



Tales of the Hidden World: Stories

Simon R. Green

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Seventeen delightfully unexpected stories from Simon R. Green including a brand-new adventure of the Droods take us deep into the Darkside, embroil us in the Secret Histories, and lead us into the shadowy places where monsters and demons roam.

Welcome to the worlds of Simon R. Green. In this wide-ranging collection, the *New York Times*' bestselling urban fantasist opens doors into hidden places: strange realms bordering our own mundane existence and prowled by creatures of fancy and nightmare.

Here are the strange, frequently deadly and sometimes even dead things that lurk in garbage-strewn city alleyways and grimy subway stations after midnight, visible only to the most perceptive human or inhuman eye.

In these tales, Green revisits the ingenious worlds within worlds that he created for his wildly popular novels. Take a stroll on the Darkside with a jaded street wizard, an underpaid government functionary responsible for keeping demons, vamps, and aliens in line.

Enter the hidden recesses of Drood Hall, where the aging family member who creates powerful weapons that protect humankind recalls his long and bloody career. Join a squad of no-longer-human soldiers dispatched to combat the all-consuming jungle on a distant planet. Visit a house at the intersection of two realities that serves as a sanctuary from the evil of "all" worlds. Confront the unstoppable zombie army of General Kurtz in a brilliant homage to "Apocalypse Now".

And whatever you do, never forget that there "are" monsters out there. Really. Each story includes a new afterword by the author.

Tales of the Hidden World: Stories Details

Date : Published July 8th 2014 by Open Road Media Science & Fantasy (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781480491168

Author : Simon R. Green

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Short Stories, Urban Fantasy, Science Fiction, Horror, Fiction

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From Reader Review Tales of the Hidden World: Stories for online ebook

Pam Winkler says

This one has poor or no borders between the story and the notes. This means that it's occasionally hard to figure out when the story ended and he's talking about it. That really hurt.

Question of Solace was good.

Street Wizard was fantastic.

Death is a Lady was good.

Dorothy Dreams was ok.

Down and Out in Dead Town was interesting.

From Out of the Sun, Endlessly Singing was good, and very old sci-fi.

It's All About the Rendering was absolutely perfect.

Find Heaven and Hell in the Smallest Things was pretty good.

Jesus and Satan Go Jogging in the Desert was ok? It wasn't my kind of thing.

Food of the Gods was interesting.

He Said, Laughing was ok? It wasn't my kind of thing.

Soldier, Soldier was ok? It wasn't my kind of thing.

Manslayer was Conan, but the stereotypical Conan and doesn't really appeal to me.

Cascade was ok.

Soulhunter was pretty good.

Awake, Awake Ye Northern Winds was pretty good. I liked it.

In the Labyrinth as well was good, although it was a bit weird that they did them in this order since In the Labyrinth was first. It spoils it a bit.

Sophie says

Really enjoyed this collection of short stories and has encouraged me to find more from this author. Loved the explanatory notes that came after each one.

Jaki says

This review and others at <http://tangledbookmarks.com>

*I received this book for free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

When people ask me who my favourite authors are, Simon R Green usually sneaks in there in the top spot. Most people respond with "Simon WhoNow?".

That hurts. I'm a HUGE fan of Green's Hawk & Fisher series. Old school fantasy with two very tough, very

kick-arse leads – who just happen to be married. To each other.

Say what now? When's the last time you read fantasy OR urban fantasy and the lead characters were not only kick-arse, take no prisoners warriors....and not involved in either instaluv or a love triangle? But were happily married to each other and each had the same amount of plot time. Green does it, and he does it well. Something I've been dying to see happen in Urban Fantasy at least, but have yet to discover.

So Green gets "Favourite" status from me, based on the Hawk & Fisher series.

And all that rambling above was a way of me leading into the fact that I was very very excited to read his Tales of the Hidden World, and discover his short stories.

First tale Question of Solace, is from his Secret History series. Here I have a confession....

I don't like the Secret History series.

Yep, one of my favourite authors...but ah...erm...I don't enjoy one of his series. Go figure. Although having said that, I kinda enjoyed the tale. A sweet little tale about Jack Drood, Armourer to the Droods (the Droods being the family the Secret Histories series is about)reminiscing about his life and work.

Second tale was Street Wizard. An excellent tale of a street wizard, and a night on his beat. Inspired by Green's Nightside urban fantasy series.

Third tale, Death is a Lady, is an oddity. A page or two long, it's definitely short, about a Near Death Experience. Based on the author's own experience, it's more of an essay than a tale. And I have no idea what I've just read. Bit of a "what?" moment. Not sure it even really belongs here, as it seems to be a throwaway piece, a page jotted down simply so the author could tell us his own NDE, which is nothing like the ones we normally hear about. I have an odd feeling in my belly that this is more of a vanity piece, than anything else.

Dorothy Dreams, the fourth tale, is Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz, dreaming while she is in an old age home. Not a solid piece, it ends on a really twee twist. One that you see coming from the beginning, and feel like you've been smothered in sugar and honey and are supposed to think "awwww so sweet". More like, massive eye roll.

Down and Out in Dead Town is a zombie tale – but it's not really about the dead-and-came-back zombies. They are in it, but it's more about the other zombies we see...the ones we try not to notice. Homeless people..down on their luck people. It's a good tale, and it makes up for the couple of tales before it.

From out of the Sun, Endlessly Singing, a fantastic title for a maybe-not-so-fantastic tale. Sci fi, alien invasion, told in an arty-farty prose voice. The type of voice I really don't like and makes me want to roll my eyes so far back in my head, I fall over.

It's All About the Rendering – the absolute star of this collection, in my eyes. I actually read this one twice because I love it so much – the strong characters, the fantastic premise of a House on the Border, between reality and fantasy. And depending which door you enter, is what you will see. And yes, there are prissy bureaucrats in the real world and fantasy world. This is the sort of tale I'd love to see turn into a full novel. This tale makes up for the previous few. Sidenote: I actually have a coffee mug like the one mentioned. :D

Find Heaven and Hell in the Smallest Things started out strong, a good solid sci fi tale with soldiers in cutting edge “hard” suits, the latest armour shells, who are sent out to help prepare a new planet for terraforming. Descended into more twee eye rolling moments, and my teeth started hurting it was so “sweet”.

Jesus and Satan Go Jogging in the Desert – loved it. As the author himself puts it – Jesus is fasting in the desert for forty days and forty nights, tempted by the Devil, told in the style of The Odd Couple. A not-so-irreverent tale that had me smiling.

Food of the Gods – ah yes. Well. Bit of a head shaker this one. Not so much the premise, more like “did i just waste 5 minutes reading that?”.

He Said, Laughing – while I like the title, I actually quite disliked the story. Homage to Apocalypse Now, which is most definitely, not one of my fave movies. This story and the next one Soldier, Soldier were yawn-fests for me. And at the end of Soldier, Soldier, in the author note, it is mentioned that this story was his very first printed work, in a fanzine. And the rest of the stories are his very earliest works.

No. Just no. By this time, I’ve got that horrid sinking feeling. The one that is telling me that my initial excitement has been misplaced. The one that was all “yay! new stories by one of my fave authors! these are gonna be sooooo good!”. It suddenly disappeared like that friend whose shout it is at the pub. Why?? Why do authors do this?? Why do they insist on republishing their very very early works, the first ones they got printed, the newbie stuff that appeared and then disappeared like a fart in the wind?? The ones that just aren’t that very good? Is it a vanity thing? Is it a case of “hey now I’m really famous, I want the world to read my high school assignments cos even tho it was so long ago and they are extremely unpolished, I want to show how good I almost was? Even George R R Martin did this and couldn’t pull it off.

Manslayer is a naff fantasy piece, with clunky dialogue, a ridiculous premise and an extra ridiculous end to the monster. Cascade is a silly maudlin horror piece that feels like it was written by an emo teenager. Soulhunters was dull. Awake Awake Ye Northern Winds and In the Labyrinth are pirate tales with three fairly interesting leads, but is demolished by -once again – extremely clunky dialogue, naff action scenes and an all-round yawn-fest.

So here’s the dilemma. Favourite author, couple of tales I liked – one I LOVED and want to see turned into a full length novel – topped off by pulling a full-on vanity move of including his oldest tales that are just...naff. How do you decide if the book as a whole is worth reading, or recommending? Plus that terrible cover. Oh dear.

In the end I’ve decided that while this isn’t a book that I would recommend to those new to Simon R Green’s work, it was worth it to me for the few tales that I did like. So if you’re a fan, you’ll probably enjoy this. But if you’ve never read him before, I’d be more inclined to recommend his Nightside series or his Hawk & Fisher series.

Ea Solinas says

Simon R. Green is one of those authors who just overflows with awesome ideas -- in fact, often he will slap

some of his awesome ideas into books that are otherwise unrelated.

So he does quite well in the short stories in "Tales of the Hidden World," a loose web of short stories about ghastly aliens, Droods, wizards, zombies and whatnot. Green's fertile imagination and zippy writing keep every short story entertaining and inventive, although at times I wondered if it was all meant to be in the same big messy universe that most of his books inhabit.

It begins with a bittersweet tale of the Drood Armourer, an old man reflecting on his life -- the woman he loved, the people he lost, the son who went rogue, and his feelings about the life he has led. It's a rather sad note for the collection to open on, but it's also an affectionate farewell for a character who has endured throughout the Secret Histories series.

Among the other tales: A snarky Dresden-Files-esque tale of a street wizard who polices the street at night, encountering a wacky assortment of aliens, vampires, Street Preachers and others.

- *A homeless man's thoughts on the undead.

- *A true story about meeting Death.

- *An elderly Dorothy's last visit to Oz, and the discovery of the fantastical land's true nature.

- *The hated and feared Lords and Ladies are called upon to defend Old Earth from the grotesque alien Medusae.

- *"The House that stands on the border" between worlds, and what happens when it isn't properly maintained.

- *Humans locked into robotic "hard suits" are sent to a dangerous jungle world, and discover it may be too deadly even for them.

- *A conversation between Jesus and Satan about... well, the nature of reality.

- *An investigative reporter who runs afoul of the Epicure, whose love of fine cuisine masks a horrifying secret.

- *"Apocalypse Now" with an undead twist.

... and a bunch of Green's earliest works, such as some decent sword-and-sorcery, an environmental mood piece, a Soulhunter searching for the Hags, and several others.

The best description of "Tales of the Hidden World" would be a collection of odds and ends. "Question of Solace" is the only one that is explicitly tied to Green's other tales; the others seem to be mostly other kinds of short stories that floated out of his imagination, ranging from a true story to a "Wizard of Oz" fanfic to assorted standalone tales that he was inspired/challenged to write.

And short stories really work for Green's too-many-cool-ideas imagination -- he can craft short stories all about some of these ideas (the Hags, who steal the souls of aborted babies) or weave them into a story all about how weird Soho is (a sewer-dwelling undine). His writing is snappy and snarky ("Inhumanly handsome, insufferably graceful, and almost unbearably arrogant. Not because he was a Prince, you understand, but because he was an Elf"), but he can also provide stories that are unexpectedly serious and poetic ("From Out of the Sun, Endlessly Singing").

"Tales of the Hidden World" is a nice little sampler of Green's work -- and while only one story is explicitly set in Green's usual universe, it's a fun and colorful collection of ideas, stories and early works.

David Caldwell says

This is a collection of 17 short tales from Simon R. Green. They range from his early writings to his latest tale of the Droods. This book was put out by a smaller publisher and they did let a few glitches slip through when they printed it. I guess it is a mixed blessing. Smaller publishers, along with e-publishers, means more books and stories by more authors but we have to deal with glitches slipping through as well. Some stories are better than others. So let's look at each story.

1. Question of Solace. This is the latest entry in the Drood stories. The Armourer looks back over his life and career. Not your typical Drood story. It is much quieter without a big villain that needs stopping, violently all over the place. Almost more of one of those moments of life that happens between the books (the big things). Still it is an important part of that world. Must read for Drood fans.

2. Street Wizard. A wizard does his nightly patrol of Soho to protect the "regular" people from the many things that go bump in the night. This is the closest story to a Nightside story in the collection. Not a bad story, but again, it feels more like what happens in-between the stories than an actual event worthy of a story.

3. Death Is A Lady. A story based on a near death experience that the author had. Very short but still interesting. Felt more like a story beginning than a full story.

4. Dorothy Dreams. The little girl that went to Oz finally learns the real secrets of Oz. One of my favorites in the collection. While similar in nature to the first story, this one felt more complete to me. This one gets 5 stars.

5. Down and Out in Deadtown. A different kind of zombie story. A nice story that compares homeless to the walking dead.

6. From Out of the Sun, Endlessly Dreaming. A sci-fi tale of what humanity had to sacrifice to stop an unbeatable foe. This one is told in the style of a Cordwainer Smith tale (looking back on the future from the far future).

7. It's All About the Rendering. There is a house that sits on the border of the world we know and the world of magic. Depending on which way you enter, you will see the house in different ways. Great premise of a story (or even a series) but then it is over. The ending felt that it was much too easy and quick for the set-up.

8. Find Heaven and Hell in the Smallest Things. Another sci-fi entry. This one tells the story of a man in a robotic suit trying to terraform a hostile world. It is much more than that simple one line summary, but saying more would definitely be spoilers. This one makes you think.

9. Jesus and Satan Go Jogging in the Desert. A fun re-telling of Satan trying to tempt Jesus during his time in the desert. The interaction between Jesus and Satan made this story. They both seemed a little more human while remaining faithful to the original version. A 5 star story.

10. Food of the Gods. A reporter gets more than he bargained when he goes looking for a story. My least favorite of all of the tales. Mainly a personal preference, but I do not like any story with this subject matter. While it did have a decent hook, I could have done without this story.

11. He Said, Laughing. Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (Apocalypse Now) with zombies. Decent but I was never really a fan of the original tale either.

12. Soldier, Soldier. How many sides can fight in a war? Starting here, the rest of the stories are early works

(late 70's and early 80's). This was the first story of Simon R. Green to see print. He was still looking for his own voice at the time, so doesn't necessarily seem like one of his stories.

13.Manslayer. A straight fantasy tale of a mercenary fighting a local monster. The first story that Simon R. Green sold for money.

14.Cascade. A dark tale of a man fighting a monster. Hard to describe this one. Not exactly horror, but close to it. I guess dark fantasy would be best description. Fairly grim ending as well.

15.Soulhunter. A man fights demons to save a soul and might end up losing his as well. This one could be called controversial (one line really, but it is a doozy). Personally, I found it to be a great set-up. I could see this one being expanded to a novel. but maybe not a full series.

16.Awake,Awake Ye Northern Winds. A pirate tale of a deserted port, treasure, and the walking dead. This was the best of the early tales in my opinion. I could see these characters supporting a series. The strong captain, his deadly (female) first- mate, and the wizard with his many secrets are all great characters with some intriguing interactions. A 5 star story.

17.In The Labyrinth. The prequel to the previous story. It tells the tale of how the wizard was freed from his prison. Simon R. Green explains that while this was the prequel to the previous story, it was the last short story that he sold during this time so he included it last. While that makes sense, it would still have been better to read it before the other story.

Most of the stories I would give between 3 and 4 stars. Three would get 5 stars and only one would get one star. So while I would love to give this collection 5 stars since Simon R. Green is one of my favorite authors, I just can't. Too many of the stories lacked that spark that made them really shine like what I have come to expect from his writing. Still, this is a very nice collection that his fans should enjoy. It wouldn't be a bad collection to try if you have never read his other works since only the first story really ties into any of his series.

Yzabel Ginsberg says

(I got a copy through NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.)

I'm not quite sure what to make of this anthology. I only know Simon R. Green through his *Hawk & Fisher* series, of which I only read the first volume, so I applied for this one thinking it'd make a good introduction to his writing in general, but... I'm not so sure anymore. For instance, the first story, for instance, deals with the Armourer of the Drood family, and while I mostly got what it was about, it feels like not knowing the corresponding series is a slight problem. Or maybe it's just me.

Also, I admit I skipped the second story ("Street Wizard"), because I had already read it a few weeks ago in another anthology.

Most of those stories were rather dark, which was all right with me, since I was in a mood to read about

characters put in such situations. I guess mostly my problems with this anthology stemmed from the choice of stories, whose plots in general didn't seem so thrilling, and whose twists were fairly predictable ("Dorothy Dreams"), or kind of flat ("Down and Out in Deadtown"). The last third of the book is made of older shorts dating back to the 70-80s, and they feel different, incomplete, somehow... unfinished? The last two in particular puzzled me: the prequel was printed after the "main" story, and it removed all suspense as to whether the characters would survive their adventure. I don't really understand that choice.

I read *Hawk & Fisher* in French, not in English, so I can't compare the author's style here with that in his novels. When it comes to this specific collection, I thought it was heavy on the adverbs.

All in all, lots of good ideas, but not so well executed.

Kathy Davie says

An anthology of 17 short stories, one of which falls within the Secret Histories series about the Drood Family. There are a few which could be considered loosely affiliated, I guess.

Series:

"Question of Solace" (Secret Histories, 7.5)

"In the Labyrinth" (Captain Varles, 1 *)

"Awake, Awake Ye Northern Winds" (Captain Varles, 2 *)

* My own "series" name for these two short stories.

My Take

It's primarily horror in this anthology with a smattering of science fiction, urban fantasy, and the paranormal. Green definitely gives us food for thought.

The Stories

"**Question of Solace**" is a look back by Jack, the Drood family armorer. A fascinating look at Jack's life from his dashing spy days with his brother, the Gray Fox, and on through his days in the Armoury. What is required of a Drood to work there and why Jack quit fieldwork. Thoughts of his wife and son, even a dog he'd had once. It's also a tour of the Secret Histories as Jack recollects different cases through the years. You will laugh and you *will* cry at the end.

Loved the T-shirt slogan: Guns Don't Kill People, Unless You Aim Them Properly!

"**Street Wizard**" is its own story about a wizard who works for the London City Council keeping the peace at night on the city's busy streets, preventing crime, sobering up drunks. It's trademark Green with its outrageously silly crimes delivered with a real-world feel---really sends it home how crazy this is as he battles giants, fairies, angels, vampires, sirens, succubae, lurkers, and the God-botherers. As well as his interactions with fellow enforcement from undines filtering pollution and the Men in Black. Be sure to read up on leeches!

"**Death is a Lady**" is a brief story about a near-death experience. Green's to be exact.

"**Dorothy Dreams**" is cute as well with a Dorothy who got old and her kids put her in a rest home. A dull,

boring one so far from Oz. Hmm, and carefully picked by her children to be far away from their homes so they'd have an excuse not to visit. Not much to do there but dream, and dream Dorothy does about her days of fame when she consulted about her trip to Oz with the movie producers and all the mistakes they made. Oh, deary, dear. Yet more dreams and she learns the truth about her trip to Oz. Oh, deary, dear...

“Down and Out in Dead Town” is a gruesome story that takes into account our current economy with a man who loses his job and can't get another. It's so bad that he becomes homeless, and we follow his “adventures” right along with the development of a new phenomenon: the dead rising up and returning to their families.

”It doesn't matter how hard you work, or how much you have; there's nothing you've got that the world can't take away.”

Ooh, Green makes a good point about the distinction between *homeless* and *street people*; I gotta wonder how much truth is in this. How we're more likely to take a stray dog in and feed them, give them a warm place to stay than we are to take in a homeless, er, I mean, street person. That the homeless are just as “real” as the dead.

Oh, and it's a horrible conclusion Green comes to, why the dead came back.

“From Out of the Sun, Endlessly Singing” is another bit of horror, how three people were sacrificed without their knowledge to save a dying earth.

“It's All About the Rendering” is a lovely story about a guest house run by a couple in love: Peter and Jubilee Caine. It's a sanctuary for anyone who needs it, until the day the house is noticed on both sides of the border! A drowning in bureaucracy and debt is looming...! There's a Nightside feel to this, and I don't know if I keep re-reading the same short story or if there are others out there about this house. I know I'm hoping there are others!

Jubilee has a great mug: “Worship Me Like the Goddess I am or There Will Be Some Serious Smiting.”

“Find Heaven and Hell in the Smallest Things” is yet another gruesome horror story about 12 people conscripted into hard suits and sent off into space to terraform a very hostile planet, er, planet. It's a clever story, but I don't really grasp how the plants make the decision, distinction?, as to when to stop attacking? Why weren't they landed with more ammunition? What right does the Empire have to do this to people?

“Jesus and Satan Go Jogging in the Desert” is barely changed from the original in the bible. What I remember anyway. I found it dull and tedious as Satan tries to tempt Jesus as he comes out of his 40-day-and-night stretch in the desert. Coming from Satan's perspective does make it a bit more interesting. It does explain why Lilith, Adam's first wife was thrown out of Eden.

“Food of the Gods” has a nasty and shocking ending. It shouldn't be as surprising as it is since Green does keep telling us what's going on, dropping all sorts of hints to us about the curious James Eddow, investigative reporter. It does promote primitive beliefs that we can absorb our enemies' courage and abilities. Truly gag-worthy.

“He Said, Laughing” is another horror story with a murderous Captain Marlowe given two evil choices: two

bullets or a suicide mission. Seems there's a general who has been very naughty, raising zombies to fight the Vietnamese War. I can see the general's point, but his plans for after the war...EEK! I do have to agree with Green's point about what the real horror is in this!

"Soldier, Soldier" is a street war in America, preparing ourselves for when the aliens arrive. I have to confess I don't get the rationale behind this. If there really are aliens on the moon, why are we getting ready for it by fighting all sorts of stupid little wars on earth? Instead of destroying our own forces, why aren't we putting the effort into taking down the real bad guys.

"Manslayer" is one of the good ones! It's a fantasy in which Brand, a former slave and now a mercenary, takes on the job of defeating a tremendous undersea monster, Manslayer. He's been promised a huge fortune to save slave-owning and -abusing Lord Vallar's family fortune. It's a nasty little man who is ungrateful from the start, and that ending...it'll make you cry. And I want Green to write a sequel and destroy this scumbag.

"Cascade" catches your attention from the start with those two opening sentences and keeps dragging you down below the surface as he takes vengeance for his Jenny. It's beautifully written with lots of *show* and it all seems so futile...

"Soulhunter" is another horrific tale with the soulhunter battling to save a not-born soul from the monsters that seek to eat it. I do like how Green handled the "info dumps" in this, lol! There's a gritty realness to this that will leave you wanting a hot shower.

"Awake, Awake Ye Northern Winds" should follow **"In the Labyrinth"**, and the excuse Green gives for how it's organized in *Tales of the Hidden World* are lame. Sorry, Green, but it's a lousy reason. These two shorts should be arranged for the readers' convenience.

That said, this one is my favorite of all the stories---it's pirates and hidden treasure! Combine that with a horror story about zombies and a cursed city...and you'll be reading a hell of a scary tale with some great primary characters, although I'm still confused if Ravensbrook is the cause or the result of its lord. I'm hoping there'll be more stories about these three---there's supposed to be a sequel, "The Pit of Despair".

"In the Labyrinth" is the prequel to **"Awake, Awake Ye Northern Winds"** and tells us how Captain Varles and his first mate, Jarryl, springs Shade from the dungeons of Mhule. A terrifying precursor!

The Cover

The cover is great, lol, a purple and blue background with hazy figures in the distance. In the foreground, a man in focused detail comes toward us, almost carrying a yellow ball of light. The yellow is repeated in the title while the author's name is in white.

The title is true enough for this is a world which we don't normally see in our everyday lives; they're the *Tales of the Hidden World*.

Angela says

30 November 2015: \$1.99 on Kindle

Fangs for the Fantasy says

This short story collection has an excellent, coherent, link between the best stories in the book (something that many collections miss) – they're all extremely, incredibly eerie. There's a sense of darkness, of creepiness that permeates every story here. Not otherness – speculative fiction lends itself to otherness and weirdness – but crawl down your spine creepiness. For most of them

Then there's a few extra stories slotted in there which just feel more questionable

There is a theme of death that carries through many of these stories – the nature and fear of death in particular and even a question of whether death is worse than life. A Question of Solace takes an old man who has lived an exciting and productive life, finally slowing down and losing his touch but not realising it; his memories, his doubts, his guilt over his legacy all combine to be a beautiful, powerful and moving goodbye scene for him – a time when death is certainly not to be feared or grieved, but a life celebrated. Dorothy Dreams is a powerful story of Dorothy from Oz growing old, being forgotten, neglected in her old age, finally getting to return to Oz. It's a beautiful interpretation of that old story – and so many other stories – and another story that celebrates death even as life is seen as something painful to endure.

Find Heaven and Hell In the Smallest Things takes it to the next level, with Paul, the protagonist, enduring a living hell after his life was "saved" after a terrible accident; saved but now doomed to work the rest of his days imprisoned in a mechanical suit, enduring horrendous conditions to serve the government with the incomplete memory of his dead wife in the suits computer for company – a wife who cannot remember the last 3 years of their marriage or that it had fallen apart before her death. The excellent writing really does bring home a fate worse than death and any release as a relief.

Down and Out in Deadtown also follows the theme of death but to a far more cutting degree – the dead rises in a zombie horde... that doesn't hunger. They're dead... but moving. Not moving much or doing anything – they're just... there. And people are happy until they realise the returned dead aren't who they want them to be so they're shuffled away and forgotten, rendered invisible; and all of this is told through the eyes of a homeless man – shuffled away and forgotten, rendered invisible. The comparisons and insight is razor sharp and very very true.

Many of these stories make me want to read more in the universe – A Question of Solace certainly will have me looking up the rest of the Drood series – supernatural James Bond's trying to deal with world wide supernatural and sci-fi problems, with a side order of moral quandaries as they have to do terrible things for the "greater good"? Sign me up for that – exciting, well written and full of surprising depth and characterisation, I'm sold. I'd already read Street Wizard in another anthology and what I said then still applies. It's All About The Rendering is probably the only story in this book that isn't a little dark in some way – it's a surprising break among the deep, dark, grittiness, hard choices, and uplifting death: a fun, whacky story of a house on the border between normality and wonder. And I really want to read more. It does seem completely out of place in the book, however.

From Out of the Sun, Endlessly Singing is part of the theme of hard, morally questionable choices along with A Question of Solace – thought provoking as well as a fascinating story; we have the remnants of humanity facing one solution to save the human race – the ultimate End that can only be achieved by a truly terrible

Means. There's the moral quandary of just what can we do in the name of the greater good?

Food of the Gods; He Said, Laughing and Soldier, Soldier take the other side – killing and death as tragedy and as brutality. Not death when it becomes a relief and not doing terrible things for the greater good – but killing for sadistic enjoyment, for cruel fulfilment and through sheer serial killer need. While the complete opposite of the other stories of death, they fit the full spectrum of the theme and add the missing elements to the question of “Ends justifies the means” that has been raised – after all, we may say yes in the first two stories – but is this where such an answer leads us? More, how many times do we sit in peaceful ignorance while, as He Said, Laughing and Soldier, Soldier expose, we allow these terrible decisions to be made for us, away from our gaze so it doesn't disrupt our peaceful lives.

The remaining stories all felt out of place to me and didn't really add much. Death is a Lady tried to latch onto the death theme but was just a brief anecdote. Jesus and Satan Go Jogging in the Desert seems to have no connection with the rest of the stories but also feels kind of pointless in and of itself. I don't see what it really adds or the twist it brings to the Bible story; nor do I see the advantage of retelling it from Satan's point of view.

Read More

Koeur says

<http://koeur.wordpress.com/2014/04/12...>

Publisher: Open Road

Publishing Date: July 2014

ISBN: 9781480491120

Genre: Fantasy

Rating: 2.0/5

Publisher Description: Seventeen delightfully unexpected stories from Simon R. Green—including a brand-new adventure of the Droids—take us deep into the Darkside, embroil us in the Secret Histories, and lead us into the shadowy places where monsters and demons roam

Review: Cover art is way weak. When in doubt, put a raven on it, preferably in water color.

This is a collection of short stories. Some are good, some are not so good. After about halfway through this “collection” I thought “Fug, this reminds me of Mistworld”. Lo, and behold back in January I wrote a rather scathing review on Mistworld by Simon R. Green. My issues with Mistworld were many fold, but the main detraction was the constant use of adverbs, verbs and nouns conjoined into non-sensical phrases for finishing a persons emotive inclinations.

So here we are again, with a collection of short stories by a very creative author that uses phrase crutches to imply a deeper characterization than really exists, as building characters takes effort which, short stories by their nature, are loathe to develop.

Kudos to the author for minimizing the use of his unique phraseology from Mistflop and gets an extra star for the effort. BUT, in one short story we had...(ahem) "glared impotently x3", "said diffidently x3", "said grimly x2", "said carefully x2", "tugged thoughtfully", "sniffed moodily", "said crushingly x2", "sniffed sourly x3". And of course throughout the novel we have multiple uses of "scowled, scowl, growl, growled, sighed, moodily and thoughtfully".

Lets look closer at a couple of these "phrases". "Closed the door thoughtfully". How the fuck do you close a door thoughtfully? Why would you need to close a door thoughtfully, unless said door likes a good banging. Is the door in need of repair, so as you ruminate on how best to repair the door, a thoughtful look comes across your face? And what is sniffing moodily? Is the act of sniffing a noun that now requires an adjective emotive quality? I mean, most of these phrases do not fit the scene and if they did, you have a hard time visualizing what the author is trying to impart.

I will say it again. The author should take an advert out that goes something like: "Good writer with a lot of creative ideas, looking for hot narcoleptic book editor. Will win lots of awards if a leash is used in the restraint of idiotic prose. Looking for candidate that likes to edit in their underwear. Cheers."

Anne says

First of all, I am not a fan of short stories, but I am a fan of Green's full length novels and I thought they would give more of his secondary characters from the Drood and Nightside novels a chance to shine. No where was I told that, so that's on me for having unrealistic expectations.

We do start of with a fairly long story about the "Q" of the Drood family, aka The Amourer. He's an old man in the Drood stories and here he is too. He basically reflects on his life and wonders if his sacrifices for the family have been worth it. We do get to find out about two of her adventurers as an agent prior to being The Armourer which was nice despite the fact they weren't too successful.

None of the stories are happy and uplifting, which, if you've read his other work, you shouldn't be expecting. It was just a bit too depressing with many death elements and parallels to societal problems.

I did like the author's personal notes at the end of each story where we gives a little background as to what influenced him to write the story.

I honestly can't recommend this to new readers of Green and those that enjoy his work already would probably only find these mildly interesting. If I'm going to read about death and gloom, I prefer a full story with a beginning, middle and end with plenty of action.

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for my honest review.

Alexander Draganov says

A five stars collection of stories, spanning during the whole career of author Simon R. Green - since the late 70s till last year. It has swords & sorcery, science fiction, urban fantasy and horror stories and all of them are

very good. You don't wanna miss this book.

Beverly says

I do like short stories, but mostly those that are related to characters and stories a book series. I read this off and on between reading other books.

I gave up reading "Tales..." about halfway through. I liked the first, a Drood story, very much. It was downhill from there. I have too many good books on my "to read" pile to waste time forcing myself to get through a book.

Zeb Kantrowitz says

The book is divided into two parts. The first half is new stories from the last two years. The second (back half) are some of the first stories that he sold that go back to the late seventies and early eighties.

The second half, the old stories are a poor addition. They read poorly and are not that good (one was sold to a fanzine). They have poor characterization and the stories are 'choppy' and not well plotted. What is strange is that he put two stories that go together at the end of the book, but put the 'main' story first and then the 'prequel' kind of tells you how they book was put together.

Of the first half 'new' stories, the first story is the best. For those who read his series the "secret histories" it is a very important story. But having put the best first, the rest of the book is downhill from there. Too bad this could have been a 'great' introduction to Green's 'worlds' but it's not.

Zeb Kantrowitz

Danial Beck says

Overall a good read...

Great stories albeit inconsistent in reading quality. A good read overall though for the genre of this book with some original storytelling.
