Dead of Dromore by Ken Bruen - I don't like harping on a story being too fast or some such when I'm reading a. Anthology but let's face it, some are still too damn fast. Even for a story a few pages long. I had questions at the end that I shouldn't have had. I should have understood more while reading. Also, the double spacing freaked me out? What's the basis for this?

I'm over halfway and have read two stories so far that we're above 3 stars for me. I forget what it was called but I read another of Golden's zombie anthologies and I don't remember the stories being so..... sucky.

(2.5 stars) All the Comforts of Home by John Skipp & Cody Goodfellow - I have mixed feelings on this one. I liked the characters and the writings fine but the story felt... I don't know if 'thrown together' is the correct phrase. I skimmed a few paragraphs and when I do that - or even want to do that - I know I have a problem with a story or book.

**I'm beginning to feel let down. I thought I could expect more based on previous reading of Golden's work(s). I'm very pleased I borrowed this from the library and didn't spend money on it. If I read anything else I'll definitely be borrowing it in case it turns out like this.

For as many stories as I've read I should have found more already

That I loved. Or, at the very least, liked a lot. Instead I'm finding myself going through the motions in order to a.) get to Maberry's story and b.) finish this and return it to the library pronto.**

(2 stars) Ghost Dog & Pup: Stay by Thomas E. Sniegowski - This started out fantastic. I thought it might be the best one in the book. Until the extra supernatural stuff was thrown in. It's just not my cup of tea. Zombies are frightening enough so I like my zombie reading to be as realistic as possible. Basically, real life with zombies thrown in. Life forces and plates in the ground... just not my thing.

(3.5 stars) Tic Boom: A Slice of Love by Kurt Sutter - This one is different. I had some questions but they were answered by the end. Even though its a SHORT STORY. I thought for a bit the religious aspect might be taken too far - luckily I was wrong. I actually wish it'd have been longer.

(5 stars) Jack and Jill by Jonathan Maberry - Nothing needs to be said. I knew this would be up to par and if you've read Maberry than you know why. This story is one of the few - very few - things Golden did. The only thing is it - and a select few others - are more deserving than to be placed with such mediocre to pisspoor others.

(4 stars) Tender as Teeth by Stephanie Crawford & Duane Swierczynski - This was good too. I wasn't sure how it would work but just the premise, becoming something other than yourself and doing something so unbelievably horrible the world - including yourself - wants you dead, only to then become yourself again, makes for a great story. I don't want to go into spoiler detail but this is one not to skip.

(5 stars) Couch Potato by Brian Keene - No doubt this could be part of a great book. This has the every-day-type of things, the realisticness that makes a zombie story so frightening for me. The twist the author throws in, the lack-of-attention combo was clever. I'm pretty sure I've at least heard of Keene, if not read something by him before but now I need to make sure I look for his books.

(No rating) The Happy Bird and Other Tales by Rio Youers - I totally skipped this so I'm not comfortable rating it.....

(No rating) Parasite by Daniel H. Wilson - I'm not rating this although I didn't totally skip it. The writing is good, the premise is good but it's not my kind of story. There are people who will enjoy it though.

Overall I'm seriously disappointed. Hopefully The Living Dead will be a ton better. My fingers are crossed.

Mangzilla says

Excellent and wide-ranging stories about zombies, or near-zombies. Many different takes. But you might not want to listen to them all in a row, as I did.

Angie says

As with any and all short story anthologies, there are a few stinkers, but I was very impressed with the entirety of the book and how, after reading several stories consecutively, I didn't feel like I was being beat over the head (pun unintended) with the usual zombie cliché.

It's weird how the second to last story is almost always my favorite, and "The Happy Bird and Other Tales" is no exception. Rio Youers' work is absolutely flawless--and speaks, like all great stories do, to something within us that makes us human.

Amber Benson (yeah, the girl who played Tara on Buffy the Vampire Slayer) even has a story in the collection that, while not being on the cutting edge of originality, is well polished and a fun read.

The two stories that I personally would have nicked from the collection: "The Drop" by Stephen Susco and "The Dead of Dromore" by Ken Bruen. "The Drop" had an interesting set-up, what with a world obsessed with computerized role-playing games and the technological scares it sets up, but it didn't pull through. It was hard to really picture what was going on, perhaps because the author bit off more than he could chew. Pun unintended. (Although, to give him credit, he is a screenwriter and sometimes jumping genres can be a bit tough even for a seasoned veteran.)

The other stinker, "The Dead of Dromore," just wasn't written in a very reader-friendly style. Its style desperately tried to mimic hard-line military talk and it just didn't pop off the page in the way I think the author intended it to. Additionally, there wasn't enough back story for me to really get interested in the tale, the characterizations were weak, and the end of the story was just too bland.

"Jack and Jill" by Jonathan Maberry was a great tale that riffed on the ol' nursery rhyme, only it involved cancer and zombies and a great big wave rather than... y'know, fetching water and stuff. Maberry pulled the difficult feelings of a child with cancer who knows his day is coming off really well, and the added background of there being a zombie attack is an interesting take. Now I'm tempted to rewrite a bunch of Lurlene McDaniel books, turning everyone into zombies or zombie-lovers.

"Tender as Teeth" by Stephanie Crawford and Duane Swierczynski was also a stunning tale of a world in which zombieism has a cure--but the discrimination lingers, especially when it involves the eating of infant children.

All in all, a very wonderful collection. The breadth and depth was pretty spectacular, considering the entire book was about zombies. I cried, I laughed, I drooled a little and picked my eyeball off my chest and put it back in its socket.

Cassie-la says

REVIEW ALSO ON: <http://bibliomantics.com/2012/07/08/y...>

Golden uses the stories in this anthology as a lens to process our 21st century fears, the fear of death, the unknown, etc. There are nineteen stories in all, some covering the literal undead while others tackle drug use, loss, media consumption and every zombie metaphor imaginable. Zombies are called the walking dead, Infected, workers, the NODS, survivors, Hamlin's Revenge, and the Dead Ones. They're created by the R1 Virus, use the Revenant Patch, are spread by spiders, caused by drug use, and occur during the apocalypse, the Resurrection, and the Devastation. This is not your typical anthology about the undead.

A good portion of the stories deal with zombies in relation to media, television and video games in

particular, a metaphor that mass media consumption is turning us into brainless zombies. This theme is tackled in “Why Mother’s Let Their Babies Watch Television: A Just-So Horror Story” through dark humor in Verite’s story that reads like a fairy tale about infanticide. Stephen Susco’s “The Drop” follows users of the most wildly successful, ultimate RPG game called Cynapse. Not to be confused with Synapse in the film Antitrust. While fans, fondly referred to as ‘Napsacks await the drop of the appropriately titled Revenant Patch, our protagonist stumbles across the game’s horrifying secret from one of the patch’s beta testers. “Couch Potato” by Brian Keene does double duty with zombies as representative of television and drug reliance.

Most prevalent however in the take on zombies as media obsessed is the hilarious satire “Reality Bites” from author S.G. Browne. The story is focused specifically on trashy reality television, in this case, zombie based reality television on the channel ZTV. This satire centers on the unoriginality of Hollywood, using programming such as “Dancing with the Undead” and “Reanimated Jersey Shore” to remind us just how brainless and mindless “reality” (yeah, right) television is making Americans. As we’re told, “This is television... They [the viewers] don’t want clever and smart. That’s why shows like Arrested Zombie Development get cancelled.” My funny bone was tickled so hard at that line that I may have literally died.

Second to the media metaphor is the correlation between zombies and drug use. This is explored through the heroine addicted Mom in the aforementioned “Couch Potato”, along with Caitlin Kittredge’s “Devil Dust” and “The Happy Bird and Other Tales” by Rio Youers. Both stories focus on themes of revenge and drugs, which make you emotionless zombie slaves. With zombies as a blatant metaphor for enslavement/drug addiction. They function in the same way as the media based stories but with a lot more heft behind them. The same can be said for “Jack and Jill” by Jonathan Maberry, which correlates cancer with zombies and takes the phrase walking dead to a terrifyingly possible level.

One of my favorite tales wasn’t much a straight zombie story, but more an exploration of social classes through a dystopic society. “Antiparallelogram” by Amber Benson revolves around a misshaped store in the Color Sector that sells special elixirs to the public. These bestow buyers with super powers and if you so please can turn you into monsters: vampires, werewolves and even zombies. Social classes are much more prevalent in this city, with people having to wear colored jump suits that denote the citizens’ stations in life (pink = orphan, purple = homeless, etc). Members of society must move above purple by the time they’re 30 or they will be given an orange jumpsuit, which labels them as one of the walking dead. They have a year to live before they are euthanized for overpopulation purposes. Homeless as the walking dead metaphor? Perfection. Dear Amber Benson, please write an entire book set in this crazy colortocracy!

Still other stories focus on zombies as just zombies. In Mark Morris’ “Biters”, thirteen year olds team up with the Infant Care Program, where they bring home and care for zombie babies that are used to test possible cures. Worst replacement for home ec ever. “All the Comforts of Home: A Beacon Story” by John Skipp and Cody Goodfellow takes zombies and transforms them into servants for survivors living inside hotels with all the amenities and Dan Chaon’s “How We Escaped Our Certain Fate” views zombies as pests who trample gardens, dash in front of cars and overturn garbage cans. Provided of course you’re a stranger or the faceless person at the convenience store who made the zombie their coffee every day.

Another top story goes to fellow Rutgers alum Kurt Sutter, who penned “Tic Boom, A Love Story”. Written akin to a screenplay, this slightly more traditional zombie story follows a Tourettes stricken man who talks to the dead and may have more screws loose than Norman Bates. Of course, the apocalypse will do that to you. Sutter gets bonus points for the great twist ending in this, his first ever published prose story. But I wouldn’t expect a shoddy tale from the “Sons of Anarchy” creator.

Of course, there were a few stories I liked a little less than other, one which irked me a lot more than most. As you may have gleaned from another post about Orson Scott Card where I railed against his homophobia and racism, I am not a huge OSC fan, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt. Of course he proved me right.

Rather than being about straight zombies, “Carousel” is an uber religious story about loved ones being resurrected. When the protagonist’s wife returns as a giant bitch and convinces her children to join her in death, our “hero” visits a carousel, talks to God, and assumes that homeless people are incapable of being decent human beings. Especially in public restrooms. I will refrain from ranting further. ::shakes progressive fist at OSC::
