



## **Dead Letters: An Anthology of the Undelivered, the Missing & the Returned**

*Conrad Williams (Editor)*

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The Dead Letters Office: the final repository of the undelivered. Love missives unread, gifts unreceived, lost in postal limbo. *Dead Letters: An Anthology* features new stories from the masters of horror, fantasy and speculative fiction, each inspired by object from the Dead Letters Office. Featuring original stories by:

Joanne Harris \* Maria Dahvana Headley & China Miéville \* Michael Marshall Smith \* Lisa Tuttle \* Ramsey Campbell \* Pat Cadigan \* Steven Hall \* Alison Moore \* Adam LG Nevill \* Nina Allan \* Christopher Fowler \* Muriel Gray \* Andrew Lane \* Angela Slatter \* Claire Dean \* Nicholas Royle \* Kirsten Kaschock

## **Dead Letters: An Anthology of the Undelivered, the Missing & the Returned Details**

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## **From Reader Review Dead Letters: An Anthology of the Undelivered, the Missing & the Returned for online ebook**

### **Kira says**

Authors that stood out:

Joanne Harris  
Ramsey Campbell  
Claire Dean  
Lisa Tuttle  
Nicholas Royle

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### **Matt Hlinak says**

As with any anthology, the quality of the stories in 'Dead Letters' is uneven, and there are some flubbed endings. But on the whole, the all-star writers who contributed to this volume do indeed deliver.

Read my full review at Pop Mythology.

*I received a free review copy of this book from the publisher.*

Matt Hlinak  
Author of DoG

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### **Brian McClain says**

Received through goodreads giveaway. Very solid anthology with no real let downs. Recommended.

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### **Emma Sea says**

Excellent collection of stories, with some incredible writing on display. If you like freaky-ass goings on and ambiguous endings then this is the anthology for you. I enjoyed so,so much.

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### **Catherine Grant says**

Anthologies are often a mixed bag of styles and themes. In the case of Dead Letters, editor Conrad Williams gave his authors prompts in the way of items they needed to incorporate into their tale. It gives the collection the feel of a connected set of stories in a way that many anthologies can't pull off with just a theme, namely in how distinctively random each item seems, and the texture they add to the tales in this delightful collection. - See more at: <http://www.nyjournalofbooks.com/book-...>

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### **Sean says**

I knew I was in for a bumpy ride from the very first story, "The Green Letter." I just didn't get it ... "Over to You," the second, was far better and "In Memoriam," by Joanne Harris, seemed to bring things back on track - very haunting, a good read! And so it went ... ups and downs ... very uneven. I'm wondering if somehow, in the "translation" (a very English starting point, stories with a British-twinge, then read by an American reader) if something got lost? Perhaps 'Dead Letters' may need another read .....

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### **Samantha says**

Anthologies are always challenging; I typically find myself enjoying only a few of the collected stories, often even disliking or skipping others entirely. I went into this collection with that in mind, expecting to find myself underwhelmed by at least several of the stories, but looking forward to the few I would quite like. Happily, I discovered that all of the stories in this collection were enjoyable; no, I didn't love all of them, but I also can't quite say I disliked any either.

While some stories seemed very loosely connected to the theme of "dead letters," they were each very unique and distinct visions of that theme. I don't think I have a favorite story, but there are a few that I think will stick with me for a while. Overall, this was a good read that I am glad I picked up.

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### **Alexis says**

So I guess this just turned out to be a lot different than I expected. It's still accurate to its description, but not what I wanted from it. There were a few good stories, but most I could have done without. There's a lot of stories leaning to or straight up horror, and also just a lot of really weird stuff that is probably horror but I don't know how weird it would be within that genre... Anyway, yeah, turned out not to be really my thing.

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### **Seregil of Rhiminee says**

Originally published at [Risingshadow](#).

Conrad Williams has come up with an original idea for Dead Letters, because he has gathered a good and versatile selection of stories about undelivered, missing and returned letters. This is something that has never been done before (I don't recall hearing anything about similar kind of anthologies).

I think that all of us - or most of us - have experiences about letters and packages that have disappeared into the postal limbo and have never found their way to the recipients. There's nothing we can do about this, but accept that unexpected things may happen to our letters when they're posted. If you're curious about what happens to these letters, you'll get some insight into this matter when you read Dead Letters, because each of the stories reveals something new about undelivered letters.

I was pleasantly surprised by this anthology, because it's one of the most original anthologies I've ever read. I've read a few stories about lost and undelivered postal deliveries, but I've never read so many good and imaginative stories about such deliveries. The authors have clearly done their best to write memorable stories that showcase their distinct literary voices, writing skills and imagination.

Dead Letters contains the following stories:

- "The Green Letter" by Steven Hall
- "Over to You" by Michael Marshall Smith
- "In Memoriam" by Joanne Harris
- "Ausland" by Alison Moore
- "Wonders to Come" by Christopher Fowler
- "Cancer Dancer" by Pat Cadigan
- "The Wrong Game" by Ramsey Campbell
- "Is-and" by Claire Dean
- "Buyer's Remorse" by Andrew Lane
- "Gone Away" by Muriel Gray
- "Astray" by Nina Allan
- "The Days of Our Lives" by Adam LG Nevill
- "The Hungry Hotel" by Lisa Tuttle
- "LOND0N" by Nicholas Royle
- "Change Management" by Angela Slatter
- "Ledge Bants" by Maria Dahvana Headley & China Miéville
- "And We, Spectators Always, Everywhere" by Kirsten Kaschock

All of these stories are original to this anthology, and each of them has been inspired by an object from the Dead Letters Office. Their contents range from undelivered letters and love affairs to family secrets and strange lifeforms. They're effective and thought-provoking stories filled with difficult themes and issues concerning life, work, family, secrets, love and relationships.

Because many of the authors are masters of contemporary dark fiction and have experience about writing different kinds of speculative fiction stories, their stories are fascinatingly dark and strange. There's a dark, macabre and wistful edge to their stories that will please readers of dark fiction.

It's great that Conrad Williams has given speculative fiction authors an opportunity to write stories about dead letters, because they have plenty of imagination and they're capable of writing emotionally touching and harrowing stories. I don't mean to belittle literary fiction authors, but I've noticed that speculative fiction authors are more capable of delivering literary stories that have a direct impact on readers and what's best, speculative fiction authors dare to write unflinchingly and honestly about difficult themes and issues (their stories have brutal honesty).

Here's a bit more information about these stories and my thoughts about them:

"The Green Letter" by Steven Hall:

- A story about the green letter that mysteriously arrives in mailboxes at a certain time. Every green envelope contains only one item - a list that has ten points on it. When one of the points is circled, something happens to the recipient.
- This is a fascinatingly weird story with an unsettling undertone.

“Over to You” by Michael Marshall Smith:

- In this story, a man receives an envelope that has been addressed to another person. He opens and finds a chess piece and a short sentence. Soon he notices weird things.
- An excellent story about a man who's trying to reduce smoking, because his son wants him to quit smoking.

“In Memoriam” by Joanne Harris:

- A story about CEW (Customer Experience Worker at the National Returns Centre for the UK) who opens a letter addressed to him and finds a picture of himself with other persons.
- A well written and wistful story about memories and family ties.

“Ausland” by Alison Moore:

- In this story, Karla meets his childhood acquaintance, Lukas, again after many years. She wants to show him a few photographs.
- I enjoyed this story very much, because the author writes well about what happens when Karla and Lukas meet each other again.

“Wonders to Come” by Christopher Fowler:

- A story about Roy who wonders what caused a hotel construction to miss its deadline. What Roy finds out is something unexpected.
- A well written science fiction story featuring a new lifeform.
- This is one of the best stories in this anthology.

“Cancer Dancer” by Pat Cadigan:

- A woman who hears that she has only two years left to live because of uterine cancer. She gets an envelope that is addressed to a detective sergeant and becomes interested in its contents.
- The author writes well about the cancer patient's feelings and life.

“The Wrong Game” by Ramsey Campbell:

- This is an interesting piece of fiction, because the author addresses the editor of this anthology in an intriguing way with a dash of wittiness.
- This story has a good atmosphere that becomes increasingly interesting as the story unfolds.
- One of the best stories in this anthology.

“Is-and” by Claire Dean:

- In this story, the protagonist and her partner, Gareth, travel to an island and meet Gareth's mother. Soon Gareth receives a mysterious parcel.
- An excellent and atmospheric story with references to old beliefs and Celtic folklore.
- This is one of my favourite stories in this anthology.

“Buyer's Remorse” by Andrew Lane:

- The protagonist receives a letter by mistake and wonders how he could deliver it to its intended recipient.

He begins to search for the place where the recipient is supposed to live and finds himself in trouble.

- This story is satisfyingly Lovecraftian and unsettling. The author writes excellently about a lost, isolated and ignored place where cosmic evil has gained a foothold.

- An excellent story.

“Gone Away” by Muriel Gray:

- This story's protagonist receives a returned letter that has no address on it. She becomes interested in the letter and its contents.

- The author writes fascinatingly about the protagonist's relationship with her grandfather.

- A well written story with intriguing mystery elements.

“Astray” by Nina Allan:

- Aileen is mesmerised by letters that arrive at their house, but are addressed to a person who doesn't live there. These letters have an effect on her life.

- This story gradually grows into a disquieting tale of obsession concerning other people's lives and fates.

- The author's descriptions about the protagonist's life are vivid and realistic, and the conversations between her and Selena are excellent.

- An excellent - and perhaps the best - story in this anthology.

“The Days of Our Lives” by Adam LG Nevill:

- A fascinatingly unsettling portrayal of a macabre marriage.

- The author writes strikingly about the protagonist's difficult and twisted relationship with Lois.

- Along with Nina Allan's story, this is one of the best and most memorable stories in this anthology. Once you've read it, it's quite difficult to forget it.

“The Hungry Hotel” by Lisa Tuttle:

- A beautifully written story about a woman who has an affair while her boyfriend is out of town.

- I was impressed by this story and its atmosphere, because the protagonist had to deal with her feelings towards the man she met.

- This is one of the most intriguing stories I've ever read about love and infatuation.

“L0ND0N” by Nicholas Royle:

- A story about an editor, Nick, who is stalked by a man called Ian. Because Nick reads Ian's novel and finds it interesting, he thinks about publishing it.

- A fascinating story that offers readers a glimpse into the life and choices of an editor. It was interesting to read about how Nick felt about Ian and his novel and how he weighed different things.

“Change Management” by Angela Slatter:

- Eva, who works at the Dead Letter Office, is a "solitary little mouse". Her life changes when she steals a letter that has been sent by a woman called Lucy to her brother, Jonathan.

- An excellent story with a memorable ending.

“Ledge Bants” by Maria Dahvana Headley & China Miéville:

- This story is wonderfully different, because it tells of Merlin who works at the Dead Letters Office and hunts for his scattered magic.
- I was positively surprised by this story and its originality, because I didn't expect to find this kind of a story in this anthology.
- A truly original and intriguingly whimsical take on Arthurian fiction.

“And We, Spectators Always, Everywhere” by Kirsten Kaschock:

- A frighteningly effective and unsettling glimpse into the life of a boy called Gibb and his caretakers.
- I was impressed by the author's way of writing about Gibb's childhood and what happened to him when he grew up.
- An excellent story that will haunt your mind for a long time after you finish reading it.

Michael Marshall Smith's “Over to You” is a powerful story about a chess piece that causes puzzlement. In my opinion, “Over to You” is a good example of a story that feels ordinary, but is in fact quite extraordinary - it's intriguing storytelling at its best.

Claire Dean's “Is-and” is one of the best stories I've had the pleasure of reading this year. It's a compelling story about a couple who visit an island. I was intrigued by the author's way of adding folklore elements to the story, because they worked well and enhanced the atmosphere.

Andrew Lane's “Buyer's Remorse” is an excellent Lovecraftian weird fiction story with a distinct feel of something strange and threatening, because the protagonist is fascinated by lost and ignored places. This story has a feel of classic weird fiction to it, because the author evokes haunting images of hidden places where unspeakable things happen.

Muriel Gray's “Gone Away” deserves a special mention as a story with interesting mystery elements. I was impressed by the author's way of writing about the protagonist's relationship with her grandfather.

Nina Allan's “Astray” is a haunting and beautifully written story. What I like most about this story is that it gradually grows into a compelling and disquieting story with a harrowing ending. All of the different elements in this story form a narrative that gives readers a glimpse into the protagonist's life and highlight her obsession with what she has learned from a letter that was accidentally delivered to her. The beautiful prose emphasises the story's atmosphere and emotional depth.

Adam LG Nevill's “The Days of Our Lives” is the most disturbing story in this anthology. It features a captivatingly twisted glimpse into a relationship that is anything but normal and healthy. The author writes unflinchingly about what Lois does and how she reacts to various things. I consider this story to be a masterpiece of modern dark fiction.

Angela Slatter's “Change Management” is a dark and fascinating story about change. The protagonist, Eva, is described as a person who enjoys being alone and avoids socialising at work. When change comes into her life, it's almost like a force of nature that transforms her from a quite mouse to a much stronger and more determined woman. The author's approach to change feels powerful, because she pays attention to Eva's life, feelings and fears.

I enjoyed reading Dead Letters and found all of the stories intriguing and well written. It's a fine anthology of versatile stories that inhabit the space between literary fiction and speculative fiction. It will delight readers who enjoy well written fiction and strange stories, because each of the stories is something different and

special.

What makes this anthology especially intriguing is that it will be of special interest to readers who have personal experiences about lost letters and packages. If you've ever lost anything that you've sent or haven't received something that you've expected to arrive in your mailbox, you'll most likely find these stories very interesting and will enjoy them.

My final words are:

Dead Letters is an excellent anthology of dark, wistful and thought-provoking stories for adults - highly recommended!

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### **Karl says**

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Each story has an afterword from the author.

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### **Blair says**

Read Nina Allan's story 'Astray'. It's a wonderfully multifaceted story that makes great use of the anthology's theme of 'the undelivered, the missing, the returned'.

Aileen is the daughter of two army officers and has thus led something of a peripatetic life. She is rather more accustomed to receiving other people's mail than most, and knows the rules: it's an offence to open something that isn't explicitly addressed to you. Yet an incident from her youth, when she opened letters for

a 'Lucy Davis' and found the contents sinister and fascinating, has given her a bit of an obsession with misdirected post. So, years later, when she receives a letter for someone called Selena Rouane, she can't resist opening it. This leads her to the story of Selena's missing sister Amanda (who may have come back) and the letter-writer, the sisters' father, who believed Amanda had been abducted by aliens. There's also a revelation from Aileen's own past.

There are so many links between Aileen and 'dead letters' that the story could seem contrived in a lesser writer's hands. But she's such a well-realised character that I barely noticed. I particularly liked the way Aileen became quickly obsessed with the mystery of Amanda in a way that felt completely believable: researching old news articles, looking up the Rouanes' house on Street View, befriending Selena.

'Astray' is important because the initial idea led Allan to write her novel *The Rift*. Even before knowing this, I'd guessed it: the themes are so similar. I'm glad to have taken the time to work through Allan's short stories before starting *The Rift*. Not only has this given me invaluable context, but 'Astray' is a brilliant piece of fiction in its own right.

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### **Amanda says**

After a certain point a lot of the stories started to get similar due to the topic of the collection. Towards the last quarter of this collection the stories just got strange. The last few were really weird.  
Overall I enjoy most of this collection.

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### **Pam Winkler says**

This one varied between loves and hates. I think overall, it was more of a good collection than ok.  
The Green Letter by Steven Hall was one I loved. It was very much like SCP. I loved it enough, I went and got The Raw Shark Texts, but I wasn't as big of a fan of that, although it was good.  
Over to You by Michael Marshall Smith was good.  
In Memoriam by Joanne Harris was ok?  
Ausland by Alison Moore was good.  
Wonders to Come by Christopher Fowler was good.  
Cancer Dancer by Pat Cardigan - I'm not sure if I get it? It was very good, but I was kind of confused by the ending.  
The Wrong Game by Ramsey Campbell was a bit confusing for me.  
Is-And by Claire Dean was good.  
Buyer's Remorse by Andrew Lane was fantastic, and very Lovecraftian.  
Gone Away by Muriel Gray was good.  
Astray by Nina Allan was ok? It was a bit complicated.  
The Days of Our Lives by Adam LG Nevill was ok?  
The Hungry Hotel by Lisa Tuttle was good.  
London by Nicholas Royle was good and weird.  
Change Management by Angela Slatter was good and creepy.  
Ledge Bants by Maria Dahvana Headley & China Mieville - I hated this story. It started interesting and then got very annoying after the first few paragraphs.  
And We, Spectators Always, Everywhere by Kirsten Saschock was ok.

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**John Wheeles says**

Dead letters, shorts about lost or misdirected letters as well as things lost. Some stories are excellent, some never seem to come together. This does, however, make for an overall interesting read. It is not a quick read, nor is it a light whimsical foray into the written word.

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**Ashley says**

BOOKCITEMENT LEVEL 3.7/5

Good Anthology. I liked it.

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