



Desert Gothic (Iowa Short Fiction Award)

Don Waters

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This powerful debut collection, set in the light-filled deserts of Nevada and Arizona, introduces a darkly inventive new voice. Like an early Richard Ford, Don Waters writes with skill, empathy, and an edgy wit of worlds not often celebrated in contemporary literature. In *Desert Gothic*, Waters unleashes a wild and gritty cast and points them down paths of reckoning, where the characters earn the grace of their hard-won wisdom.

- Set in bars, mortuaries, nursing homes, truck stops, and the “poverty motels that encircled downtown’s casino corridor,” Waters’s ten stories are full of misfit transients like Julian, a crematorium worker who decorates abandoned urns to create a “lush underground island,” and the instant Mormon missionary Eli, a hapless divorcé who “always likes people better when they’re a little broken.” Limo drivers, ultra-marathoners, vagabonds, and a distraught novelist-to-be populate the pages of these gritty stories.

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