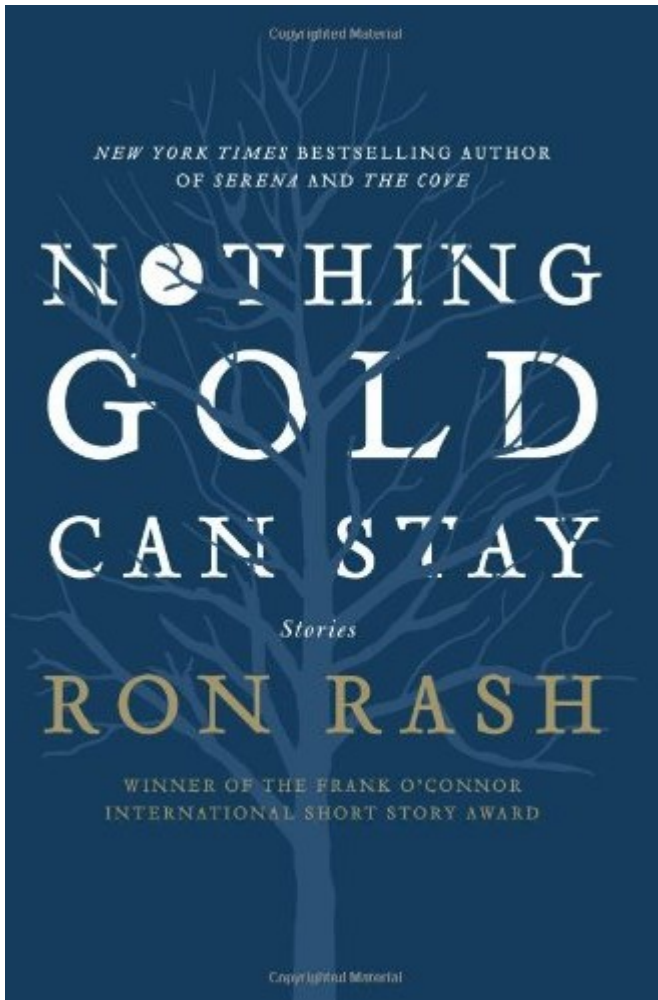


At the heart

By [Debra Bendis](#)

April 16, 2013

In Review



Nothing Gold Can Stay

by Ron Rash

Ecco

Ron Rash writes the way a fisherman filets. Nothing is spared getting to the meat. His sharpened knife sends the extras flying off the table.

What's left is naked narrative, each story caught in a defining moment that's loaded with unexpressed pathos or fear. The spare quality owes its origins to Rash's works as a poet and his habit of using concise language. The quality of pathos or fear comes with "cornering" his characters. What Rash says of Flannery O'Connor's stories describes his own: "It was putting her characters in a situation where their essence would be revealed, the mask of the everyday would be taken off of their everyday existence."

Rash's latest collection of short stories comes soon after the success of *Serena*, a novel that was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award. This collection, like [his last](#), showcases Rash at his best.

In "The Trusty," a prisoner attempts to con a farm woman into helping him escape, but the reader must worry—along with the prisoner—about the trustiness of the people he hopes to con. In "Those Who Are Dead Are Only Now Forgiven," two young people who are reaching for college success waver when the local meth culture tempts them with social acceptance.

In "The Magic Bus," a 16-year-old meets an aimless hippie couple and considers fleeing her fundamentalist family. But the promise of "peace, not war" may be as loaded with danger as the warnings she hears at home. And in the dark comedy "A Sort of A Miracle," a man's survival depends on the advice of two woefully illiterate relatives.