



Love Hurts: A Speculative Fiction Anthology

Tricia Reeks (Editor) , Jeff VanderMeer , Hugh Howey , Karin Tidbeck , Charlie Jane Anders , Holly Phillips , Aliette de Bodard , A. Merc Rustad , more... Mel Paisley , J.D. Brink , Matt Leivers , Michael Milne , Michal Wojcik , Carla E. Dash , Terry Durbin , Michelle Ann King , Kyle Richardson , Leah Brown , G. Scott Huggins , Dan Micklethwaite , Victoria Zelvin , Shannon Phillips , Keith Frady , Jody Sollazzo , David Stevens , Morgen Knight , Margaret Reeks (Assistant Editor) , Sergio Garzon (Illustrator) , Steve Simpson ...less

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Twenty-six brilliant speculative fiction stories about love, and the pain that so often accompanies it. Enjoy a cornucopia of imaginative tales, wondrous settings, and unforgettable characters—such as the disillusioned time traveler who visits ancient Japan to experience a “Moment of Zen,” the young woman from planet Kiruna who can only communicate in song when the moonlet Saarakka is up, and the sorcerer who loses their happiness in a bet with a demon.

Rich and wonderfully diverse, this collection spans many speculative fiction genres: from SciFi to Dystopian, from Fantasy to Magical Realism, from Steampunk to Superhero, from Horror to Weird. Sometimes funny, occasionally happy, frequently gut-wrenching—these stories will take your heart on a wild emotional ride.

Stories by Jeff VanderMeer, Hugh Howey, Karin Tidbeck, Charlie Jane Anders, Holly Phillips, Aliette de Bodard, A. Merc Rustad, Steve Simpson, Mel Paisley, J. D. Brink, Matt Leivers, Michael Milne, Michal Wojcik, Carla Dash, Terry Durbin, Michelle Ann King, Kyle Richardson, Leah Brown, G. Scott Huggins, Dan Micklethwaite, Victoria Zelvin, Shannon Phillips, Keith Frady, Jody Sollazzo, David Stevens, and Morgen Knight.

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From Reader Review Love Hurts: A Speculative Fiction Anthology for online ebook

J.D. Brink says

What I like best about this collection is that you can pick up the book with just 20 minutes or so to kill and get a complete, entertaining spec-fic story. No long-term commitment. I have a hard time keeping up with a novel these days, just because it may be several days between chapters for me. But with these shorts, I get the satisfaction of a complete tale every time.

And the variety on the theme is always fun to see. They are all about some aspect of the pain of love, but experienced through a kaleidoscopic lens of sci-fi, fantasy, steam punk, magical realism, and more. One theme with 26 different ways to play it. And all great fun!

I must admit that I have a story in this book myself. But I didn't get it to read my own stuff. I'm enjoying everyone else's take on the theme. Some stories are better than others, but overall it's an excellent entertainment for those looking for a quick story, or several.

Kelly says

I enjoyed this book a lot - a great read!

Probably my overall favorite was "Catching On" - I like the precognition angle! Echos of Paul Atreides and Dune. Touches on the metaphysics of free will. Very good.

"Possibly Nefarious Purposes" was very funny and enjoyable. Might could adapt it into a good X-Files episode.

"Past Perfect" was great - I love stories with time loops! A darker version of "Groundhog Day".

I also really liked "Virgin of the Sands", "The Ghul", and "Favor" - all dark and disturbing, but great.

"The Boulevardier" - also enjoyably disturbing.

"WHILE (u > i) i--;" - interesting idea, clever title - the first part especially was unsettling.

"A Heart for Lucretia" - classic Vandermeer - evil meerkats - great!

Those were my favorites, though the second tier had some very worth-while reads too:

"The Sorcerer's Unattainable Gardens" - this one was a bit too atmospherically vague for me. It didn't grab me.

"A Puzzle by the Name of L" was well written and good - I liked it, but not to the same extent as the first tier stories above.

"Jacinta's Lovers" - to me this one had a 1970s sci-fi vibe to it. Interesting, weird, unsettling, and surrealistic.

"A Concise Protocol for Efficient Decide" - unsettling, though I didn't get a lot out of it otherwise. It did remind me of a good short story called "Sweet Surrender".

"Fairy Werewolf vs. Vampire Zombie" - good, clever, funny, but somehow didn't make a huge impact on me.

"The Woman Who Sang" - the ending saved it. This one also had kind of a 1970's sci-fi feel to it.

"Traveler" - very solid. Good.

"Metempsychotic" - interesting idea, well written, but it didn't pack a huge emotional punch for me. Too leisurely.

"Your Moment of Zen" - I liked it! Good premise, good ending.

"Back to Where I Know You" - well written, I liked the way it ended, but didn't draw out the dystopian aspect enough. Should have been more disturbing.

"Green-Eyed Monster" - good, interesting, short. Maybe a bit too predictable.

"By Bargain and by Blood" - well written, but not weird enough. Reminded me a little of "Scar Night".

"Stargazer" - well done description of a relationship.

"So Fast We're Slow" - Interestingly different. Steam Punk meets...Mary Kay Letourneau? Distinctive.

"Alice" - a fine story, but felt too familiar. Somewhat reminiscent of The Road.

"Sing" - I'd say this one had a 1980s feel to it. Interesting idea, though in the end didn't quite grab me.

Sue says

This was an interesting collection of short stories that you could dip in and out of. There is something for everyone in this book whatever genre of book you prefer. This book was a prize on Goodreads.

Bob Milne says

This is an anthology I struggled with for a long time, desperately hoping that the next story would be the one to hook me, but eventually I just had to accept the fact that the very concept didn't work for me.

I'm sorry to say, but many of the stories were just poorly written, relying on narrative tricks and heavy-handed allegory to disguise the absence of well-developed plot or characters. There was one that I swear

made it in my accident, with the kind of sentence structure that reminds of the breathless stories my toddler tells.

Fairy Werewolf vs. Vampire Zombie and *Traveler* were really the only 2 bright spots in the collection, at least in so far as I forced myself to read.

K.P. Ambroziak says

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley. Review cross-posted at Literary Aficionado:
<http://literaryaficionado.com/n/love-...>

Though I'm not a linguist, I love words and their wizardly talent for surviving transmogrification, as their earliest meaning clings to their roots like a bur to bristles. Consider anthology's Greek origin: antho, meaning "a blossom" or "flower," as in chrysanthemum (gold flower), and logy, from the verb "to gather," as in a collection. Eventually Latinized, anthology became known as a collection of poems, and thus is how we get our use of the term, a collection of literary works that complement one another in some way. But the Greek word, a collection of flowers, speaks most readily to Love Hurts.

Yes, the works in this anthology have a common theme, but because they are works of speculative fiction, the similarities are more or less irrelevant. Speculative fiction, in my opinion, is often ripe with wordplay and filled with rich prose working to disorient the reader, making her squirm and fumble in intellectual darkness. Good speculative fiction asks its reader to rummage up meaning, rather than serves it up on a platter. Bewildered and confused are positive adjectives in this case, which is not to say that a reader is less satisfied when she finishes a story that leaves her mildly heartbroken and incapable of moving on to the next read. With an anthology such as this, the push to move forward from one narrative to the next heightens the reading experience, as we are forced to leave pieces of ourselves behind in the process. This sounds dramatic, I know, but I experienced a kind of literary mournfulness as I read this compilation, traveling through its worlds from one story to the next.

To the credit of the editor, Tricia Reeks, the ordering of the pieces makes for an excellent flow, and I would encourage the reader to abide by the arrangement. As Reeks writes in her introduction, "Individually, these stories are wonderful," but she hopes to "have also managed to capture a bit of the magic that comes from reading them as a collection—that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." And though I agree this is the case, I finished the anthology wanting to return to certain blooms again for a second redolent pass. From the first story, A. Merc Rustad's "The Sorcerer's Unattainable Gardens," I knew I was in for a hauntingly rhythmic experience, a dance that made me relinquish any lead I may have desired to take. As I've already said, it is best to give in to the vertigo and be swept away with speculative fiction. Rustad's narrative set the stage, pulling me into a world of forbidden love reminiscent of Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" or perhaps a tale from Ovid's "Metamorphoses." I was sold from the start.

Of course, as is often the case, some stories are stronger than others, weightier, more invested, polished by the writer's skill set, but I can't say that any of the twenty-six shorts left me unsatisfied. I did have some favorites, such as Victoria Zelvin's "Back to Where I Know You," which toggles between remembrance and memory in a beautiful love story that asks what it is to recall a life we still have to live and yet have lived already. And Carla Dash's "A Puzzle by the Name of L," which so subtly and effortlessly captures the agony of loss, the heaviness of the body as one continues to breath, to live, to resist the tsunami of grief rising to sweep one away after the death of a loved one. It is one of those stories difficult to let go of, as it refuses to

let go of you. And Terry Durbin's "The Woman Who Sang" loitered and lingered and haunted my soul long after I'd moved on and re-entered the real world. And Shannon Phillips's "Favor" had me redefining both alien and love, and challenging my heart to stay its course as I absorbed some of the finest and most poetic lines of action I had ever read. And Morgen Knight, whose "Alice" showcases the allure of dystopian literature, has so meticulously painted a landscape of longing with her words I didn't realize they'd sneak into my subconscious and have me seeing the world with new eyes.

But to say each writer has done this in some way is accurate, too. All of the stories in this anthology deserve a line in my review, though it'll have to satisfy to say that in every one, whether sci-fi or dark fantasy or delving into elements of magical realism, time travel, and horror, the cicatrices of love marked their place in the collection, having stamped and woven themselves into each tale, making each floret in this posy of darkly colored blooms worthy of a pluck.

Tori (InToriLex) says

Find this and other Reviews at InToriLex

This was a great collection. I really enjoyed the many ways that the authors talked about love gone wrong or right. I did think the theme of the stories tied them together well. Some were in different time periods, future and past. Some were wonderfully strange, but intriguing enough for me to look up the author's other work. There are some dark stories described that definitely creeped me out too. The love in the stories reached beyond, life, death, humans, morality and sometimes light years. The weirdness was definitely a treat that I enjoyed.

Some of my favorites of the collection are quoted and described below.

The Woman who Sang by Terry Durbin

"It doesn't matter. Love and understanding are two dishes seldom served of the same plate." In a cold ordered world, man is shown love but doesn't know what to do with it.

Iron Roses by Michal Wojcik

"Put enough love into anything and it comes alive." A boy tries his hardest to get the girl, but it doesn't end well.

Back to Where I know You by Victoria Zelvin

"What is important is not always happy. Ariadne preferred to preserve only happy memories, to help her remember that life has not always been so gray." Chemicals are used to alter memories, but Ariadne's trying to hold on to her favorite ones.

By Bargain and By Blood by Aliette de Bodard

"To leave something behind me. Something I shaped and not taken apart." A mother not quite a mother, makes a decision because she can't let go.

Catching On by Kyle Richardson

"You know what time really is, Oss? Its an endless stream of death. An infinite line of heartache and suffering." Two superheroes try to protect the world, at all costs.

While (u>i) i--; by Hugh Howey

"While you are greater than myself, reduce myself." A strange but memorable couple, finds a way to relate in old age, despite strange differences.

Sing by Karen Tidbeck

"Someone wanted me It was a very strange sensation, like a little hook tugging at the hollow under my ribs." A woman struggling to belong on a future world where the locations of moons can control sound.

I would recommend this to sci-fi and speculative fiction lovers. There were some stories that were not as good and didn't connect with me, but they were few and far between. If you have a short story collection you love, post it in a comment below, I'm looking to read more short stories.

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

LV says

Saw a review of this on Kirkus and have to agree that it was a well-organized anthology. I was partial to the horror/weird entries such as Heart for Lucretia, Ghul, and The Boulevardier, but enjoyed all but a couple of the other stories as well.

Lorraine says

Editors of anthologies face two big problems from the start: choosing a theme which is broad enough that the stories don't wind up too samey, but narrow enough that it makes sense to have that particular group of stories together; and then finding enough high quality stories to fill their volume.

Has Reeks achieved this? Yes, mostly.

The theme of this anthology is clear in the title, and Reeks presents stories which cover a very broad spectrum. Most of them tend not to end well for at least some of the primary characters, which is a bit of a downer if you read too many of them at once. However, there's a lot of diversity in the body of the stories, and that works to the reader's advantage.

Generally, too, the stories are of high quality. I'm not sure there's anything here which will be hailed as a masterpiece, or be particularly memorable. But they're well written, enjoyable to read, and mostly have something interesting to say. None really stood out for me, neither for good or bad.

I enjoyed this. I read a lot of speculative fiction, and while some of these used familiar tropes, most had originality and all were engaging. This is a very accessible anthology for anyone dipping their toe into speculative fiction, but readers familiar with the genre will also find this enjoyable.

Basically, this anthology entertains and gives you something to enjoy. It's not groundbreaking, and not particularly memorable, but it's worth the time you'll spend with it. A fairly wide spectrum of readers will likely find things to appreciate in here.

Disclosure: I received this book as a Goodreads Giveaway.

Ripley says

Love Hurts is a collection of short stories by various authors from different cultures, which you can see in the names and events written about. There are 26 stories all dealing with various forms of love set within the science fiction and fantasy genres. These aren't traditional love stories. They cover all forms of love: true love, familial, sibling, same sex, interracial, interspecies, platonic and more. There's pretty much something to pique everyone's interest.

In reading through this collection I felt every emotion on the spectrum. Some made me sad, some angry, and some made me jump for joy. There's also varying landscapes from alien, to dystopian, even ancient China. Some of the stories were so abstract they were hard to understand, but if you are someone who likes to read between the lines to find deeper meaning you would probably really enjoy it.

A couple of the stories that really spoke to me I will highlight here for you. The first is called "Catching On". It is set in a world where children can be born with special powers. Two of these children are now adults and one can see into the future. She knows of an event that could destroy humanity and wants to destroy the object that would be the catalyst. This is a tale of love realized too late and filled me with sorrow. The second one that really touched me is called "Metempsychotic". A pregnant woman is on the verge of giving birth and goes over the events of her life with the ghost that lives with her that only she can see. This one is a tale of young love lost and how someone can love you so much that they stay with you even beyond the grave to make sure you are okay. This last one I will mention is by far my very favorite and captivated me so much that I wish it was a book because there could be so much more than the small portion that was written about in this book. It is called "So Fast We're Slow". In a world where people can selectively erase memories, Maggie is a wet nurse who has lost a lot. The baby she loved died in her womb and the father of the child had his memories of her forcibly removed by his controlling parents. On the Zephyr she has begun working on she meets a man who brings those repressed memories back all too clearly.

The material is very science fiction in nature and has some sexual content so reader discretion is advised. Though most of the stories were entertaining a few just weren't for me which is why I rated it a 4 out of 5. All in all, I really enjoyed it.

Corinna says

*ARC / review copy provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review;
thanks again to the publisher, Meerkat Press.*

I really like the idea of a collection of short stories about love with this interesting twist: the elements of different genres like sci-fi, fantasy, dystopia and post-apocalyptic.

Like the title says, these stories don't always have an happy ending, and I appreciate this choice because I think it's a more "realistic" vision.

-The Sorcerer's Unattainable Gardens: it's a great way to start this anthology; good story and I really

appreciated the double point of view.

-A Puzzle by the Name of L: it's a well written story, but it wasn't among my favourites.

-Jacinta's Lovers: a very surreal and bizarre story, but I like it a lot.

-A concise Protocol for Efficient Deicide: very short (and unsettling), i would have liked reading a little bit more about it.

-Fairy Werewolf vs. Vampire Zombie: one of my favourite, a really funny story!! I would love to hang out in Rachel's Bar..

-The Woman who sang: it reminded me of "1984", it's a good dystopian story with a really bitter end.

-Iron Roses: good story, i liked the premises, but i didn't grab me.

-Traveler: another one of my favourites; a good and well written story, i would have read a lot more about those characters.

-Virgin of the sands: I was really hoping for a happy ending, because i thought the characters deserved it.

-Catching On: one of my favourite, I like short stories with superheroes. It was one of the saddest story, but the idea of him at the restaurant, trying to change the past/her mind is very sweet.

-Metempsychotic: it's a good story with the less original idea (in my opinion), but is well written and I really liked Dave.

-Possibly Nefarious Porpuses: I love alien-themed stories, and I thought this one was really unique and enjoyable.

-A Heart for Lucretia: I've read just "Annihilation" by VanderMeer, but I like his style.. The evil giant meerkats were a very interesting choice!

-Your Moment of Zen: a very good story, with an original idea of time-travel.

-Back to Where I Know You: another sad story, where i was rooting for the two women and their happy ending..

-Green-Eyed Monster: this was a very short story, with a great premise.. I really liked it and I would have read some more.

-By Bargain and by Blood: it was well written but the story and the characters didn't grab me.

-The Ghul (A Nasty Story): this was a creepy story, but i liked it!

-Past Perfect: TIME LOOPS!!! One of my favourite stories..

-Favor: I like the premises, very disturbing, but the story isn't among my favourite.

-While (u>I) I--: the title is very clever, but the story didn't grab me.

-The Boulevardier: this one goes along with the disturbing stories that I liked a lot!

-Stargazer: maybe I think this is the less-weird story of all, but still interesting. It's a nice description of a relationship.

-So Fast We're Slow: good premises and well written.

-Alice: it's a perfect love/ghost/post apocalyptic story!

T. Kent says

I thoroughly enjoyed this collection. There were fantastic stories by Jeff VanderMeer, Karin Tidbeck, Holly Phillips who I've already read but also some new names. I especially like Mel Paisley's story and Carla Dash's story.

Althea Ann says

A very mixed bag of stories - some are great, some... not... it's really all over the place.

* A. Merc Rustad -The Sorcerer's Unattainable Gardens:

Not so much a fantasy story as a drawn-out metaphor for 'trying to get back into someone's heart,' with the sorcerer as the object of desire ensconced within a nigh-inaccessible garden. The idea is sappy and a bit trite; the writing amateurish.

** Carla Dash -A Puzzle by the Name of L:

Depressed after her fiance's death, a young woman is surprised to one day find Death himself at her door. She allows him in, but refuses to agree to his repeated suggestions that she off herself immediately.

Gradually, the two settle into what begins to feel almost like a routine...

The ending here just didn't feel very satisfactory, and overall the piece reminded me of something that might've been written as a therapy exercise.

* Steve Simpson -Jacinta's Lovers:

This piece starts off with an interesting (if, I thought, flawed) premise: In the near future, we figure out how to make memories and knowledge inheritable. Parents can now pass on their skills and knowledge to their children. This leads to the collapse of civilization, because people can no longer be bothered to learn anything new. (I wasn't convinced how or why this would be the case.) After this sci-fi/post-apocalyptic setup, the author takes a hard left turn into an attempt at surrealism, and it ends up just feeling disjointed and nonsensical.

* Mel Paisley -A Concise Protocol for Efficient Deicide:

Holy run-on sentences and tortured grammar, batman! At least it was short.

There's an apocalypse, there's some kind of experimental procedure in a hospital... I don't really know what was going on here.

*** Charlie Jane Anders -Fairy Werewolf vs. Vampire Zombie:

It's funny! This one really felt like a breath of fresh air! Or rather, stale-beer scented air with a whiff of fairy dust and gunpowder. The owner of an underground bar tells the outrageous tale of how her watering hole acquired its mascot. It involves an exiled fairy princess (who's also a kickass pub singer) and an unusual love triangle. Felt a bit like a clever take-off on Terri Windling's 'Bordertown' series - I chuckled more than once.

** Terry Durbin -The Woman Who Sang:

In a harsh surveillance state where anything that is not purely utilitarian is 'discouraged,' a daring woman brings a man who catches her eye to a secret gathering where bright colors are worn, and ancient songs are sung. I loved the setting and the feel to this story, but it was oddly lacking in any attempt to give its characters believable motivations. At the end, we have no idea why either of the characters chose to do the things they did, and without that, their actions seem peculiar and unlikely.

*** Michal Wojcik -Iron Roses:

Steampunk tale of unrequited love. A young 'scrapper' learns to craft lovely (but impractical) iron roses to try to impress his colleague.

**** Michael Milne -Traveler:

Time travel can be a difficult and dangerous job. But the hardest part can be coming home for dinner, after

months or years away, to a family who perceives that you just left for work that morning. This story perfectly captures the dissonance in such a relationship. Excellent story.

*** Holly Phillips -Virgin of the Sands:

Alternate WWII-era story: the Allied forces are losing ground in North Africa. Avoiding a crushing defeat may depend on the help of a necromantic witch. But the witch in question is also a vulnerable young woman. I enjoyed the story, and thought it was well-done - but I disagreed with its reinforcement of the myth regarding the mystique of virginity.

** Kyle Richardson -Catching On:

In this X-Men-influenced piece, a couple of registered mutants use their special power to go up against a huge corporation whose newest experimental device could cause the end of the world. The action-oriented part of the story was pretty good, but I felt like the ending lost focus.

*** Leah Brown -Metempsychotic:

Pregnant with her first child, a suburban housewife is haunted by the ghost of her high school boyfriend. The story rides a nice line between sweetness and creepiness, but felt slightly predictable.

*** Michelle Ann King -Possibly Nefarious Purposes:

Dayna and Amy are roommates who have something unusual in common: they're both afflicted with extraterrestrial 'friends' who have a disturbing habit of interfering in their lives. Amy, the older woman, has arrived at a 'solution'- she is reclusive, and attempts to make her life as boring as possible to avoid alien interest. Dayna still wants to go out and have fun, and is willing to cater to the aliens' 'suggestions.' Amy thinks that's a bad idea - but her reasons for thinking that will only be gradually revealed. Darkly humorous and original.

**** Jeff VanDerMeer -A Heart for Lucretia:

Weird fiction that works. Grotesque, bizarre, but coherent. Accompanied by a Flesh Dog, a young man goes on a quest to an enigmatic City to try to trade for a human heart. He needs the heart as a transplant to save his dying sister's life. But the inhabitants of this city are hard bargainers.

* Dan Micklethwaite -Your Moment of Zen:

First of all, it's "sake" not "saki." It's not even pronounced "saki."

When a breakup and a job loss hit a young man like a one-two punch, he decides to sign up for a time-travel vacation in ancient Japan. (However, the way the story's set up, it seems much more like a theme park experience than time travel - the whole time travel thing is unnecessary to the plot.) Samurai-style melee fighting with electric swords and fake blood doesn't work out, so he settles into being depressed, drinking incorrectly-spelled sake, and pathetically obsessing over the geisha next door. I finished this one with a big ol' "meh."

**** Victoria Zelvin -Back to Where I Know You:

Wealthy heiress falls in love with another woman - a research scientist who's nowhere near her social class. As they forge a secret relationship, the researcher divulges the secret she's discovered: the government regularly wipes out the memories of its citizens, selectively. But she's developed a way to distill select memories into a potion, which when drunk, allows them to be recaptured.

The premise doesn't bear close examination (too many 'whys' and 'hows' unanswered) but I was willing to forgive that due to the story's romantic and poignant atmosphere.

** JD Brink -Green-Eyed Monster:

If you're willing to let yourself be experimented on by a miniaturized colleague, better make sure that colleague doesn't bear you any ill will. This one didn't do it for me.

**** Aliette de Bodard -By Bargain and by Blood:

Would make a good opening chapter for a novel. After her sister's death, a woman has raised her niece as her own. After eight years, she's unprepared to have the girl's father suddenly appear, demanding that his daughter be turned over to his custody. She's even more unprepared for the fact that the father is a 'blood empath' (it's not fully explained what this is, but it's some sort of ominous and possibly malevolent wizard or priest). The dilemma is nicely drawn, the world and characters fascinating - but I wanted more of the story!

*** Matt Leivers -The Ghul (A Nasty Story):

It is, as advertised, nasty. When his obsession with another young man is not reciprocated in the slightest degree, a spoiled and decadent lord turns to a particularly unpleasant magic to allow him to slake his lust.

*** G. Scott Huggins -Past Perfect:

After years of estrangement, a man is summoned to visit his college girlfriend - and her husband, the man who 'stole' her from him. The husband's on his premature death bed - does he simply want one last chance to rub his 'victory' in the loser's face? Or is there some other reason? Why, for all these years, has the lovely Su put up with this jerk, who treats her in a truly offensive and disrespectful manner?

*** Shannon Phillips -Favor:

Forced to fight in an alien arena for the entertainment of sentient insects, Tess is the last surviving member of her crew. In today's combat, she fully expects to finally die. But the ways and motives of other species are obscure.

***** Hugh Howey -While (u>I) I--:

This story is also available free on Wattpad: <https://www.wattpad.com/52488446-shor...>

An android is engaged in a strange ritual, intentionally degrading and slowly destroying himself. Has he gone insane? Or is there some reason behind his actions? The answer, when revealed, is heartbreaking - and thought provoking.

*** David Stevens -The Boulevardier:

What happens when two monsters finally find each other? Unfortunately, we don't really get to find out, in this inconclusive story.

A shapeshifter has carefully crafted his camouflage, creating a 'normal' life and a safe, workable routine for himself. But what he encounters in an alley one night will jolt him out of it...

** Keith Frady -Stargazer:

A smugly self-absorbed psychic spends his time eavesdropping on others' private conversations and convincing himself he could order their lives far better than they can manage for themselves. The story focuses on him 'listening in' on a coffee-shop breakup. The story itself feels self-indulgent, not just the character.

** Jody Sollazzo -So Fast We're Slow:

Steampunk romance, where the romance comes out of nowhere. The setting is interesting: the main character is a wet nurse on a FTL ship. The idea is that young mothers can drop off their babies, who won't age while underway due to the time dilation effect. The women will pick up the kids when they're older and more ready to care for them.

This effect is mirrored, a bit, in the romantic relationship that's the main focus of the story. I felt like there

were quite a few ideas with potential here, but they needed to be more clearly articulated.

*** Morgen Knight -Alice:

In a post-apocalyptic urban landscape, where water is fatally contaminated, a lone man is haunted by the ghost of his wife.

***** Karin Tidbeck -Sing:

Read previously: "Tidbeck is definitely an author to watch out for - she deserves recognition. I loved her collection, 'Jagannath,' and this is another deftly told tale. A tailor, disabled and shunned by her community, meets an off-world man who looks at her without the condemnation she is used to from her own people. She is attracted to the vision he offers her of a wider world. And he, in turn, appreciates her. But there is a secret that the people of her world do not speak of. The story captures real complexity of emotion." Available for free here: <http://www.tor.com/2013/04/17/sing/>

Priya Sridhar says

"Love is a battlefield, and sometimes you lose." - Sylvia, from *Wander over Yonder*

You win some, and you lose some in love, regardless of the genre or your gender. The tales in this anthology expound on this theme, with the losses being much harder than the victories precisely because a romantic like me craves a happy ending. *Love Hurts* is like a giant cup of bitter espresso

One of my writer friends has her first published short story here, and I recommend the anthology because her tale is solid, filled with pain, longing, and coming of age. With that said, be prepared for plenty of pain, heartache, and hope.

Siobhan says

Time for a little bit of truth. The kind of truth that most people do not want to hear. I requested this anthology on NetGalley for one reason, and one reason only – because I saw Hugh Howey's name. I love what that guy writes. I was happy to grab something that contained his work, even if it was a mere handful of pages. Therefore, I jumped at it.

Of course, I was happy to read the entire thing. I am not the kind of person to pass up an entire book. I wanted to see what the other authors in the anthology had to offer. I wanted to see what people had to say on the painful topic of love in the speculative fiction genre.

It turns out there was a lot to be said. Each of the twenty-six short stories is a wonderfully imaginative tale – to a point. By that, I mean they all have very different notions. The stories go off at different angles. Each story is unique. Each story offers something different.

However, I failed to really enjoy them.

Don't get me wrong, they weren't all bad. There were a handful I enjoyed. Yet nothing really stood out to me. Hence the two star rating. There were some books that could have pulled it up to a higher rating, but the

large majority of the reads earned a mere two stars from me. Needless to say I was disappointed. I wanted to be wowed by all the stories, instead of only enjoying a couple. I wanted to be able to remember them all, instead I can only point out one or two.

Even though they were all well written, they failed to do anything for me. I forgot most of them as soon as I moved on to the next story. They were imaginative yet they were not memorable. They simply were. I just wanted something more.

Overall, I was let down.

As a final note, I would like to thank NetGalley and the publisher for allowing me to read this. I just wish I had more to say other than this anthology left me with a drastic feeling of 'meh'.

Diane says

I won this book in a Goodreads first-reads giveaway.

It was my first time reading the speculative fiction genre. The stories were all unique and interesting takes on love and how sometimes it does hurt.
