Use Once, Then Destroy by Conrad Williams

Existencial Horror At Best

A serial killer is removing victims hands in a Venice shackled by winter. A woman at the end of her tether finds a terrible release on holiday in the fens of East Anglia. A man is haunted by graffiti, and finds that his road to discovering the perpetrator leads to death. and worse. A husband trying to comfort his terminally ill wife seeks help in a forbidden zone from his childhood, where blood is the price of perfection. In this spellbinding collection of his best stories from the last ten years, award-winning writer Conrad Williams offers the kind of horrors that move subtly into you, like pain, or love, or regret. They are stories that explore the scarred outposts of desperation and desire, sickness and death, sex and decay. Within these pages you will also find the acclaimed novella Nearly People (nominated for awards by the International Horror Guild and the British Fantasy Society), in which a womans search for food in a nightmarish city brings her attention from an enigmatic man known as The Dancer, and a host of terrible epiphanies. --Publishers Weekly (starred review) Includes three stories never before seen: Nest of Salt, The Night Before and The Owl. Contents The Machine Supple Bodies The Light that Passes Through You Nest of Salt City in Aspic Other Skins The Windmill Wire The Burn The Owl The Night Before Edge MacCreadles Bike Known The Suicide Pit Excuse the Unusual Approach Nearly People

My Personal Review:
Painted onto paper with pen strokes much like a dark feather tickling down your spine, Use Once, Then Destroy is a chilling and eerie treat to the horror fan in you.

Not particularly graphic or even overly shocking, these tales are old time creepy combined with new world situations, brought to vivid life with the poetry of William's prose.

The horror are vague, and they hide in the shadows as they salivate over your soul, waiting for the appropriate moment when the air is at its chilliest
to sweep over you in shivering apprehension and dread, leaving you bleak and trembling in their wake.

UOTD is a chilling collection of quiet terror, of felt but unseen things in the mists, of low-lying dread and unspeakable impulses. There are seventeen stories in all, too many to cover each one, but here is a quick summary of my favorites:

City In Aspic - a haunting and misty tale of a hotelkeeper in Venice, and the horrors that haunt him through the city's winter streets.

The Windmill - A vacation in Norfolk will be the beginning or the end of Claire's relationship.

Wire - A boy remembers his mother, and the dark terror that stalked her when he was young.

Edge - Another vacation gone awry, and love that turns bitter and violent.

The Owl - A young man and his expecting wife move into an old house in the country, and a storm comes that changes everything.

The Suicide Pit - In streets filled with "little samples and smears of humanity that won't erase", a lonely man finds his destiny.

Nearly People - (the longest and best of the stories) Eerily futuristic look at a quarantined area of a city, where Carrier stalks food for Jake, and meets the Dancer. I loved the Mowers, and there is some graphic and dizzyingly disgusting scenes in this tale, causing my shiver-meter to jolt into the red.

Conrad Williams’ surreal and nightmarish tales are well worth the price, poetically written and devilishly creepy, this is a great collection to add to your bookshelf. Enjoy!

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