



Supernatural Noir

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A hit man who kills with coincidence... A detective caught in a war between two worlds... A man whose terrible appetites hide an even darker secret . . .

Dark Horse once again teams up with Hugo and Bram Stoker award-winning editor Ellen Datlow (Lovecraft Unbound) to bring you this masterful marriage of the darkness without and the darkness within. Supernatural Noir is an anthology of original tales of the dark fantastic from twenty modern masters of suspense, including **Brian Evenson, Joe R. Lansdale, Caitlin R. Kiernan, Nick Mamatas, Gregory Frost, Jeffrey Ford**, and many more.

Supernatural Noir Details

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Author : Ellen Datlow (Editor) , Gregory Frost , Lee Thomas , Tom Piccirilli , Nate Southard , Brian Evenson , Caitlín R. Kiernan , Nick Mamatas , more... Paul G. Tremblay , Richard Bowes , Melanie Tem , Lucius Shepard , Jeffrey Ford , Laird Barron , Elizabeth Bear , Joe R. Lansdale , John Langan , Paul Tremblay ...less

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From Reader Review Supernatural Noir for online ebook

Stefanie says

I am only giving this anthology 2.5 stars because out of 16 stories, I only enjoyed 4 of them. I found that the stories which were good were **really good** and the ones that were bad were either **really bad** or just mediocre. Some of these stories, I think, had trouble mixing the noir and supernatural elements. That is, some stories were more noir than supernatural and vice versa. Or there were some stories (ie "Little Shit" by Melanie Tem) which had barely any connection at all with the two genres. The stories that are good are totally worth it, but since there are only a few, I wouldn't recommend this anthology. I expected a lot more.

Here are the good ones in my opinion:

"The Getaway" by Paul G Tremblay

"The Last Triangle" by Jeffrey Ford

"But For Scars" by Tom Piccirilli

"The Absent Eye" by Bryan Evenson

Jiří Pavlovský says

řtenářský deník 2018/95

Supernatural Noir

Přetěný další sborník. Tentokrát je ale vřnovaný mixu fantastiky a noiru. A jelikoř mám noir radři než řistokrevně fantasy, tak ho hodnotím i o nřco výře. Pokud jsem o sborníku Kniha meřř psal, ře je to v jedné hladině, ani prudké pády, ani prudké vzestupy, tak Supernatural Noir je právř ten typ sborníku, kde sice nejsou vylořeně řpatně povídky, ale mezi klasickými variacemi na detektivní téma se obřas objeví nřco, co mř vylořeně nadchlo. Do téhle kategorie patřř hned druhá povídka, Gateway, od Paula G. Tremblaye, popisující únik po jedné nezdařené loupeži. Jednoduchá ale intenzivní. Melanie Tem má v Little Shit spřř zajímavý nápad - „trpaslici“ pracující v dřtském převleku na lovu pedofilř. Ale není tam moc nadpřřirozena ani noiru a vyznřní je dost slabé. Je tu i Lucius Shepard, který přřinářř Ditch Witch, spřř prřmřrný přřbřřh o nebezpeřří dřevřných elfř... a Laird Barron, jehoř povídka The Carrion Gods in their Heaven, vyřřla i ve sborníku Ta nádherná vřc... a byla tam jedna z třch nudnřjších. Tady taky. Zase nahoru to jde povídkou Elizabeth Bearové The Romance – o dřtské párty pro dospřřlé a magickém kolotoři. Sama povídka je dost jednoduchá (a opřřt – vřbec ne noir), ale má atmosféru, dobré dialogy, a dobré prolínání minulých a souřasných událostí. Prostř lepší koncepce než přřbřřh. Pak je tu Lansdale, Dead Sister, kvřli kterému jsem si to vlastně koupil. Ano, je vidřt, ře tu povídku vyhřeznul za jedno odpoledne, ře se s tím zase tak moc nebabral, ale i tak je to zábavné, plné hlášek a nekrofilie. Lee Thomas přřinářř Comfortable in her Skin, přřbřřh pomsty a trochu specifických uchvatitelř třřl. To je povídka z řeledi solidních, po řemř přřicházř další intenzivnějšř záležitost, přřbřřh But for Scars od Toma Piccirilliho, o tom, co všechno se skrývá pod postelí. Od toho jsem i kdysi řetl nřjakou kriminálku a rozhodně ho jeřřt zkusím. A další jednoduchá, ale atmosférická záležitost je Absent Eye od Briana Evensona, přřbřřh vydloubnutého oka a co všechno je jím možné vidřt. Nemřže chybřt ani komiksová scenářřstka Caitlín R. Kiernanová s feministickou verzí Maltěřského sokola – The Maltese Unicorn, ve kterém se hledá prastarý robertek vyřezaný z rohu jednorořce. Dobrý nápad, povídka spřř prřmřr a moc dlouhá. Celkem šestnáct povídek, z toho třř autořř mi uvřzli v pamřti (Tremblay, Piccirilli, Evanson) a rozhodně si od nich chci jeřřt nřco přřeřřst. Coř povařřuju za sluřné skóre.

Kathryn says

Supernatural Noir is a fusion of genres which many readers may be inclined to pick apart and overanalyze. Many of the stories were barely noir, just the tiniest sliver of atmosphere present, and many of the supernatural elements did not mesh well with that atmosphere. I can not recommend this book to fans of detective noir fiction. I can recommend it to fans of horror and urban fantasy, which I am. Still, no matter your specific genre tastes, there are at least a few stories for everyone here.

Many big name authors added to this collection. I am eager to look into further works of more than a few of the authors included in this collection but they are not the big names which first caught my eye.

At the top of my list, I loved *Little Shit* by Melanie Tem and *The Carrion Gods in Their Heaven* by Laird Barron. *Little Shit* was a deeply disturbing story, horror with an undercover and talented character. I have never read anything quite like it. If I were to describe the story, it would probably throw readers off, besides not being very believable. To do what Tem did in such a short story is quite amazing.

The Carrion Gods in Their Heaven was another straight up horror story, with hardly a glimmer of noir, and I loved it, more so than Tem's. This story felt like a classic, along the lines of Algernon Blackwood and other greats who connected with their readers through a love and fear of nature. It scared the bejeezus out of me and I am extremely excited to read more by the author.

Brian Evenson's *The Absent Eye* was interesting and completely unique compared to the other stories but it rather felt like an introduction. I would love the story to be turned into a full length novel or collection of stories but sadly this one left me hanging without much of an ending. Evenson is one of my favorite authors and it pains me to say anything except glowing compliments.

I did not fall in love with *The Romance* by Elizabeth Bear, *The Maltese Unicorn* by Caitlin R. Kiernan, or *Dead Sister* by Joe R. Lansdale. These are more of the big name authors people would tend to buy the anthology for. Each of the stories were well-written but they fell flat with me. I barely remember Bear's story. My notes only say "loved the character and idea but not the execution." Kiernan's story was too much in every possible way, too fantastical mainly, and I felt zero connection to the character. Lansdale's story was fun but a little too predictable.

Comfortable in Her Skin by Lee Thomas was dry until a very memorable and queasy ending. *But For Scars* by Tom Piccirilli was very good, one of the better stories. I also enjoyed *Ditch Witch* by Lucius Shepard. His story possessed that perfect atmosphere I love and it truly creeped me out. I have a problem with doll-sized creatures.

The rest of the stories were all very good and might interest other readers yet none of them were what I consider memorable enough to mention, bad enough to comment on, or good enough to make me want to read more by their authors. I feel that 4 stars is pushing it slightly but the stories I loved, I really, really loved. Recommended for fans of horrific (not noir) short fiction.

Donna says

I've got a short line-up of anthologies lately. First and foremost, the formatting on this digital galley was absolutely atrocious. To the point where I couldn't even read it on my eReader, atrocious. There were a few pages a story section that I could read but then the pages would double up and snap to microscopic print that I couldn't enlarge. I tried reading it but I ended up giving myself a migraine. So I ended up tethered to a

computer to read this one and had the stories been bad, I would have dropped it like a bad habit. Not only did this take me longer to read but, as I said, I was tied to a computer to read it and since I don't have a laptop, it was a major inconvenience. But I kept reading it because I really liked what I was reading.

So putting the formatting issue aside, I really did like these stories. Trust. For how put out I was reading SUPERNATURAL NOIR, I would have stopped REALLY quickly if I didn't like it. Even if I somewhat liked it, I would have stopped because the format was an issue. But I didn't. I kept reading. Had I had this book in a normal print version, I would have flown through it, I liked it that much.

And now I'm back to reviewing an anthology of stories; an issue for me as I stated in my review of FEAR last week. Well, with SUPERNATURAL NOIR, each story was distinct enough to showcase the uniqueness of each author but at the same time all of their themes blended together seamlessly, each complementing the last as the book went on. Datlow did an amazing job of compiling such similar yet vastly different stories into one book.

What you have to understand with noir is that it's a bit over the top. Normally it's not really my thing but seeing as this was of the supernatural variety, I wanted to see what it was all about. And I really liked it. Yes, some of the stories read a bit like DICK TRACEY meets SUPERNATURAL but all of the stories had personality and I certainly can't deny them that. They stood out against the rest of the "normal" supernatural stories out there because of that noir effect, and I think it made them all the better.

My favorites were 'The Getaway' by Paul G. Tremblay (about a guy driving with a semi-prostitute that ends up at an inn, stalked by wooden gnomes), 'Comfortable in Her Skin' by Lee Thomas (about two women escaping battered pasts only to be sucked into a whole new world thanks to a wayward wolf hide) and 'The Maltese Unicorn' by Caitlin R. Kiernan (about a post-WWII female detective working for the wrong side trying to make a run for a crazy whore house owner). There's just this overwhelming grit to all of them that will leave you a little uncomfortable when you're done. I like it when my stories do that. It means they've actually moved me.

I wouldn't say the stories are inherently scary but there is some level of horror aspect to all of them (although the one with the gnomes was pretty freaky). The noir is more underlying, existing more in the personalities of the characters than in the overall story itself so if you're not big on it, you'll still probably get a kick out of them anyway as they're not dripping in it. But they definitely should be read for the supernatural aspect. They're different kinds of horror stories, playing into all manner of horror, not just your standard spooks. For that I can greatly appreciate what SUPERNATURAL NOIR has to offer, as would any genuine horror fan. It's a deviation from all of the other regular horror out there and will certainly leave a lasting impression even after you close the cover.

Chris King Elfland's 2nd Cousin says

NOTE: *This review was first published at **The King of Elfland's 2nd Cousin** on June 22nd, 2011. If you enjoy it, check out what else is there!*

First, let me start by saying that I love *noir* fiction and film. Give me a good hard-boiled detective story, and I'll lap it up – typically not looking for much beyond entertainment. I also love dark fantasy and horror, and so the thought of blending them in a new anthology fittingly titled **Supernatural Noir** sounded great to me. Throw in one of the best editors working in the business today – Ellen Datlow – and I am definitely there. Having read a digital review copy, I can say that Dark Horse's **Supernatural Noir** delivers as advertised, even if it may lean closer to dark fantasy than I would have liked.

With Datlow's editorial pedigree, this should come as no surprise. On my shelves at home, I have over fifteen anthologies edited by Datlow (often with excellent collaborators like Terri Windling). I admit, I'm a bit of a fan. Historically, her anthologies have demonstrated a particularly consistent ability to showcase top-flight authors and stories, and to assemble them into collections unified along whatever dimension is relevant to a particular book. The table of contents for **Supernatural Noir** is no different in this regards.

The authors read like a "who's who" of dark fantasy (more so than *noir*): Gregory Frost, Melanie Tem, Paul G. Tremblay, Laird Barron, Jeffrey Ford, Joe R. Lansdale. Sixteen authors contributed original short stories for the anthology, and all of them come from a dark fantasy / supernatural / horror background in their writing. This is not a complaint, but it should be an indicative fact: the authors selected for this book skew by experience towards the "supernatural" part of the anthology's title, so it should not be surprising that their stories lean in that direction. If you are looking for horror stories written by hard-boiled mystery writers, you won't find them here. Instead, this collection offers dark fantasists' spins on the hard-boiled crime story. Which – I would argue – is just as fun, although it means the *noir* elements might get a little de-emphasized in some places.

A large number of stories (either explicitly or plausibly/implicitly) are set in the time period from the late '40s to the late '70s. Considering *noir*'s roots in the late '40's and '50's, this makes sense to me: the square-jawed hero (or stalwart heroine – more on this in a sec) in a worn trenchcoat is emblematic of the post-War period. But the difference in tone between the stories set in this post-War period and the stories set in a contemporary (or vaguely futuristic) setting is striking. The stories set closer to WWII – like Richard Bowes' "Mortal Bait", or Joe R. Lansdale's "Dead Sister" – tend to employ a greater number of *noir* tropes. The later a story is set, the less prevalent *noir*'s emblematic elements become. What does this say about modern society and the evergreen qualities of *noir* as a sub-genre? Is *noir* possible in a world with mobile information and instant access? Judging by the excellent contributions from Melanie Tem ("Little Shit") and Nick Mamatas ("Dreamer of the Day"), the tropes of traditional *noir* fiction need to be adjusted and updated to operate in our modern reality: the tropes that worked in the days of vacuum tube televisions may not work any longer.

The second stand-out was the number of female and queer heroes featured. In many ways, this is representative of *noir*'s original values: it should be only natural for a genre typified by a frank treatment of violence and sex to grow beyond the "haunted square-jawed hetero male detective" trope. The variety of heroes employed in these stories was encouraging, although at times it stretched some bounds of credulity. For example, while I thought Caitlin R. Kiernan's story "The Maltese Unicorn" was great fun, I was haunted by an inability to completely buy its heroine in 1935 New York.

Coming to it looking for fantastical *noir*, the anthology will be reasonably satisfying. If you come to it looking for *noir*-ish dark fantasy, I suspect you will be more satisfied. All of the stories here are competently executed. Some including Jeffrey Ford's "The Last Triangle" and Elizabeth Bear's "The Romance" (which snuck up on me delightfully) will stay with me for a long time. Others, like Laird Barron's "The Carrion Gods in Their Heaven" just didn't suit my own tastes, although I recognize their quality. Only two stories (Joe R. Lansdale's "Dead Sister" and Richard Bowes' "Mortal Bait") didn't work for me for critical reasons: in both cases, they featured characters/voices that did not stand out, and plot structures that I found predictable. Interestingly, both were among the stories that adhered most closely to traditional *noir* structures. I believe their weaknesses highlight the single greatest challenge in modern *noir*: crafting a hero and voice that is distinctive and interesting. Most of the stories in this anthology – even those that did not particularly appeal to me – manage to get it right.

If I have one complaint to register, it's a relatively minor (and inordinately geeky) one. I really enjoyed reading this anthology for its entertainment value. But I would have loved to see one or two critical essays discussing *noir* and its long relationship with the fantastic (and the Gothic). While I would have loved to see

that, I freely admit to being a the kind of dork who likes reading literary analysis.

I recommend **Supernatural Noir** for fans of hard-boiled detective fiction who want to dabble in the fantastic, or for fans of dark fantasy/horror who want a touch of hard-boiled crime. And that recommendation really says it all: **Supernatural Noir** delivers as advertised.

Alan Baxter says

Datlow anthologies are always great and this is no exception. Not all the stories worked for me, but so many did. Really great stuff.

Nicholas Kaufmann says

Another exemplary anthology from Ellen Datlow, this time with a theme that's right up my alley. The intersection of crime stories and the supernatural is fertile ground, one that's reaped well by the authors assembled here. There isn't a weak story in the bunch (such uniform excellence is a trait I've come to expect from Datlow anthologies), but of course that makes choosing standouts to mention in this review very difficult. Suffice it to say that the authors I expected great things from -- Paul Tremblay, Laird Barron, Lucius Shepard, Tom Piccirilli, John Langan, Lee Thomas -- all deliver, and many of the authors whose work I was less familiar with -- Melanie Tem, Brian Evenson, Richard Bowes -- left me greatly impressed. There are no shortage of novels that blend crime or detective stories with fantasy and horror -- hell, I've written a few of them myself -- but if you're curious to explore this evolving subgenre, I can't think of a better place to start.

PopcornReads says

The Supernatural Noir anthology contains 16 original dark fantasy stories edited by Hugo and Bram Stoker award winner Ellen Datlow. Datlow says in her introduction that she asked the writers to provide her with "harder-than-nails stories of the supernatural with at least a few of the trademarks of noir." To read the rest of my review, go to <http://popcornreads.com/?p=1029>

Heidi Ward says

Good solid collection; not a clunker in the bunch. Not all were new to me, but several stories really opened up with another read, particularly Barron's "The Carrion Gods in Their Heaven" and Langan's "In Paris, In the Mouth of Kronos." (Their literary friendship spins pure gold.) Elizabeth Bear's "The Romance" and Lee Thomas's "Comfortable in Her Own Skin" were first-time treats. If you enjoy your dangerous dames and cucumber-cool hitmen with hints of blood, decay and unwholesome magic, Datlow's collection will not fail to please.

Gef says

The ARC of this anthology came at the perfect time, as my reading tastes this spring and summer have been tuned to the noir and dark fantasy genres. So, to see a slew of authors each offer up short stories with a blending of elements from both genres, with Ellen Datlow expertly compiling the stories together, well ... let's just say this might have been the perfect summer read for me this year.

Now, being an anthology, this book offers up a mixed bag, even if it does seem like the theme narrows the borders in which the authors can play. The truth is that noir fiction can be pretty damned diverse, and throwing in a supernatural bent only offers more freedom. It boils down to tone, I suppose. In any case, an anthologist like Ellen Datlow is about as reliable as they get when it comes to getting the best from the best.

Right off the bat I was charmed by a gritty heist story by Paul Tremblay called "The Getaway." A getaway driver speeds his cohorts out of town after a botched robbery, only to find the leader of the pack isn't in the car anymore. He's just disappeared, and the rest start to wonder just what the guy they robbed might have had to do with it. This was had a good deal of tension and a cool bit of paranoia.

A great little tale of the wayward soul seeking redemption came from Jeffrey Ford's "The Last Triangle." A washed-out addict winds up at the end of his rope and going through a rough bit of rehab in an old woman's house. But she doesn't throw him out, and instead recruits him into helping her investigate a mystery involving some rune-like symbols graffitied around town. The dichotomy of the two characters felt familiar, but the magical flavoring and Ford's way of moving the story along made it feel unique. Quite liked this one.

After that came Laird Barron's "The Carrion Gods in Their Heaven." Young women hiding out in a cabin in the middle of nowhere, hiding out from the law and the men in their lives, are swept up in a local legend and an animal hide with some powers that imbue through whoever wears it. A damned strange story with an ending that really packed a punch. It wound up being one of my favorites from the bunch.

A bit of a quirky one came from Joe Lansdale's "Dead Sister," which had a fella hired by an alluring woman to find out who is digging up her sister's grave each night. I found this one creepy as heck, but with an odd bit of humor to it that kept the rather macabre subject matter from being too gruesome.

Those are just a few samples of what you can expect from the anthology. Sufficed to say that I didn't really find any of them to be a disappointment, and I was really happy to finally get a chance to sample the works of some authors I've not read from yet, but have heard tons of praise for. It's just about as good as I could ask for from a themed anthology and I hope there is second volume sometime down the road. I suspect Supernatural Noir could be a wellspring of stories if this batch is any indication.

Megan Baxter says

There are some very good stories in this anthology, and a number of only so-so ones. I said that to my husband, and he replied, "so, it's an anthology?" Fair enough. More of the problem, if it's a particular problem, is that many of these stories are not very noir. Supernatural, sure. But a few fall down on the noir front. They lack that cynical edge of noir, even a few that manage to include detectives. It's not always a bad thing - one of my favourite stories in the collection isn't in the least a noir story. It's just a really good ghost story.

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at Smorgasbook

Karissa says

I got an eGalley of this book through NetGalley(dot)com. This is an anthology of stories that focus on the dark, dirty, and supernatural parts of human society. Definitely a collection for adults as there is a lot of swearing, violence, and sex in these.

Highlights for me were *The Dingus* by Gregory Frost (I loved the dark atmosphere in this story and really enjoyed the ironic ending), *Little Shit* by Melanie Tem (loved how the plot was spun out and again great irony), *The Last Triangle* by Jeffrey Ford (excellent mystery tinged with magic, will definitely be picking up some of Ford's books to read), and *The Romance* by Elizabeth Bear (loved how creative this one was and loved the haunted carousel),

The stories are mostly mysteries with a tinge of supernatural to them. All of the stories have a very dark and dirty tone to them. All of them are interesting; as with any anthology some were just outstanding and some so-so.

If you are interested in the darker grittier side of investigative urban fantasy then this is the anthology for you. You can check out brief synopsis and comments for each individual story below.

- *The Dingus* by Gregory Frost (5/5 stars)

Very well written story about a taxi cab driver who decides to investigate a strange mass-murder. Very dark and atmospheric. I love the ironic ending. Definitely makes me want to check out some of Frost's books.

- *The Getaway* by Paul G. Tremblay (3/5 stars)

About a group of guys who rob a place and start to disappear during the getaway. It was okay. The sentences are short and kind of fractured, so it wasn't the smoothest sounding story. There was some irony, but just a hint of supernatural.

- *Mortal Bait* by Richard Bowes (4/5 stars)

About a veteran detective who is hired to solve a case that ends up being more about an ongoing war between elves and fairie than anything else. Very much a hard-boiled detective story with a little urban fantasy thrown in. The writing style is pretty good and the story had some good twists but it was a little confusing; seems like a complicated world that didn't fit in a short story well.

- *Little Shit* by Melanie Tem (4.5/5 stars)

About a woman with some strange attributes who uses them to catch pedophiles. This was actually a really great story; very well done and suspenseful. I enjoyed the author's writing style and how she spun out such an ironic plot.

- *Ditch Witch* by Lucius Shepard (4/5 stars)

A story about a man who picks up a girl who might be a witch; then they get attacked by killer elves. Yep, it was a strange story and a bit confusing too. It was still entertaining and a good read. The writing style was easy to read.

- *The Last Triangle* by Jeffrey Ford (5/5 stars)

A drug user finds himself fighting withdrawal on an old woman's stoop. She finds him in the morning and takes care of him; in exchange he hunts down strange symbols for her. This was a great mystery tinged with

magic. I loved the writing style and the story. I will definitely be picking up something from Ford in the future.

- The Carrion Gods in Their Heaven by Laird Barron (4/5 stars)

About a couple of young women who stumble into a fur hide that literally changes who they are. This is a dark story and is somewhat ironic. I enjoyed the writing style and the story.

- The Romance by Elizabeth Bear (5/5 stars)

Very well done story about a haunted carousel and a murder. Very creepy but also very creative and engaging. I really enjoyed this story!

- Dead Sister by Joe R. Lansdale (4/5 stars)

A detective is hired by a woman to find out what is digging up her sister's grave every night. This story had a lot of action, some humor, and was very engaging. I enjoyed it.

- Comfortable in Her Skin by Lee Thomas (4/5 stars)

A well written and interesting, if incredibly creepy and somewhat gross, story. About a woman scorned and how she uses some icons to get revenge.

- But For Scars by Tom Piccirilli (3/5 stars)

A story about a girl who escapes from an asylum, stumbles into some guy's house, and kills herself. The guy tries to track down the man who murdered her parents. To be honest I didn't really understand what happened at the end of the story; it was kind of confusing.

- The Blisters on My Heart by Nate Southard (3/5 stars)

About a guy who tries to defend his hooker girlfriend from a man who is purely evil. Okay story.

- The Absent Eye by Brian Evenson (4/5 stars)

About a child/man who loses an eye and can see creatures wrapped around everyone with his missing eye. Creepy but creative and well-written. I enjoyed it.

- The Maltese Unicorn by Caitlin R. Kiernan (4/5 stars)

Engaging story about a strange artifact made from a unicorn that allows people to feel innocence. The protagonist gets unknowingly drawn into a plot to steal it from its rightful owner. Creative story and interesting characters; a little bit vague at points.

- Dreamer of the Day by Nick Mamatas (3/5 stars)

About a woman who visits the Dreamer of the Day to have him kill her cheating husband; only she gets more than she bargained for. I didn't enjoy the writing style very much; there was minimal punctuation which made it a bit hard to read. The story was very ironic though.

- In Paris, In the Mouth of Kronos by John Langan (3/5 stars)

Story about two ex-Army people who are hired to perform a job that looks simple. It ends up being much more dangerous than expected. It was well-written, but the story goes back and forth between the current story and a story about torturing people in Iraq and I didn't enjoy it all that much. I did like how Greek mythology was tied into the story.

Steve says

I have to admit, I had some reservations over Ellen Datlow's *Supernatural Noir*. Oh, I definitely wanted to read it since it contained stories by a number of writers I admire. But the whole thrust of the collection – Supernatural Noir – reminded me a bit of Datlow's previous effort, *Lovecraft Unbound*, which contained a number of great stories, along with about a 100 pages of filler. In that effort, Datlow set out to have a collection of Lovecraft stories that were not, on surface at least, identifiably Lovecraftian. No pastiches please. A nice goal, I suppose, but the strongest stories in that collection were the ones touched base with various Lovecraftian tropes. And then there was the boring and bad. A backfire.

With *Supernatural Noir*, I could foresee a similar scenario playing out: A narrowly focused anthology, and not enough good material. Well, I was wrong. Most of the writing here is very strong, and the idea of Noir is elastic enough – without editorial boundaries – to allow the writers to rock. Only on two occasions could I find stories that I didn't consider Noir. Elizabeth Bear's "The Romance," and "The Absent Eye," by Brian Evanson, but I'll touch on those stories below.

One brief comment on Noir and Horror (which may be more accurate than "Supernatural"), I think they are indeed kissing cousins of a sort. Both rely often on atmosphere, the idea of the labyrinth, and losers (well, the last is more specific and necessary for Noir). One thing I had in mind as I started reading this was Otto Penzler's comment regarding Noir (from a recent anthology he did with James Ellroy). Penzler said (and I'm paraphrasing here), that Noir is not Detective Fiction, and he did not think that Chandler was necessarily a writer of Noir. That's a controversial statement, but I see his point. No White Knights. What Penzler also said, and that scored with me, is that Noir is basically about Losers. Well, Datlow's collection has quite a collection of those, and atmosphere to burn. A few comments on the stories (*Means worth reading again):

"The Dingus," by Gregory Frost. My first encounter with Frost, and it's a good one. It's a period piece (1940s?) set in New York (I think). It's about an ex-boxer, taxi driver, who stumbles into gangsters, revenge, and a witch from the old country. It's pure pulp – and I loved it.

"The Getaway," by Paul Tremblay. I've been hearing good things about Tremblay, and after reading this, I can see why. A robbery gone bad, memories, fate, and a blurring reality. Great atmosphere.

"Mortal Bait," by Richard Bowes. Something about elves and detectives. I couldn't get into it.

"Little Shit," by Melanie Tem. Very gritty story about a midget (?) who can push people with her mind (I think), who is also in college (a prodigy it seems). Oh, and she helps cops capture pedophiles. I'm still not sure what I think of this story. The voice is compelling, but I didn't like the ending. I may need to re-read this one. There's certainly enough good here to make me want to. I wonder if this story would have worked better as a longer piece?

*"Ditch Witch," by Lucius Shepard. A couple of hookers (one male, one female) on the run, with a stolen car, stolen money, and a bag of coke. They stop at a secluded hotel in the Pacific Northwest, and encounter evil Nazi elves. One of my favorites stories in the collection. A wild mix of hallucination, Noir, and Horror. Outstanding.

"The Last Triangle," by Jeffery Ford. A loser hooked on drugs, is befriended by an old lady on the eve of a magician war. I really liked this one up until the end, which I wasn't crazy about. But the loser here is a great character, and there's some darkly funny moments.

*"The Carrion Gods in Their Heavens," by Laird Barron. I think Barron is one of the greatest writers of Horror today, and I wasn't disappointed here. An abused woman and her lover flee to a bad house in the woods. There's a lot going on here, one of which is Barron moving Noir out of its comfort zone – an urban environment with its mean streets, into an even meaner zone, the Wilderness. My only bitch here is that I think this could have been a longer piece (a novella – a form that Barron is an expert in). But it's totally

nasty, totally dark. One of the best stories in the collection.

“The Romance,” by Elizabeth Bear. Bear can clearly write, but I didn’t like this story. It’s about a haunted merry-go-round, a birthday party, and pot brownies. Does that sound like Noir? It isn’t.

“Dead Sister,” Joe Lansdale. Set in 1958, it’s about a detective who is asked by some beautiful woman to check into the desecration of her dead sister’s grave. Lansdale is a great writer of pulp, but he phoned this one in. Button pushing pure and simple. There’s some good freaky moments, but the whole time you’re reading it, you know he’s done better.

*“Comfortable in Her Skin” by Lee Thomas. Good God! Imagine a “Sopranos” episode scripted by Clive Barker in his *Books of Blood* days. But I doubt HBO would ever of aired this episode. One of the best stories in the collection, but it’s as dark as it gets.

*“But for Scars,” by Tom Piccirilli. If there is such a thing as Supernatural Noir, Piccirilli would be viewed as one of the founding fathers, since he’s mixing it with these genres for some time now. Very pulpy, and very good story about murder, motorcycle gangs, and mental illness. You can’t help but think of the “Sons of Anarchy” while reading this. If that show was indeed an inspiration for this story, it’s way better, and more original, than the overly ballyhooed SOA effort/homage by Stephen King and Joe Hill from a couple of years ago.

*“The Blisters on My Heart,” by Nate Southard. I’m not sure I got the whole blisters/heart thing, but that may have been due to distracted reading on my part. That said, I liked the mean economy of this story. A jealous lover, a demonic rival, and a lap dancing beauty in the middle. Pulp the way it should be.

*“The Absent Eye,” by Brian Evenson. Evenson is one of the most interesting writers in speculative fiction today. I went through the trouble of saying up above that this was not, to my mind, Noir. It’s Horror, it’s Literature, and it’s good. A boy suffers a childhood accident, losing an eye. Unfortunately, it opens up a strange universe of pain and dark wonder. I’ll say no more.

“The Maltese Unicorn” by Caitlan Kiernan. Kiernan is one the very best writers of dark fiction out there. I think her recent *Red Tree* is a Horror classic. However, here I wasn’t won over. It’s a period piece, set in the 1930s. Kiernan’s great at doing the historical stuff, but I thought this story was too long, and tried to do too much. The cracking wise by various characters always seemed to go on an exchange too long. All of that aside, there’s some good stuff. When you find out what the unicorn really is, you can’t help but laugh at the outrageousness of it. An OK story from a great writer.

“Dreamer of the Day,” by Nick Mamatas. Good story about a woman who wants her husband dead. A good balance of the two genres. The Dreamer will creep you out.

*“In Paris, In the Mouth of Kronos” by John Langan. Langan is one of the most versatile writers of dark fiction today. I’ve not always been on board with his efforts, but I can clearly see he’s got a full quiver of literary arrows to fire. Here he totally surprised me. It’s kind of like Robert Ludlum writing a Cthulhu Mythos story – but it’s considerably better than that. Beyond the story itself (which is about ex-soldiers trying to kidnap a former “associate”), Langan has some things to say about torture, Iraq, and the price for entering such darkness. One of the best stories in the collection.

Paula Cappa says

The stories here are by award-winning authors and more weird stories than anything else. "Supernatural noir" is certainly a weird bending of genres. Not as thrilling as I hoped but well written and suspenseful. The best story is Brian Evenson's *The Absent Eye*. One thing I have to say was a huge disappointment was how the formatting was designed for Kindle ebook. The Table of Contents titles did NOT have a link to the stories so you have to click every single page to get to a story or author you'd like to read, or begin reading every story in the order dictated by the editor. And for this reason, I'm giving it only three stars because the ebook design is so faulty. A short story anthology in ebook format MUST have links on the titles!

Shadowdenizen says

An interesting mix of stories, and just up my alley.
But I'd been spoiled already by the similar-but-superior *Weird Noir*.
