



Beyond the Woods: Fairy Tales Retold

Paula Guran (Editor) , Tanith Lee , Gene Wolfe , Angela Slatter , Elizabeth Bear , Yoon Ha Lee , Nalo Hopkinson , Catherynne M. Valente , more... Holly Black , Caitlín R. Kiernan , Kelly Link , Karen Joy Fowler , Margo Lanagan , Shveta Thakrar , Theodora Goss , Gardner Dozois , Peter S. Beagle , Priya Sharma , Neil Gaiman , Richard Bowes , Octavia Cade , Jane Yolen , Steve Duffy , Veronica Schanoes , Rachel Swirsky , Ken Liu , Kirstyn McDermott , Peter Straub , Jeff VanderMeer , Charles de Lint ...less

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Once upon a time, the stories that came to be known as “fairy tales” were cultivated to entertain adults more than children; it was only later that they were tamed and pruned into less thorny versions intended for youngsters. But in truth, they have continued to prick the imaginations of all ages.

Over the years, authors have often borrowed bits and pieces from these stories, grafting them onto their own writing, creating literature with both new meaning and age-old significance. In the last few decades or so, they’ve also intentionally retold and reinvented the tales in a variety of ways—delightful or dark, wistful or wicked, sweet or satirical—that forge new trails through the forests of fantastic fiction.

This new anthology compiles some of the best modern fairy tale retellings and reinventions from award-winning and bestselling authors, acclaimed storytellers and exciting new talents, into an enchanting collection. Explore magical new realms by traveling with us, *Beyond the Woods*...

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From Reader Review Beyond the Woods: Fairy Tales Retold for online ebook

Alicia says

Wavering between two and three stars, but I'll give it three because I really liked the two Tanith Lee stories that bookended the compilation. I really liked about a third of these, really did not like another third (too grimdark in the bad kind of way, ie using rape and violence which I am strongly opposed to) and felt ambivalent about the remaining third. Some interesting retellings, but overall a little too presumptuously gritty for my tastes.

Em says

This book was not what I had anticipated.

I was thinking "modern retellings" or "the fairy tales you know and love--but with a twist!". Most, however, weren't just Little Red Riding Hood remade with a romance with the wolf, or Cinderella but she's a cab driver. It was something entirely different. It was a series of intelligent, interesting, diverse, often thought-provoking stories that were often a joy to read. Some of them were of slightly lesser interest, but many were creative and engaging. I enjoyed *The Coin of Heart's Desire*, *Mussel Eater*, *The Bone Mother*, *Lebkuchen*, and many others. The author selection was great--I love Neil Gaiman, Holly Black, Elizabeth Bear, Gene Wolf, and Gardner Dozois. There were authors I didn't know whom I enjoyed quite a bit, and it's definitely worth reading. It was super fun, and often very beautiful.

Lara says

Find my full review of all the short stories in this collection on my blog

I love fairy tales and fairy tale retellings, so this collection was a must-read for me and it did not disappoint. There are some very sweet stories in there, some creepy twists on well known classics and some entirely different kinds of fairy tales. Each author adds his or her own unique twist to the fairy-tale genre.

I particularly enjoyed:

Halfway People by Karen Joy Fowler, about a girl who loves the sea and the strange man with a wing for an arm she finds one day

Beyond the Naked Eye by Rachel Swirsky, a retelling of the wizard of Oz, in which a rebellion is brewing and it uses a reality TV show to bring about the wizard's downfall

Good Hunting by Ken Liu, about a world losing its magic to the advancement of steam technology. Except magic will find a way

Erica says

I didn't take notes on the stories as I read them and it took me 6 months to finish this (there were a lot of things that cut in line because books are rude and that's the drawback to a collection of stories - you can stop for weeks on end and not miss anything) so I don't remember most of the tales anymore.

However, I know I enjoyed many of them and I gave it back to the library feeling a sense of sadness to not be holding onto this book anymore so I think that's 4 stars.

Added bonus: this has stories from all my new favorite contemporary fantasy/speculative/sci-fi...no, you know what? Let's just call them storytellers. This collection had stories from all my new favorite contemporary storytellers: Angela Slatter, Elizabeth Bear, Margo Lanagan, and Catherynne M. Valente plus a story from an old favorite, Neil Gaiman. That made me pretty dang happy.

Jewels says

The selection of short stories was pretty good, even though there were some I could have done without. Writing style is paramount to my enjoyment of a novel, and I still can't be completely happy with rapid fire stream of consciousness offerings. There are authors though, such as Jane Yolen, Neil Gaiman, and Charles de Lint, that I will put up with a lot for, in order to get my mitts on any of their stories. This was the case when I first picked up this book. I saw their names, and I instantly had to have it. If I happen to find a new writer that I enjoy, that's just bonus.

Jennifer says

Probably the best edited collection I've read in a very long time. Most collections are of uneven quality. Beyond the Woods is uniformly wonderful. Some selections I've read before, but very much enjoyed reading again. I can't recommend this highly enough! Many thanks to the publisher and Edelweiss for the ARC.

Kathy Sebesta says

Beyond the Woods is a collection of short stories that are in some way take offs on classic fairy tales. Like any collection of short stories there were some I liked ("Beauty" and "Coin of heart's desire,"), some I really disliked ("Juniper tree," "The maiden-tree," and "Catastrophic disruption of the head" are three) and most which were worth reading but not, to me, noteworthy. What made this collection more interesting than most is that the preface to each story talked about the original source, which wasn't always as obvious as you'd expect. I read each story then tried to figure out the derivation but twice the tales were new to me. (How on earth could that have happened?!)

Nadia says

Two time Bram Stoker Award winner has done some impressive edits with this collection.

Tasha says

Elizabeth Bear's "Follow Me Light" is the best of the stories I had not previously read in other collections.

Meranda says

A wonderful collection of well known fairy tales and even some new ones. Red riding hood, beauty and the beast, and sleeping beauty never looked this way before. Charles de Lint brings one of his fresh concepts on faeries and the dream world to a new level while Peter S. Beagle shows that he's got more up his sleeve than the Last Unicorn. If you're a fairy tale lover, you won't want to miss this collection!

Elizabeth says

Not quite as good as the one I read recently about intersection of forest and fairy tale. some interesting retelling of fairly tales in here though.

S says

A really nice anthology. I had seen a few of the stories elsewhere, but most of them were new - even if old, as in the case of the Tanith Lee works that bookend the stories... I have read a lot of Tanith Lee, but never saw these before, so it is worth picking up just for that. The last story especially was very good... I wish someone would put together a few new anthologies of her work, now that she has passed.

Anna Tan says

Beyond the Woods: Fairy Tales Retold is exactly what it sets out to be - a compilation of fairy tales retold for the modern generation. The modern *adult* generation. Where fairy tales were once cleaned up and made happy and "family-friendly" for the consumption of children (looking at you, Disney), these fairy tales go back to earlier forms when such tales were cautionary tales.

If you were aware that the editor, Paula Guran, edits the annual Year's Best Dark Fantasy and Horror series, you would be prepared for this. I sort of absorbed that, but it did not register totally until I started reading the stories and found that indeed, most of these tales were on the darker side, with some extremely grim ones. I'm not complaining. I don't need all my stories to have happy endings. As it was, I enjoyed most of the stories included in the anthology; there was only 1 story that I distinctly disliked.

Some of these stories are based on very familiar fairy tales, some on the not-so-familiar. Others are totally new fairy tales, but using plot devices, settings or situations common within the fairy tale formula/genre. These do not only stick to the common English/European/American tales - there are Chinese, Indian and Arabian fairy tales, as well as possibly more from cultures I am not familiar enough with to identify.

But "based on" is a rather misleading term to use. Each writer brings a new perspective to well-worn tales,

either retelling the story from a minor character, or from the antagonist's point of view. Some of them rewrite the whole story, giving us new endings altogether. Others retain the shape of the story, but bring it into modern times.

I would recommend this extremely long tome to anyone who is a fan of fairy tales and/or horror stories. Unless you're a kid. I would not recommend this for children.

Note: I received a digital ARC of this book from Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Marquise says

With two stunning and original retellings included, Tanith Lee is about the only author here that stands out from a collection that, in general, doesn't rise above a decent output for me.

Sadly, none of her stories are new or unpublished as I had been hoping when I checked this book out; both "Red as Blood" (a Snow White retelling) and "Beauty" (a Beauty and the Beast retelling) were previously published in Red as Blood, or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer, which I would highly recommend you get instead of Guran's anthology. Much more worth your money!

Judith Shadford says

What a wonderful anthology of re-done, updated or not, fairy tales. Favorite is probably the Red Riding Hood where Grandmama WAS the wolf, and stepfather axed her. Of course Red AND her mother AND her aunty were "were" wolves, could switch back and forth. Terrific writing. Neil Gaiman and Peter Beagle part of the collection as well. It would be fun to teach a class (of adults) starting with Brothers Grimm, then ending with this. Blow a few minds, that would!
