

Alan Dean Foster – With Friends Like These and Who Needs Enemies?

Two linked anthologies by Foster. He writes fairly straightforward stories, but they have their charm and I enjoyed both books.

Alastair Reynolds - Zima Blue

Anthology. It's a really good showcase of Alastair Reynolds's writing and less hard work than his novels.

Adam Roberts – Bete

A man is about to kill a cow. He discusses life and death and his right to kill with the compliant animal. He begins to suspect he may be about to commit murder. But kills anyway...

It began when the animal right movement injected domestic animals with artificial intelligences in bid to have the status of animals realigned by the international court of human rights. But what is an animal that can talk? Where does its intelligence end at its machine intelligence begin? And where might its soul reside.

Eric McCormack - The Paradise Motel

On his deathbed, Ezra Stevenson's grandfather bequeaths him a macabre tale of domestic violence. Driven to investigate his grandfather's account of the four Mackenzie children and their monstrous family history, Ezra embarks on a horrific voyage of discovery, deception and revelation.

Frank Herbert – Dune

Since it's being screened over the next few years. Although John's view is the book is edging towards the pretentious side of deep and meaningful.

James Dorr – Tombs

Collection of linked short stories in a vaguely "Dying Earth" style.

It had been a time when the world needed legends, those years so long past now. Because there was something else legends could offer, or so the Poet believed. He didn't know quite what—ghouls were not skilled at imagination. Their world was a concrete one, one of stone and flesh. Struggle and survival. Survival predicated on others' deaths. Far in the future, when our sun grows ever larger, scorching the earth. When seas become poisonous and men are needed to guard the crypts from the scavengers of the dead. A ghoulish poet will share stories of love and loss, death and resurrection. Tombs is a beautifully written examination of the human condition of life, love, and death, through the prism of a dystopian apocalypse.

Patricia Geary – Strange Toys

At the age of nine, Pet is struggling to protect her family from the horrors predicted in her older sister's book of secrets – horrors that indeed come true. At sixteen, Pet is hunting down her sister to wreak vengeance. At thirty, Pet attains strength and power enough to protect her from the present – but not from her sister's raging past.

Jeffrey Alan Love - Notes from the Shadowed City

Notes From the Shadowed City is the travelogue of a young man who sets off on a journey to research magical swords. He finds himself stranded in a land he does not know and enters a city with no name over which looms an ominous floating citadel. As he seeks a way home, he fills his notebook with drawings and observations of his life in this strange place. It is full of masked swordsmen, cities that walk, ancient gods, swords made from petrified trees and dragons that move mountains. There's also a mysterious woman who captures his heart.

This does not seem to be easily available. None of my usual sites have it and even Amazon only has used copies.

Jesse Bullington - Enterprise of Death

As the witch-pyres of the Spanish Inquisition blanket Renaissance Europe in a moral haze, a young African slave finds herself the unwilling apprentice of an ancient necromancer. Unfortunately, quitting his company proves even more hazardous than remaining his pupil when she is afflicted with a terrible curse. Yet salvation may lie in a mysterious tome her tutor has hidden somewhere on the war-torn continent.

She sets out on a seemingly impossible journey to find the book, never suspecting her fate is tied to three the artist Niklaus Manuel Deutsch, the alchemist Dr. Paracelsus, and a gun-slinging Dutch mercenary. As Manuel paints her macabre story on canvas, plank, and church wall, the young apprentice becomes increasingly aware that death might be the least of her concerns.

Note that this is 465 pages.

Yukimi Ogawa - Like Smoke, Like Light

A monster wearing the stolen dress of a deceased mother agrees to help the woman's orphaned son. A girl whose blood can cause hallucinogenic visions makes a daring escape from the merchants who traffic her. In a society where people are prized for their jewel-hued skins—indigo, silver, amber, emerald—one girl endures brutal bruises to shine brightest of all, while another, her eyes sealed inside a featureless helmet, risks death to retrieve colours...

"Ogawa's debut collection of 17 speculative shorts stuns with its delicacy ... Harkening back to the oldest folk and fairy tales and raising pointed questions about how humans value and devalue each other, this is a showstopper."

Laird Barron - The Croning

Strange things exist on the periphery of our existence, haunting us from the darkness looming beyond our firelight. Black magic, weird cults and worse things loom in the shadows. The Children of Old Leech have been with us from time immemorial. And they love us... Donald Miller, geologist and academic, has walked along the edge of a chasm for most of his nearly eighty years, leading a charmed life between endearing absent-mindedness and sanity-shattering realization. Now, all things

must converge. Donald will discover the dark secrets along the edges, unearthing savage truths about his wife Michelle, their adult twins, and all he knows and trusts. For Donald is about to stumble on the secret ... of The Croning.

Kentaro Miura - Berserk (vol 1+)

Berserk is a Japanese manga series written and illustrated by Kentaro Miura. Set in a medieval Europe-inspired dark fantasy world, the story centres on the characters of Guts, a lone swordsman, and Griffith, the leader of a mercenary band called the "Band of the Hawk". The series follows Guts' journey seeking revenge on Griffith, who betrayed him and sacrificed his comrades to become a powerful demonic being.

Tanith Lee - The Birthgrave

The novel begins with the unnamed narrator awakening inside a volcano with no idea who she is. The story follows her quest to discover her past and her true identity.[5] Compelled by a mysterious entity called "Karrakaz," the narrator sets off in search of a glistening jade that may hold answers to her questions.

After emerging from the volcano, the narrator encounters a village that reveres her as a goddess due to her healing powers and her inhuman face, which she considers hideous. The leader of this village, a bandit-king named Darak, persuades the narrator to join him on his expeditions to raid a merchant caravan, trade for weapons, explore a cursed, ruined city, and compete in a deadly chariot race, leading to Darak's demise.

She continues to the cities of the White Desert and becomes the goddess of a decadent civilization fighting for the deceitful sorcerer-conqueror Vazkor, who uses the narrator as his instrument of power. However, thanks to Vazkor, the narrator learns about her people, a long-lost omnipotent civilization of Old Ones who once ruled the world as cruel, arbitrary gods. In the end, she also kills Vazkor.

Leaving the cities, she is enslaved by a tribal krarl, gives birth to Vazkor's son, wanders onward, battles a dragon, and encounters a spaceship from a distant advanced civilization. The spaceship computer reveals the narrator's forgotten past.

Tanith Lee – Biting the Sun

In a world dedicated to pleasure, one young rebel sets out on a forbidden quest. Published for the first time in a single volume, Tanith Lee's duet of novels set in a hedonistic Utopia are as riveting and revolutionary as they were when they first appeared two decades ago. It's a perfect existence, a world in which no pleasure is off-limits, no risk is too dangerous, and no responsibilities can cramp your style. Not if you're Jang: a caste of libertine teenagers in the city of Four BEE. But when you're expected to make trouble—when you can kill yourself on a whim and return in another body, when you're encouraged to change genders at will and experience whatever you desire—you've got no reason to rebel . . . until making love and raising hell, daring death and running wild just leave you cold and empty. Ravenous for true adventures of the mind and body, desperate to find some meaning, one restless spirit finally bucks the system—and by shattering the rules, strikes at the very heart of a soulless society.

M. Suddain - Theatre of the Gods

A space-opera, a philosophical quest, a steampunk adventure of epic proportions.

This is the story of M. Francisco Fabrigas, explorer, philosopher, heretical physicist, who took a shipful of children on a frightening voyage to the next dimension, assisted by a teenaged Captain, a brave deaf boy, a cunning blind girl, and a sultry botanist, all the while pursued by the Pope of the universe and a well-dressed mesmerist.

Dark plots, demonic cults, murderous jungles, quantum mayhem, the birth of creation, the death of time, and a creature called the Sweety: all this and more waits beyond the veil of reality.

Note that this is 622 pages.