



## The Starlit Wood: New Fairy Tales

*Dominik Parisien (Editor) , Navah Wolfe (Editor) , Margo Lanagan , Marjorie M. Liu , Seanan McGuire , Garth Nix , Naomi Novik , Sofia Samatar , more... Karin Tidbeck , Catherynne M. Valente , Genevieve Valentine , Amal El-Mohtar , Charlie Jane Anders , Aliette de Bodard , Jeffrey Ford , Max Gladstone , Theodora Goss , Daryl Gregory , Kat Howard , Stephen Graham Jones ...less*

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An all-new anthology of cross-genre fairy tale retellings, featuring an all-star lineup of award-winning and critically acclaimed writers.

*Once upon a time.* It's how so many of our most beloved stories start.

Fairy tales have dominated our cultural imagination for centuries. From the Brothers Grimm to the Countess d'Aulnoy, from Charles Perrault to Hans Christian Anderson, storytellers have crafted all sorts of tales that have always found a place in our hearts.

Now a new generation of storytellers have taken up the mantle that the masters created and shaped their stories into something startling and electrifying.

Packed with award-winning authors, this anthology explores an array of fairy tales in startling and innovative ways, in genres and settings both traditional and unusual, including science fiction, western, and post-apocalyptic as well as traditional fantasy and contemporary horror.

From the woods to the stars, *The Starlit Wood: New Fairy Tales* takes readers on a journey at once unexpected and familiar, as a diverse group of writers explore some of our most beloved tales in new ways across genres and styles.

## The Starlit Wood: New Fairy Tales Details

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# **From Reader Review The Starlit Wood: New Fairy Tales for online ebook**

## **Derek says**

Simply the most brilliant story I've read this year.

I refuse to tell you anything about it, because I think everybody should approach it with no preconceptions beyond "most brilliant story I've read this year."

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## **Sr3yas says**

### **Winner of Nebula and Hugo Award for Best Short Story 2017**

Ironically, this was the last story I read in my Nebula short story marathon.

The story introduces two women and their own unique issues and situations. The story is set in a medieval fantasy world filled with mysterious magic and elements. The underlying theme is about letting go and moving forward(?) even though it is a scary thing to do. It is also about finding love(?). I am really not very sure. This is one of those tales which tells a simple story, yet holds abundant of wisdom. Those types of stories don't... well, work very well on me. (*Case in point: Little prince and the alchemist*) Yet, this was a fun read!

There is a good chance that you'll enjoy it! Here is a link: <http://uncannymagazine.com/article/se...>

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## **Jim says**

Interesting fantasy short story about women working out the world's unfair expectations of them. It's free here:

<http://uncannymagazine.com/article/se...>

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## **Elena May says**

### **This short story receives my vote for first place in the 2017 Hugo Awards.**

A twisted fairy-tale with a great message.

Two heroines, each trapped in her own tale. One is a prisoner on a glass hill, the other – doomed to walk the world in iron shoes, until she had worn down seven pair. But no one cursed them to this fate – each chose it herself. It's supposed to be an atonement, or a way to protect the world. The world tells them it is their fault, and they believe it. It is Amira's fault men can't help themselves around her beauty. It is Tabitha's fault

(view spoiler). And so, Amira must imprison herself on a glass hill to protect her poor suitors from temptation, and Tabitha must walk the world in painful shoes to pay for perceived sins.

Their reasoning is ridiculous, but neither sees it this way. But then, their fairy-tales clash, and each sees how absurd the other's story is. And each makes the other see.

***“I do not understand how someone who loves you would want to hurt you, or make you walk in iron shoes. ”***

Ultimately, it is a story about the importance of friendship. So often people are willing to accept pain and abuse upon themselves. They justify it, and accept it as normal. But when they see friends go through this, their recognize the problems and fight to end the injustice.

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### **Althea Ann says**

Available to read, here: <http://uncannymagazine.com/article/se...>

The message overtakes the story a bit, in this allegorical piece. We're introduced to two fairytale tropes. One woman is cursed to have to wear out seven pairs of magical iron shoes. The other sits at the top of a glass mountain, while uncouth suitors attempt to scale the summit. Friendship and female empowerment will free them both from the unfair demands of men.

Merged review:

\*\*\*\* In the Desert Like a Bone • Seanan McGuire

Little Red Riding Hood here is no passive victim - at least not anymore. The tale is transposed to the Old West, where a man and a girl ride the harsh desert in search of a reward - and revenge.

\*\*\*\* Underground • Karin Tidbeck

Based on the Swedish variation of the tale of Cupid & Psyche (or Beauty & the Beast): Prins Hatt. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince\\_...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_...)). The significant difference to this Swedish variation is that, while the young woman is imprisoned by the man whose face she cannot see, the reason for his cruel demand is that if he cannot win the maiden's trust, he in turn will be forced to marry a cruel woman of magical powers. By shifting the background of the story to a modern (but still magic-infused) Stockholm, Tidbeck points out the flaws in the logic of the original story's 'justice,' and creates a far more empowering tale.

\*\*\*\*\* Even the Crumbs Were Delicious • Daryl Gregory

If you read and enjoyed Gregory's "Afterparty," (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>), this story is a must! In his near-future of designer drugs, a couple of teens wander into an apartment where the stoner dude Tindal has been setting up for a funeral party for his roommate, a dealer who's missing and presumed dead. The kids have gotten into the drugs, and are out of their minds. What is Tindal to do? This is, of course, a take on Hansel and Gretel and their visit to the witch's cottage... but it's also just a believable (!), funny and ultimately truly sweet story.

\*\* The Super Ultra Duchess of Fedora Forest • Charlie Jane Anders

Based on a Grimm fairy tale which I'd never read before: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm023.html>. At the author's exhortation, I did indeed go read the original, which I hadn't been familiar with, and it is indeed weird. The retelling takes the original, adds a dash of hipster-cool, and gives it a happy ending. It's just not really my kind of story, though.

\*\*\* Familiaris • Genevieve Valentine

More of a literary analysis than an actual story, but not a detached, objective analysis. This piece is intensely full of the fear of having children, and an indictment of the pressures that force some women to do so, against their will. Ended it saying, "SO glad I don't have any!"

\*\*\* Seasons of Glass and Iron • Amal El-Mohtar

Available to read, here: <http://uncannymagazine.com/article/se...>

The message overtakes the story a bit, in this allegorical piece. We're introduced to two fairytale tropes. One woman is cursed to have to wear out seven pairs of magical iron shoes. The other sits at the top of a glass mountain, while uncouth suitors attempt to scale the summit. Friendship and female empowerment will free them both from the unfair demands of men.

\*\*\* Badgirl, the Deadman, and the Wheel of Fortune • Catherynne M. Valente

Inspired by 'The Armless Maiden,' Valente gives us a poignant, horrifying glimpse into the life of a young girl living under the threat of her junkie father's drug dealer.

\*\*\* Penny for a Match, Mister? • Garth Nix

As the title suggests, this one is (loosely) inspired by "The Little Match Girl." However, the similarity pretty much stops at the fact that it's got a poor urchin who sells matches. Rather than a sappy Christian homily, this is a supernatural adventure set in the Old West involving a vengeance-seeking spirit who has 'crossed over' and is preying on the members of a gang of bandits. The match girl just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time...

\*\* Some Wait • Stephen Graham Jones

Modern, horror retelling of The Pied Piper. Fourth-graders are disappearing from a small town, and their desperate parents turn to darker and darker 'solutions.'

Eh. The afterword to this mentions that the author first planned on doing the story 'cyberpunk' style, but then changed his mind halfway through. There's a spooky video game left over from that plan which feels like a red herring, but ends up just being a loose end that doesn't fit. The 'explanation' at the end didn't really explain anything, either - overall, it just didn't come together for me.

\*\*\* The Thousand Eyes • short story by Jeffrey Ford

While working on an art series: depicting the interiors of all the bars of South Jersey, an artist hears about a bar he's missed. "The Thousand Eyes" is a tucked-out-of-the-way dive that advertises its performances with a lounge singer billed as "The Voice of Death" on late-night radio, but rumor has it that you can only find the place if you're meant to be there. Rumor also has it that not everyone who goes there comes back - but our artist is determined to complete his collection.

Based on a rather obscure tale (<http://fairytales.com/the-voice-of-de...>), this is a horror story with an old-fashioned vibe.

\*\* Giants in the Sky • short story by Max Gladstone

Jack-and-the-Beanstalk meets post-humanism. A dialogue after the Singularity, where the ascended meddle with - or try to help - our not-so-lucky descendants. Didn't capture my imagination.

\*\*\*\* The Briar and the Rose • Marjorie M. Liu

Six days a week, a trusted bodyguard obeys the orders of her mistress, a beautiful courtesan, accompanying her on her lascivious nights and becoming privy to her rapacious schemes. But on the seventh day, all the other servants are sent away and something strange happens. "Carmela" becomes "Rose," an innocent girl who has been ensnared by the witch who calls herself by the name of Carmela. The bodyguard has fallen in love with Rose, and is desperate to somehow find a way to free her from the spell. An original take on the 'Sleeping Beauty' theme, beautifully told.

\*\*\*\* The Other Thea • Theodora Goss

I always like Theodora Goss, but this one reminded me A LOT of Diana Wynne Jones. (Which is also a good thing.) A recent graduate from a School of Witchcraft must use her recently-acquired skills to venture into the Other Lands and retrieve her missing shadow. Complicating matters is the fact that said shadow may not be entirely enthused by the idea.

\*\*\* When I Lay Frozen • Margo Lanagan

Peculiarly carnal take on Thumbelina. Bound by timidity and gratitude to a 'mousewife's' den, the tiny Tommelise has never met anyone like herself. She knows she doesn't like staying underground, and she's repulsed by the local mole's lecherous advances toward her. But she doesn't see what other options she might have - until a little bird tells her certain things. Will she be bold enough to seize freedom?

\*\*\*\*\* Pearl • Aliette de Bodard

One of my Hugo Award nominees, novelette, 2016.

I wasn't previously familiar with this Vietnamese folktale:

<http://en.vietnam.com/culture/art/fai...>

This take on it is amazing. An ambitious young man is given a 'remora' specially created for him by his household AIs. The gift, called "Pearl," is far more advanced than the average remora. With the information Pearl gives him, he is able to attract the attention of the Empress and rise to the coveted position of councillor. But Pearl is more than a simple tool; she is an intelligent, conscious being with her own ambitions and desires. And those desires may involve more than advising a human man in his career. Beautiful, lush, poignant, wondrous... and an insightful look into the forces that drive us, and the consequences of those drives.

\*\* The Tale of Mahliya and Mauhub and the White-Footed Gazelle • Sofia Samatar

I've read and enjoyed both of Samatar's novels, so was looking forward to this one. Unfortunately, I didn't see much point to this metafictional literary analysis of a recently-translated medieval Arab tale. I'd rather just go read the original. (<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-ent...>)

\*\*\* Reflected • Kat Howard

Physics researchers replay the event of Andersen's 'Snow Queen,' in this story of an experiment gone wrong. The ode to friendship is touching, but I prefer the original.

\*\*\*\*\* Spinning Silver • Naomi Novik

One of my Hugo Award nominees, novelette, 2016.

Very strong finale to the anthology. The subtext of 'Rumpelstiltskin' is interrogated and subverted by this narrative - but it's also just a fantastic story.

The action moves to Russia, where a family of Jewish moneylenders is facing poverty and near-starvation. The good-hearted, kindly father of the family just isn't good at collecting on his debts. In desperation, the young daughter of the family steps up to the plate - and discovers that she may have a talent for the tough job. But as her family's fortunes turn around, and her silver pennies turn to gold in the bank, she attracts the

notice of an intimidating elf lord who demands that she also turn his faerie silver to gold... or face the dire consequences.

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### **Sarah says**

I've read a thousand fairy tale retellings, and I would have said that genre had been mined fairly extensively. This is a brilliant reinvigoration. Not every story was a hit with me, but even when I didn't love a story I loved the author's note afterward explaining their inspiration. My favorite was probably Amal El-Mohtar's *Seasons of Glass and Iron*, but all in all it's an excellent anthology. Bonus points for the stunning cover.

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### **Jerry Jose says**

Congratulations on *Nebula*, and congratulations on tricking me into reading Fantasy.

This story in its essentials, felt like a modern day retelling of two *Brothers Grimm* fairy tales - **Bearskin** and **Old Rinkrank** that I barely remember from my childhood (my memory might as well be wrong here). What I loved about the narrative was the ambiguity that followed Tabitha and Amira, like they were already part of a well expanded universe, the details of which readers are free to imagine. In this retelling or extended act of passing reference, Author intertwined the essentials of both fairy tales into one lovely story, making them female centric and in poles with the original perspective. My ambitious and embarrassing attempts to understand the metaphors are given below.

Number 7, from a Biblical view point represent perfection or completion and number 1 stands for unity or oneness, the numbers which the female protagonists of this story identify themselves to be bound in by magic. (view spoiler)

I think I might have heavily misread the 'things', this allegorical reading was supposed to explore the nuances of. Nevertheless the lovely prose will have every reader covered for sure.

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### **Jen says**

This book was a rather fun collection of fairy-tale retellings. Though I didn't enjoy every story equally, I find that I'm now thinking kindly about this anthology as a whole. Bracketed by good, very enjoyable, stories and with at least two great ones in the mix, I really enjoyed the time I spent with this book. :-)

There was one line in this book that startled a laugh out of me: In "Giants in the Sky" by Max Gladstone, on page 195, the narrator says, "I'm not asking you to solve quantum gravity with a slide rule." You had to be in the story to understand this and why it was funny, but. . .lol! ;-)

So this was a fun collection. The best stories, my favorites, are "Seasons of Glass and Iron" by Amal El-Mohtar and "The Briar and the Rose" by Marjorie Liu. Lesser favorites, because thoughts of them are still rattling around in my mind, include "In the Desert Like a Bone" by Seanan McGuire and "Giants in the Sky" by Max Gladstone. :-)



In fact, I'm going to up my star rating for those latter two stories. "4 stars - very good" just doesn't feel right for stories that are still "haunting" me. :-)

Now I need to find the original stories for ALL of these retellings, and I'll be a happy reader. :-)

I reviewed each of the individual stories, both those I enjoyed and those I was less enthused about, below, if you'd care to read my thoughts. :-)

...

**"In the Desert Like a Bone" by Seanan McGuire, 4.5 stars "great!" Read 11/23/2016.**

This story was a retelling of Little Red Riding Hood and it was rather chilling. The "red fox girl" (she has a name, but it was given to her; until she chooses a name for herself, I'll think of her as Coyote's red fox girl) was "Little Red" and her Daddy was the wolf. \*shudder\*

But the red fox girl won the day and earned her red "hood." :-)

**"Underground" by Karin Tidbeck, 3.5 stars. Read 11/23/2016.**

This story was a retelling of East of the Sun, West of the Moon, which the author called "Prince Hatt Underground." I hadn't ever read this story. I'm not sure if I've even ever heard of this story. So I was rather confused by it.

What happened was this: (view spoiler)

So, two things in there that left me feeling dissatisfied/confused: (view spoiler)

Next: (view spoiler)

I have two problems with this part, too: (view spoiler)

So this story was good, but rather unsatisfactory, too, sadly.

**"Even the Crumbs Were Delicious" by Daryl Gregory, 4 stars. Read 11/23/2016.**

This was sort of a fun story. A retelling of Hansel and Gretel, it featured a stoner "witch," who papered his walls with drugs, and the children (never named) were (interloping) stoners, too.

I liked that Tindal, the "witch," was kindly, and that the "big bad" in this story were the parents. I especially liked that Tindal was befuddled for much of the story, though his befuddlement can probably be blamed on the drugs. :-( Still, though. . .

:-)

**"The Super Ultra Duchess of Fedora Forest" by Charlie Jane Anders, 4 stars. Read 11/23/2016.**

This story was bizarre. It's a retelling of The Bird, the Mouse, and the Sausage by the Brothers Grimm, which I'm going to have to look up. (In the Author's Note that followed the story, Charlie Jane tells us that the original is "incredibly bleak and unbelievably strange.")

This retelling was more upbeat, a fact for which I am grateful. Sure, our heroes (the sausage, mouse, and bird) were (view spoiler) :-)

**UPDATE #1 - 11/24/2016:** *So I did as Charlie Jane suggested and Googled "Grimm bird mouse sausage." And wow, bleak is one way to describe it. Dark and depressing are also good words. Interestingly, Charlie Jane's story kept to the original story's plot: She just fleshed it out, as it were, and changed the ending to gift us with a happy one. :-)*

**"Familiaris" by Genevieve Valentine, 2 stars. Read 11/24/2016.**

This story didn't make much sense to me, unfortunately. I understood the words, but. . .

It was okay, but none of the characters were named, which made it confusing. And somehow, it read like a stream of consciousness piece.

So I didn't like it. But I'll give it two stars for being okay. And maybe if I read the fairy tale that this was a retelling of, it will make more sense? That story is The Wolves...Or maybe it's The Turnip Princess and "The Wolves" were characters. Either way, it's by Franz Xaver von Schönwerth.

**"Seasons of Glass and Iron" by Amal El-Mohtar, 4.5 "great!" stars. Read 11/24/2016.**

This was a really neat conglomeration of TWO fairy tales: The Black Bull of Norway and The Glass Mountain. I really enjoyed how Amal merged them together. I'm not familiar with either story, but I suspect that Amal not only combined them, and combined them to great effect, but that she also gifted both with a happy ending. :-)

**UPDATE #2 - 11/24/2016:** *I looked up and read both The Black Bull of Norway and The Glass Mountain. Both stories already had semi-happy endings, as it turned out. But I like Amal's conglomeration better. :-)*

**"Badgirl, the Deadman, and The Wheel of Fortune" by Catherynne M. Valente, 3 stars. Read 11/24/2016.**

This story wasn't very satisfying. The Deadman made a bargain with Badgirl's Daddy and got Badgirl in exchange. Daddy was a junkie, Deadman his dealer, and Badgirl was just a good girl caught up in the mix.

But unfortunately for me, it ended with Badgirl (view spoiler) Sadly, though, we readers don't get to know if she will be successful or not, since the story just ended. :-)

Per Catherynne, this was a retelling of The Armless Maiden fairy tale. According to the Table of Contents, it was a retelling of The Girl with No Hands. Either way, I'll have to look up this one, too.

**"Penny for a Match, Mister?" by Garth Nix, 4 stars. Read 11/24/2016.**

I really enjoyed this story. A retelling of The Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Andersen, it was a fun story about a wicked entity that crossed the Line thanks to a death, and who then sought vengeance for that death. (view spoiler)

In the Author's Note that followed the story, Garth Nix tells us that this story takes place in the same world as a previous story of his ("Crossing the Line"), and that he will "probably write some more!" Dare I hope for a series revolving around Marshal-Warden Rose Jackson? I'm not much for reading westerns, but fantastical, and fantastically weird, westerns? More, please! :-)

**"Some Wait" by Stephen Graham Jones, 4 stars. Read 11/25/2016.**

A retelling of The Pied Piper, this was a rather chilling story. We weren't ever told who took the children, or even what or how, and the viewpoint was in the first-person from someone who was never identified. . .

Stephen Graham Jones writes horror? I'm going to have to find a book of his to read. This story was/is just so creepy. I hope to read more with this sort of scare-factor. :-)

**"The Thousand Eyes" by Jeffrey Ford, 4 stars. Read 11/25/2016.**

This was another creepy story. I really enjoyed it. The Thousand Eyes is a bar in South Jersey and on Wednesdays, they feature a singer known as "Ronnie Dunn, the Voice of Death."

I'm rather stumped on what else to say about this story. Suffice to say, "the Voice of Death"? This was a really good story. :-)

Incidentally, this was a retelling of The Voice of Death, a Romanian folk tale. (I looked it up. Jeffrey's story was the more chilling, but the original shares an unstated moral.)

**"Giants in the Sky" by Max Gladstone, 4.5 stars "great!" Read 11/25/2016.**

This story was a sci-fi retelling of Jack and the Beanstalk. It didn't always make sense to me, but it was rather fun to read. Orm seems great. Iluvatar was indeed "a prick" (Orm's opinion \*heh\*). I wish we were told the protagonist's name, though.

**"The Briar and the Rose" by Marjorie Liu, 4.5 "great!" stars. Read 11/25/2016.**

This retelling was most excellent. If anything, I think I like it better than the original. (It's a retelling of Sleeping Beauty.) Rose, the sleeping princess, wasn't asleep all of the time: She was under a witch's curse, and the witch had full possession of her body for every day of the week except Sunday. Briar, or the Duelist, was the witch's guard, but she fell in love with Rose soon after discovering her.

So this was a story about two women, in love with each other, who, together, defeated the witch. I really, really enjoyed it. :-)

**"The Other Thea" by Theodora Goss, 4 stars. Read 11/26/2016.**

This story is a retelling of The Shadow by Hans Christian Andersen. I must say that I enjoyed this version better than the original, which I just looked up and read. What a gruesome ending that original has! Theodora's version was much more positive, and I felt that the moral to the story was better expressed, too.

What happened was this: Thea is a witch without a shadow. It was cut away from her and hidden 12 years prior, when she was a young child. Now a shadow-less adult, she is fading.

I liked that Thea solved her problem and retrieved her shadow entirely on her own, after receiving just the barest of help from her former teachers. :-)

In short, this version was miles above the original, for me at least. :-)

**"When I Lay Frozen" by Margo Lanagan, 3.5 stars. Read 11/27/2016.**

This story was interesting, but I'm afraid that it didn't make much sense to me. A retelling of Thumbelina by Hans Christian Andersen, it wasn't until the Author's Note that followed the story that we found out that Tommelise (view spoiler) Without this key bit of important info in the story, I'm afraid that the story was just that: A story, but one without purpose or meaning.

Though to be fair, we did get to see Tommelise escape her situation. So it did make sense. It's just that the *why* was never clear. :-/

**"Pearl" by Aliette de Bodard, 3 stars. Finished 11/28/2016.**

This story wasn't for me. It was good, but it jumped around from "present" to "past" and back a lot and it wasn't always readily apparent which we were in, past or present.

Having read the original, Dã Tràng and the Pearl, a Vietnamese folktale, this retelling makes sense, though I find that it "made sense" even before I found the original to read.

It's just. . .this is a short story, maybe 30 pages long, and it failed to captivate me. :-/

**"The Tale of Mahliya and Mauhub and the White-Footed Gazelle" by Sofia Samatar, 3 stars. Read 11/28/2016.**

This story was good but sort of confusing and also sort of didn't make sense. Told as if to a researcher, "the Tale of Mahliya and Mauhub and the White-Footed Gazelle" wasn't one story so much as a series of stories told by an unknown someone who turned out to be the Crow Queen (I think).

The original that this was a retelling of is also called The Tale of Mahliya and Mauhub and the White-Footed Gazelle. I will have to look it up. Maybe reading it will help my understanding of this retelling? It's a hope. . .

But I'll do that later. For now, I've already started the next story and want to get back to it. . .

**"Reflected" by Kat Howard, 4 stars. Read 11/28/2016.**

This story was really good. And from the Author's Note that followed the story, I understand that it is a retelling of The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Andersen, only with the mirror of that story taking on a more prominent role.

As the author said, this was "The Snow Queen with science." It didn't always make sense to me, but it was enjoyable even without full understanding. :-)

**"Spinning Silver" by Naomi Novik, 4 stars. Read 11/29/2016.**

This retelling of Rumpelstiltskin was rather fun. I didn't understand the moral, I don't think, but I enjoyed the retelling! Miryem was smart and it was nice to see her come out on top in her dealings with the Staryk. :-)

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## **Bradley says**

Reading to prepare myself for the '17 Hugo Nominations, this nom is available online.

It's a story of two females locked into rather interesting mythological stories, both of them trapped in both painful and degrading situations and eventually finding solace and freedom in each other.

The mythos, itself is a curious blend of old tales, such as having to wear out seven pairs of metal shoes before being able to break her husband's bear-curse or in the other case, having being forced upon a mountaintop, eating magical apples, while being insulted or having tons of suiters-who-are-sailors demand her hand in marriage.

Overall I was struck by the imagery and the juxtapositions while also feeling something for these women. Even more important than the myths, though, was the feeling of really emotional commentary upon being a

woman in today's world, but that's just some serious subtext. I thought it was pretty awesome, actually, delineating the expectations of the sexes with each other and putting it upon magical situations and myths.

Of course, anyone can make the solid case that ALL myths do this to one degree or another, but this one is particularly modern in its take while feeling timeless.

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### **Anna says**

Got to read an ARC for this one. There was one or two stories I didn't much care for, but overall it's a solid anthology full of new takes on classic fairytales. I can't be too specific without giving away spoilers, so I'll just say that my favorite stories in this anthology were ones where the "princesses" were able to save themselves or save each other.

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### **Susana says**

Way before I joined Gr's, reading anthologies was a favourite \_ well sometimes only \_ way to discover new authors; now, not so much. Now, my TBR list has reached such an unmanageable dimension that most times I don't even go looking for new books.

But... as most of you know, I may have a slight obsession with fairy tale retellings; that means that when a book with a title and cover such as this one, is released, I read it. And hope for the best.

#### **In the Desert Like a Bone** by Seanan McGuire 3.5 Stars

"It's a truth universally acknowledged..." that my favourite series is written by this author; that doesn't mean that I am a fan of all of her work...

This was an interesting take on Red Riding Hood tale. One that takes place in the Wild West: This is actually one of the few novellas/shorts in this anthology that I still haven't forgotten.

#### **Underground** by Karin Tidbeck - 3 Stars

It reminded me of an "East of the Sun and West of the Moon" retelling but with a feminist take to it. I particularly liked how it ended.

#### **Even the Crumbs Were Delicious** by Daryl Gregory - DNF

Honestly after a few pages I just gave up; I'm afraid my brain found it way too confusing. Inspired in "Hansel & Gretel's" tale.

#### **The Super Ultra Duchess of Fedora Forest** by Charlie Jane Anders is a retelling of a Grimm's tale called "The Bird, the Mouse, and the Sausage." 2 Stars

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Yup, you read that right... it was just too strange for me.

#### **Familiaris** by Genevieve Valentine 1 Star

I've already read a book by this author and I actually liked it. This? Not so much. The way it was told felt very high handed.

**Seasons of Glass and Iron** • Amal El-Mohtar 4 Stars

Two cursed girls meet each other on top of a glass mountain.

**Badgirl, the Deadman, and the Wheel of Fortune** by Catherynne M. Valente

Retelling of The Maiden with no arms... and honestly I don't remember anything about it.

**Penny for a Match, Mister?** by Garth Nix 4 Stars

Retelling of "the little match Girl" in a western take; a story of revenge and of finding a home for the lost.

**Reflected** by Kat Howard 2.5 Stars

Retelling of the Snow Queen.

**Spinning Silver** by Naomi Novik 4 Stars

Another of my favourites, Novik brings Rumpelstiltskin's story alive.

These are just some of the stories that appear in this anthology, truth is that there's a couple more (eight maybe?), but for the life of me I just can't find the patience to mention them all.

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## **Zaz says**

A nice collection about fairytale retellings, with an adult and often dark tone.

I didn't enjoy all the stories, some were difficult to enter or too much strange or boring for my tastes. On another hand, some were delightful or very well thought, with original settings (space, wild west, drugs, etc) or insights about society problems, giving some fun to the read and adding twists to the stories. On average, my rating should be 3.5stars, but it's a satisfying collection with a not so easy choice of topic, and the authors' notes added a little something to the read, which was nice. I also finished on a pretty good note, so it gave some shinny coat to the book.

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In the Desert like A Bone - 3 stars

I appreciated the change in the setting, what a nice idea to have a western one! However, I didn't really enjoy the story and the way it was told (which came as a surprising result as I usually like McGuire's stories).

Underground - 3.5 stars

I never heard about Prince Hatt Underground, even if the retelling had similarities to more well known fairytales (it's a bit similar to the beauty and the beast I think). Because of that and the writing style, the read was pleasant. The story worked well, but was often disturbing, matching the feelings the author had when re-read the original tale.

Even the Crumbs Were Delicious - 3.5 stars

I didn't especially enjoy the story (drugs aren't my thing) and it was a little too much distant from

Hansel&Gretel for my tastes. However, there was some warmth in the interactions between the characters, the weirdness gave a special tone to the read and the way the parents were portrayed was interesting.

The Super Ultra Duchess of Fedora Forest - 4 stars

Oh my. I just read Grimm's The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage (never heard about it before reading this short story), and it was gloomy. I liked better the retelling, the sausage was a funny idea as some other secondary members of the cast. I also liked the dystopian touch, that melted well with the good fairytale storytelling.

Familiaris - 1 star

Honestly, I liked nothing in this short story. I found the way it was written confusing, the men were selfish and abusive and I didn't like the hate against children. The point of view of having children when you don't want them was an interesting choice, in this context (because otherwise, I'm not ok with parents having kids and hating them).

Seasons of Glass and Iron - 5 stars

The story was cute, I liked both heroines and how their stories were told. I enjoyed the way it addressed the fact women undergo abuse or follow men's rules because they think or are made think that they are the problem.

Badgirl, the Deadman, and the Wheel of Fortune - 4 stars

Very well conveyed creepy atmosphere. I don't know the original tale and I'm not curious about it after reading this retelling. Otherwise, the pace was good and the story was compelling, even if disturbing.

Penny for a Match, Mister? - 3 stars

Nice retelling, with a good setting and a pleasant paranormal side.

Some Wait - 5 stars

Fascinating. And creepy. I really enjoyed the atmosphere, the mystery and how the story was told.

The Thousand Eyes - 2 stars

Not badly written but the story didn't interest me and didn't really feel like a tale.

Giants in the Sky - skipped

Painful format to read, with some full caps and no point at the end of sentences (plus language and some slang). Maybe I'll come back at the end, but I don't think so. A bit disappointed as it's a Gladstone's short.

The Briar and the Rose - 4 stars

Very pleasant tale, with some diversity and an interesting story. I appreciated the fact that it only picked some wide lines of the original tale, so it never really felt like a retelling.

The Other Thea - 4 stars

Pleasant story and I liked all the work around the shadow and the depression. Plus, there was a cat!

When I Lay Frozen - 2 stars

I don't like the original tale, so even if there were some good ideas for the retelling, I found it quite boring in the way it was written and I never entered the story.

Pearl - 4 stars

Pretty enjoyable with the AI and the space setting. I don't know the original tale but enjoyed this one, it flew well and had some feelings.

The Tale of Mahliya and Mauhub - 3 stars

The format was unusual and some comments were funny to read, however it didn't interest me at a retelling level.

Reflected - 5 stars

"Let it go, let it goooooo". Ok, I loved this retelling with the scientific stuff on the top of the cake. The story was compelling, very well paced and the main character shared well her feelings.

Spinning Silver - 5 stars

Great atmosphere, good retelling, compelling story, pleasant storytelling. I'm so ready for the full novel, can't wait!

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## **Margaret says**

In the introduction, editors Dominik Parisien and Navah Wolfe express their desire to revisit the wonderful, strange, and alien of fairy tales. "In keeping with that original model of composite storytelling," they say, "we decided to run fairy tales through a prism, to challenge our authors to look at stories from an unusual angle, to bring them back into different genres and traditions, to--if you will--return them to their cross-genre roots." And they've certainly done this in this collection. Genres range from Western, to Science Fiction, to Romance, to Fantasy, to Postmodern, and each tale takes an unusual look at a single fairy tale. My favorite stories were "Seasons of Glass and Iron" by Amal El-Mohtar and "Spinning Silver" by Naomi Novik, with close runner-ups in "The Briar and the Rose" by Marjorie M. Liu and "Reflected" by Kat Howard. Three of these are perhaps the least innovative, since they use the fantasy genre for their fairy tale settings (the closest to the original settings); however, these stories are innovative in other ways, combining tales, reconstituting romance, and especially in reinterpreting happily-ever-afters. Reflected is the only non-fantasy of my favorites, and is a science fiction retelling of "The Snow Queen."

This is a great short story collection for fairy tale and speculative fiction fans. I'd already read stories from every single one of these authors, so I knew I was likely to enjoy this collection, and I'm glad I wasn't disappointed!

Here are my mini-reviews for each tale:

In the Desert Like a Bone by Seanan McGuire: A "Little Red Riding Hood" retelling, set in the desert. "She is a child of this blasted, unforgiving land, and when she looks upon it, she sees a paradise, and not a waste at all." Great writing (though I could've used less red analogies). 4/5

Underground by Karin Tidbeck: Retelling of a variation of "East of the Sun, West of the Moon"--"Prince Hatt Underground" (haven't read that one before!). A girl is sold by her father when she's the first to greet him when he comes home, and her new 'husband' locks her away in a house, and won't let her see him.

"...If you break your promise, I will be in her power completely, and forced to marry her."

"Just like what you're doing to me."

YES! 4/5



Even the Crumbs Were Delicious by Daryl Gregory: A "Hansel and Gretel" retelling, about 2 kids or teens that wander into a drug dealers house and start eating the paper-drug inventions that have been plastered on the wall. Umm, weird! 3/5

The Super Ultra Duchess of Fedora Forest by Charlie Jane Anders: A retelling of the Grimms fairy tale "The Bird, the Mouse, and the Sausage." And it's about as weird as you would expect a retelling of that particular fairy tale to be! 3/5

Familiaris by Genevieve Valentine: A retelling of "The Wolves," which appears in The Turnip Princess and other newly discovered fairy tales. I have yet to read The Turnip Princess, but it's similar enough to other fairy tales that I didn't have trouble following the story. Valentine threads 2 stories together. One is the fairy tale queen, who gives birth to 7 sons in 7 days, and sends them to be killed. And the other is a modern woman, whose husband and mother want her to have children, but she wants to work. She succumbs to their wishes, and ends up having 7 sons. Good story. 4/5

Seasons of Glass and Iron by Amal El-Mohtar: So I've now read this 3 times. :) Still just as good. A retelling of "The Glass Mountain" and "The Black Bull of Norrway." Tabitha must wear out 7 iron shoes to break her husband's curse. Amira must stand at the top of glass mountain with golden apples to offer to the suitors who try to claim her hand in marriage, and wind up broken at the bottom of the mountain. But when Tabitha climbs the glass mountain in her iron shoes, she and Amira find company in their trials, and maybe something more. 5/5

Badgirl, the Deadman, and the Wheel of Fortune by Catherynne M. Valente: A retelling of "The Armless Maiden." Badgirl is the daughter of the drug addict Mudpuddle, and Deadman is his dealer. I wanted to know what happened next, but maybe I don't want to know. 3.5/5

Penny For a Match, Mister? by Garth Nix: A retelling of "The Little Match Girl," set in the west. When the match girl's brother dies at the hands of a gang on a full moon night, vengeance is released from another world--a magical world. I liked this more powerful match girl, and would be willing to read more from this universe. 4/5

Some Wait by Stephen Graham Jones: A retelling of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," told from the collective perspective of a town. When 4th graders start disappearing, the parents investigate and discover a mysterious video game that'd been left in the 4th grade hall. Interesting concept and storytelling. 4/5

The Thousand Eyes by Jeffrey Ford: A retelling of "The Voice of Death." An artist goes to a remote bar to capture an image of a legendary musician. But completing this piece comes at a price. Great ambiance. 4/5

Giants in the Sky by Max Gladstone: A sci-fi retelling of "Jack and the Beanstalk," told through the officer logs of a once human. Interesting, good voice. 3.5/5

The Briar and the Rose by Marjorie M. Liu: Retelling of "Sleeping Beauty." An evil witch takes over women's bodies, but she must sleep one full day a week. During that day, the woman she's possessed awakens. A female body guard witnesses it all, and falls in love with the sleeping beauty. Really lovely romance. Would be a 5/5, except that there's a key scene that's not in the story! 4.5/5

The Other Thea by Theodora Goss: Retelling of HCA's "The Shadow," which I remembered a little bit. Thea returns to the school for witches she attended as a teenager after her grandmother dies, in search of her lost shadow. To find it, she must enter a door between worlds. 4/5

When I Lay Frozen by Margo Lanagan: A retelling of "Thumbelina." Tommelise lives with a mousewife who has promised her to Muldvarp. But a sparrow Tommelise helps offers to spirit Tommelise away, if she can only find her agency. 3.5/5

Pearl by Aliette de Bodard: A sci-fi retelling of "Da Trang and the Pearl," a fairy tale I'm unfamiliar with. Da Trang wishes to rise in court, and does so with the help of Pearl, a remora that uplinks info. Most remora live outside the spaceships, but Pearl is special. 3.5/5

The Tale of Mahliya and Mauhub and the White-Footed Gazelle by Sofia Samatar: Retelling the tale of the same name. This one's very meta, with various synopses of the story from different perspectives. 2.5/5

Reflected by Kat Howard: A retelling of "The Snow Queen," and one of the best retellings I've read of this particular fairy tale. When three scientists attempt to prove that there's an alternate dimension behind mirrors, in reflections, one of the scientists disappears into the reflection. 4.5/5

Spinning Silver by Naomi Novik: A retelling of "Rumpelstiltskin." Wow, such a satisfying short story! Wonderful writing. A moneylender's daughter takes over the family business, and one night boasts that she can turn silver into gold, a boast that a Staryk overhears. He takes her up on her boast, and unless she can turn his fairy silver into gold, she'll die. But then if she does succeed, she'll be forced to marry him. 5/5

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## **Cait • A Page with a View says**

Obviously I had to read this anthology of fairy tale retellings (especially since it involved some of my favorites & so many great authors). I was pretty surprised by how much I disliked most of the stories, though... a lot of them were modernized in odd ways and just became too weird or depressing for me.

So I had almost given up on this until I got to Kat Howard's retelling of The Snow Queen, which was pretty awesome. Then the final story (Naomi Novik's retelling of Rumpelstiltskin) was my favorite and totally redeemed the whole book! It has an elf lord who demands that the girl change his faerie silver to gold, but the girl got the power in the end. It was just a really neat twist and I loved the whole thing. I wish that one could be a full novel or somehow separate from the rest of this anthology!!

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## **Sara Saif says**

It's hard to enjoy a retelling for what it is when you either only vaguely recognize the name of the fairytale or have never heard of one in your entire life. Which was the case with more than half of the fairytale retellings in this book. Killed it for me.

I know only the most popular ones and I haven't read the complete works of the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Anderson. My general expectation from this book was fun retellings like Naomi Novik's *Spinning Silver* of the famous fairytales like Cinderella, Snow White, etc. There are so many weird stories in this book, the original ones even weirder (A Mouse, A Bird and A SAUSAGE?! Are you shitting me?) and almost every story tended to do this vague narration thing where the writers tried to make it mysterious. What that does, essentially, is piss me off and confuse me so I hated plenty of them.

**The ones I liked best were:**

- *In the Desert Like A Bone* (Retelling of Red Riding Hood)
- *Underground* (East of the Sun, West of the Moon) : Never heard of it before.
- *Even The Crumbs Were Delicious* (Hansel and Gretel) : This was HILARIOUS.
- *Reflected* (The Snow Queen) : I failed to see how the science part of the story related with the fairytale part. I haven't ever read it but it was incredibly intriguing all the same.
- *Spinning Silver* (Rumpelstiltskin) : It was all very beautifully written but there was an overwhelming sense of being underwhelmed when I read it all. Still, at least it made *sense*.

**The ones that were okay:**

- *Seasons of Glass and Iron* (The Glass Mountain/The Black Bull of Norway) : The glass what and the bull what? Difficult to appreciate or understand a retelling when you have zero knowledge of the actual story. That being said, this was nice. Sort of.
- *Penny For A Match, Mister?* (The Little Match Girl) : A Western that I actually *liked*. Closer to the uppermost category.
- *The Briar And The Rose* (Sleeping Beauty) : Cool.
- *Pearl* (Da Trang and the Pearl) : Closer to the bottom most category but an enjoyable one regardless.

**The ones that were too confusing or weird or just plain bad:**

- *The Super Ultra Duchess of Fedora Forest* (The Mouse, the Bird and the Sausage) : I feel sorry for the exact person who came up with this story, and even sorrier for the one who had to reinvent it.
- *Familiaris* (The Wolves) : So what, the queen's sons ate her? Despite being baffling as HECK, the story also presented a delightful view on motherhood: that children are parasites and they suck the joy out of your life. Or more specifically, from a woman's life. Applause.
- *Badgirl, The Deadman and the Wheel of Fortune* (The Girl With No Hands) : Wait, I'm so confused.
- *Some Wait* (The Pied Piper of Hamelin) : The IT vibes coming off of this story were intense but I ask again, what the butter, cream and cheese was going on in it? Why do they have to make it so incomprehensible?
- *The Thousand Eyes* (The Voice of Death) : LOL and the Thousand \*\*\*\*\*s I Don't Give.
- *Giants In The Sky* (Jack and the Beanstalk) : \*facepalm\* You seriously have to either reach the VERY end of the story or read the Author's Note to get some meaning sent to your addled brain. This is called DEFEATING THE PURPOSE.
- *The Other Thea* (The Shadow) : So bad.
- *The Tale Of Mahliya And Mauhub And The White-Footed Gazelle* (same) : You tried, bro.

In conclusion, not recommended.

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