



Two and Twenty Dark Tales: Dark Retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes

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In this anthology, 20 authors explore the dark and hidden meanings behind some of the most beloved Mother Goose nursery rhymes through short story retellings. The dark twists on classic tales range from exploring whether Jack truly fell or if Jill pushed him instead to why Humpty Dumpty, fragile and alone, sat atop so high of a wall. The authors include Nina Berry, Sarwat Chadda, Leigh Fallon, Gretchen McNeil, and Suzanne Young.

Two and Twenty Dark Tales: Dark Retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes Details

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Author : *Nina Berry , Sarwat Chadda , Shannon Delany , Max Scialdone , Karen Mahoney , Lisa Mantchev , Georgia McBride , C. Lee McKenzie , more... Gretchen McNeil , Francisco X. Stork (Foreword) , K.M. Walton , Suzanne Young , Michelle Zink , Leigh Fallon , Angie Frazier , Jessie Harrell , Nancy Holder , Heidi R. Kling , Suzanne Lazear , Pam Victorio , Leah Cypess ...less*

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From Reader Review Two and Twenty Dark Tales: Dark Retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes for online ebook

Adela Cacovean says

This review is also featured on my blog. I received an ebook ARC of this book through NetGalley.

Bilingual review: ENG/RO

English

I am one of those people who sometimes get interested in a book by seeing its cover. This was the case with "Two and Twenty Dark Tales: Dark Retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes", and I can't say I regret my decision. It was a pleasant, interesting read most of the times.

This anthology having been written by twenty different authors, it's clear from the start that you can't possibly like all of the stories included. With so many different, unique styles, it's near to impossible for each and every one of them to appeal to you.

I found myself literally loving half of these dark retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes, liking some of them, the rest boring me to death. You must probably be wondering how could such silly and cute rhymes turn into dark stories. Well, they can and I must admit that some of them really creeped me out. They all revolve around themes like death, dark witches, and pitiful, miserable beings. This book is grotesque, eerie and macabre, and at the same time intriguing and mysterious, giving you goosebumps.

Personally, I didn't know the majority of these Mother Goose rhymes, but the good thing is that the rhymes are included at the beginning of each story. If I, who didn't know them, liked them so much, I can imagine how those who are more familiar with them will love them.

The version I read being an ARC, three of the stories were missing from the ebook, which is a pity as from what I heard about them, they were really good. I wish from the bottom of my heart I could give this 4 vanilla flowers. However, I can't possibly paper over the stories that bored me out of my mind.

I recommend this book to young adults and adults who may find enjoyment in horror fairytales. A little warning though: you won't see those innocent Mother Goose Rhymes with the same eyes after you read this.

Român?

Eu fac parte din categoria de oameni care uneori sunt atra?i de o carte datorit? copertei. Acesta a fost cazul ?i cu "Two and Twenty Dark Tales: Dark Retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes", ?i nu pot s? spun c? regret decizia pe care am luat-o. A fost, în mare parte majoritatea timpului, o lectur? interesant? ?i pl?cut?.

Aceast? antologie fiind scris? de 20 de autori diferi?i, e clar de la început c? nu au cum s?-?i plac? toate pove?tile incluse. Cu atât de multe stiluri unice, e aproape imposibil s? fie fiecare din ele pe gustul t?u.

Mi-au plăcut la neburie cam jumătate din aceste povestiri întunecate ale poezilor pentru copii, o parte din ele doar mi-au plăcut, restul plăcându-mă de moarte. Probabil vă întrebăți cum se pot transforma niște rime prostă? și drăguțe în povești de groază? Ei bine, pot, să trebui să recunoști unele din ele mă au îngrozit de-a dreptul. Toate poveștile se învârt în jurul unor teme ca moartea, viața jitoare rele și finitul deplorabile, nenorocite. Această carte este grotescă, sinistru, și macabru, și în același timp fascinantă și misterioasă, fără sănătatea de găsină.

Eu, una, nu sănătatea acestor poezioare, dar partea bună este că sunt incluse la începutul fiecărui povești. Dacă mie, care nu sănătatea poezile originale, mi-a plăcut atât de mult cartea, îmi imaginez cum li se va pară celor care sunt familiari cu ele.

Versiunea pe care am citit-o fiind un ARC, trei dintre povești lipseau din ebook, ceea ce este mare pe cărți, pentru că am auzit numai păreri bune legate de ele. Îmi doresc din toată inimă să îmi pot da cărții patru flori de vanilie, dar nu pot să treacă cu vederea poveștile care mă plăcăndu-mă de moarte.

Recomand această carte tinerilor, dar și adulților cărora le-ar plăcea sănătatea poveștii de groază asemănătoare basmelor. Un mic avertisment doar: nu veți mai vedea cu aceiași ochi poezile inocente pentru copii după ce ați citit și această carte.

Jacquelyn says

I was given this ARC from Netgalley, so it doesn't have all the stories that will be in the final edition. I was really excited to read this book a dark twist on Mother Gooses nursery rhymes. I loved how it was put in the foreword "The tales now contain the other side of reality, the darker side of fear. Wishes are not always fulfilled, and the security and permanence of our parents' love is no longer a sure thing." As we grow up the rhymes seem to lose their innocence not because they are any different, but because we learn to deal with the darkness we were once protected from in our youth. Each story I read I found interesting in one way or another but I have to say the ones that I liked the best were usually the ones I knew the rhymes to beforehand. I give this anthology 4 stars because over all I really enjoyed the book and I had to give it bonus points for being the only book I have ever read about retelling of Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes.

As Blue as the Sky and as Old

Nina Berry

2 stars

A story about Taffy the Welshman This was one of the nursery rhymes I hadn't heard before, so I really didn't understand the story. I was confused why the story was first being told from a completely random person that didn't seem to pertain to the story. There were facts given in the beginning of the story that didn't seem to make sense to the end. Basically I felt confused about the story.

Sing a Song of Six-Pence

Sarwat Chadda

3 stars

Based off blackbirds baked in a pie. Of course I have heard this rhyme before, but it had an edge in this story I had never contemplated that blackbird was a person though I couldn't tell if he was a demon or a fallen angel or what. His description was confusing, I don't understand what he did to get punished by the king but I liked how the story progressed and though it ended with a sad ending I thought was a fitting ending and brought closure.

Clockwork

Leah Cypress

4 Stars

A retelling of Hickory Dickory Dock. A story based on a mouse not really being a mouse at all but an enchantment placed upon a girl. The clock being based in magic by the chimes it rings at the top of the hour. Murder and mystery, confusion and magic all coming together to make this one of my favorite short stories in the book.

Blue

Sayantani DasGupta

2 Stars

Loosely based of the rhyme little boy blue. I was confused who the girl was in the story why exactly she was spinning stories or tattooing people or something like that. Didn't really like the story though I have always like the rhyme.

Pieces of Eight

Shannon Delany with Max Scialdone

2 Stars

This is again another rhyme I haven't heard before I was intrigued by the lost prince stolen away by his mother to protect to save the kingdom in the end. But the whole in between and the battle scene of the tree didn't really like.

Wee Willie Winkie

Leigh Fallon

4 Stars

From the rhyme Wee Willie Winkie, by far one of my favorite stories in the book. It was short but it packed a punch. It took me a while to figure out where in the world I was and then when the story line was told I found I was somewhere in Ireland which makes the plot of this story so much more understandable. Gives a whole new meaning to bedtime.

Boys and Girls come out to play

Angie Frazier

3 Stars

I haven't heard this before but I was able to figure out what was going on in the story and rather liked it. A story based on picking only one and making the children come out to play. Another story of how tricky and cruel witches can be.

I come bearing souls

Jessie Harrell

2.5 Stars

This story was based on Hey Diddle Diddle. I didn't see how this had anything to do with the rhyme except the cow god and the fiddle being played in the first scene. Had mythology which was a plus in my book, I think it would make a great stand alone book I would love to find out more about Heather and her family and what Egyptian gods were doing in modern day America. It was too short for my taste.

The Lion and the Unicorn: Part the First

Nancy Holder

3 Stars

I love history and though I haven't heard this rhyme before I enjoyed the story that accompanied it. Rumors

have always surrounded the monarchs of old and they expands on the notions already out there.

Life in a Shoe

Heidi R. Kling

3.5 Stars

Based on Old Woman who lived in a shoe. The story gave depth into why she had so many children, that it wasn't a choice it was forced. It also brought to life her children and I liked how it was told from the daughter's point of view and she wasn't willing to follow her mother. Another favorite of mine.

Candlelight

Suzanne Lazear

3 Stars

I hadn't heard this rhyme either but it was a story that could stand alone from the rhyme. It dealt with what all children want freedom from their parents, though all wishes come at a price something the narrator didn't find out until it was too late. It had just the right amount of resistance to make it seem more real and I think it should have explored how they had to learn how to live on their own how much they missed their mother and how their parent actually did a lot for them. And maybe just a little longer.

One for Sorrow

Karen Mahoney

3 Stars

I had never heard this rhyme but I still thought it was a pretty good story. Basic transformation story with love being the key but in the end the twist where she wants to be a beast with him was what I really liked about the story. Gave her and him a happy ending.

Those who Whisper

Lisa Mantchev

2.5 Stars

Again a rhyme I have never heard of but I did like the story. It kinda seemed like snow white just a little bit. I would have liked to know why she was able to talk to the birds, but I loved how strong she was despite her horrid beginning.

Little Miss Muffet

Georgia McBride

1.5 Stars

I didn't like the story was confused about what was going on in the beginning even though I knew the rhyme. Couldn't understand why they were spiders and the ending was a little creepy.

Sea of Dew

C. Lee Mckenzie

3 Stars

I like the story kinda a story about how one choice really does change everything. I hadn't heard the rhyme and I was kinda confused in the beginning but then I figured out what was happening. It did drag a bit in the middle though.

Tick Tock

Gretchen McNeil

1 Star

This was a creepy story and I don't feel like it had anything to do with what the rhyme was about. Like how

was murder "what was right".

A Pocket Full of Posy

Pamela van Hylckama Vlieg

1 Star

I had always heard that this was based on the black plague and I had thought that it would be dealing with that aspect of the story. The whole vampire thing was kinda weird like what did that have to do with the rhyme except the ashes. Yes the author gave everything in the rhyme a link to the story the girl Rosie, the flowers he was going to give her, and the vampire ashes in the ended. But then it just ended didn't even give closure like did the boyfriend get convicted of murder or what?

The Well

K.M. Walton

3.5 Stars

Based off the rhyme Jack and Jill. I don't know if this makes me kinda dark but I had just lately been thinking about this nursery rhyme and how maybe Jack falling down wasn't really an accident I started thinking that Jill had pushed him down. I didn't have the whole plague involved or that they were twins that really hated each other and where the only two people left in the world. But I did like what the author did with the story.

The Wish

Suzanne Young

3.5 Stars

I enjoyed this story based on Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. It is a story about to be careful what you wish for I was kinda hoping that the ending wouldn't happen that death would have taken her away to live with him, but like I've said before wishes have a price to pay so be careful what you wish for.

A Ribbon of Blue

Michelle Zink

4 Stars

I had never heard the rhyme before but this was one of my favorites. The story was well written and though it had a sad ending I didn't find anything dark in the story. Ruby was finally at peace and beautiful and happy everything she deserved.

Thank you to Month9Books and NetGalley for giving me a chance to review these Titles.

Jill Swanson-Diaz says

(Review copy provided by NetGalley)

Beautiful and mesmerizing. This anthology is a wonderful addition to any fairy tale collection. Each story will entrap its reader, leaving them with chills. Preceded by well known Mother Goose Rhymes, such as Little Boy Blue and Jack 'n Jill, these stories dig deep down into the darkness behind every nursery rhyme. When I was a child I had a big book of nursery rhyme favorites. I often sang them to my sisters. Reading these retellings now, I have a new perspective on what I sang as a child. It is great to see the different interpretations these authors have created. Each author did a wonderful job writing a unique and fascinating tale. Some stories were more captivating than others, but overall I liked each one a good deal. These stories inspire fear and a sense of wonderment all at the same time. These stories leave a great deal of interpretation

up to the reader and they will leave your brain churning for a good while after you finish. All though meant for a young adult audience, I believe this anthology will appeal mostly to older readers and those all ready familiar with Mother Goose. I truly loved this anthology and will most likely be re-reading it from time to time. This is a must read!

Danielle says

Review to Come

Sam says

You've probably read, like me, many fairytale re-tellings of Hans Christian Anderson and The Brothers Grimm - well these are all Mother Goose nursery rhymes. At times with only a few lines to work with, these authors have weaved some haunting and truly imaginative re-tellings of these well known nursery rhymes.

With so many different writing styles it was hard to get absorbed in the story but at times the author was able to take me away and get totally wrapped up in their spine tingling tale of horror. It must be terribly hard to suck the reader in with such a short amount of time, but when the author got it right it was amazing.

While some of these stories were pretty amazing, some of them were a bit so so. I didn't end up finishing all the short stories, I only got through 12 of the 20. So below is a short write up of each of the stories that I read.

'As Blue as the sky and just as old' by Nina Berry: This one tells the nursery rhyme of Taffy was a welshman. It was ok but I'd never really heard of the rhyme before because it's a welsh tale.

'Sing a song of sixpence' by Sarwat Chadda: It must be hard to write a short story with interesting characters but I felt like this author achieved that with this story. It was interesting and had plenty of depth to it for something written in a short amount of pages.

'Clockwork' by Leah Cypess: This was an interesting spin on the Hickory Dickory Dock nursery rhyme. It was a great short story that didn't need a lot of back story, although it did seem a little cliche.

'Blue' by Sayantani DasGupta: Tale based on Little boy blue rhyme which was written in verse and very imaginative.

'Pieces of eight' by Shannon Delaney: I didn't know this rhyme either, some sleep baby sleep rhyme. I found it a bit boring but I did like the slight humor between two characters.

'Wee Willie Winkie' by Leigh Fallon: Such a haunting tale. In such a short period of time I was grabbed and taken along for the spooky tale of Wee Willie Winkie. A favourite so far and I want to read more by this author.

'Boys and girls come out to play' by Angie Frazer: Another really great story that was very imaginative about witches and witchcraft.

'I Come bearing souls' By Jessie Harrell: A creepy egyptian twist on the well known Hey Diddle Diddle rhyme.

'The Lion and the unicorn: part the first' by Nancy Holder: This one was really confusing and I didn't really get the meaning behind the story.

'Life in a shoe' by Heidi R. King: Very interesting and a little bit dystopian. Based on the rhyme there was an old lady who lived in a shoe. The idea behind this story would be the only reason why an old lady would have a reason to have so many children. This one whisked me away into it's world right away.

'Candlelight' by Suzanne Lazear: This was amazing! I would've loved reading a whole book about it. So much more of the background story could get fleshed out and I could read more about these characters in a full length book.

'One for sorrow' by Karen Mahoney: A little boring and felt very long for a short story. I've never heard this rhyme before either and I didn't really understand what the story had to do with the rhyme. The story was fairly predictable too.

Overall there were some fantastic stories and it made me want to read other books by those authors, but I gave this 2 stars mainly because I didn't finish it and because I was disappointed. Thank you to Month9Books and Netgalley for my copy.

Also on my blog

Jami Leigh says

1. As blue as the sky and just as old- I'd like to see more of this one, but the POV shifts made it less interesting to me. I'd almost rather it intercut bits, without it needing to be in chronological order. It has little suspense until the very end, but that may be due to my familiarity with folk tales.
2. Sing a song of six-pence-Interesting world, but the twist ending I saw coming from the moment the woman said what she wanted.
3. Clockwork-Simplistic. Very, very simplistic.
4. Blue- This is where the anthology really caught my attention. I really, really like her style. I'd read more from this author.
5. Pieces of Eight- Interesting concept twist, but slow
6. Wee Willie Winkie- Nice twist on this one.
7. Boys and Girls Come Out to Play-Reminded me of The Near Witch, but simplified. And with a soul crushing ending
8. I come Bearing souls- This would make a great concept for a YA novel, but feels like everything's glossed over.

9. The Lion and the Unicorn-part 1- without the other half, reserving judgment. But doesn't make me want to go out and get the full version for the other half.
10. Life in a shoe- Pretty good, gritty, not that fantastical.
11. Candellight- Awesome.
12. One for Sorrow- A bit slow, but very good. Reminded me of something Maggie Stiefvater would write.
13. Those Who Whisper- This one both bored me and interested me at the same time. I like the nod to other nursery rhymes and Disney style archetype, while then turning it on its head.
14. Little Miss Muffet—EW. Seriously. I should have known not to read this one, thinking about the original story, but it started out fairly harmless.... EW.
15. Sea of Dew (Short version)-This version is noted to be shorter than in the full, so I don't think it's fair to judge this one. As it is, I don't really care about what happens to the characters.
16. Tick Tock- Now this one, I liked. Creepy and to the point, reminds me of something from the Twilight Zone. Really shouldn't read it at night, but this was the first one that actually was scary, to me.
17. A pocket full of Posy- This has novel length potential as well. Even though, yeah, vampires aren't the newest thing, they should be scary. Vampires don't glitter, any more than Klingons do.
18. The Well- Postapocalyptic, which I normally like. This time, not quite so much. Maybe because Jill annoyed me from the second line on.
19. The wish- Nice twist on it, NOT what I was expecting at all. But I didn't feel any sympathy for Lauren. And the end slips into telling, rather than showing, and dampens the shock value. It still works, granted, but could have more power.
20. A ribbon of Blue- I know someone with CP, and a lot of the things she says about the way people treat her is spot on. I liked this story probably most of all, because it has so much hope in it, despite the darker elements.

Overall, there are some hits and some misses, but an entertaining spin into the odd, twisted world that happens when you look through the nursery rhyme lens. This one took me longer than it usually would, because I wanted to give all the stories a fair review.

Vivien says

This was an anthology with 20 tales based on Mother Goose rhymes. Some very excellent and some I didn't love. I'll share my thoughts on each short story. I did overall enjoy all these tales. Some were really dark and downright creepy while others were more of the fluffy side.

Based on eARC provided by NetGalley.

As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old by Nina Berry:

I wasn't familiar with this rhyme before reading it. It wasn't a strong beginning to the anthology. Felt cliched.

Sing a Song of Six-Pence by Sarwat Chadda:

I really enjoyed this short from Chadda. I wanted so much more after I was finished. Dark and very similar in writing style to his SanGreal series.

Clockwork by Leah Cypess:

This short story felt like the most complete of the anthology. It had a beginning, middle and end. All of which I approved of.

Blue by Sayantani DasGupta:

Unfortunately, there wasn't anything to this short story that compelled me at all. There just wasn't any development.

Pieces of Eight by Shannon Delaney with Max Scialdone:

This short story, while a decent length felt like it was all over the place. The world building was confusing and the story just just drifted.

Wee Willie Winkie by Leigh Fallon:

Having read this author before, and not really enjoying the writing style, this one surprised me. A deliciously dark tale. One that could have been told to me as a child.

Boys and Girls Come Out to Play by Angie Frazier:

This story started out real well. I was intrigued by the sisters, but in the end it fell a little flat. I'm curious to read more from this author.

I Come Baring Souls by Jessie Harrell:

There just wasn't much of this short story to go on. I didn't love it or hate it. I wish there had been more.

The Lion and the Unicorn: Part the First by Nancy Holder

An interesting premise, but since this was only part one, I can't say how the rest turns out.

Life in a Shoe by Heidi R. Kling:

This was one short story that I really wanted more from. I could see this turning into a full fledged novel. Very unsettling.

Candlelight by Suzanne Lazear:

This story shows the consequences that can come from a poor decision. Something very trivial can turn out to be very detrimental.

One for Sorrow by Karen Mahoney:

A bittersweet short story. While I wasn't completely enthralled, it really came together at the end. I'm satisfied with the outcome as well.

Those Who Whisper by Lisa Mantchev:

I enjoyed the writing style in this short story. It was very similar to Matchev's other novels. Really wanted this to keep going.

Little Miss Muffet by Georgina McBride:

OMG, I'm going to have nightmares. Spiders....eeee.... and odd. Such a unique take on this well known nursery rhyme.

Sea of Dew by C. Lee McKenzie:

A grim tale of being lost at sea. Not sure if I wanted more from this one since it left me feeling really sad.

Tick Tock by Gretchen McNeil:

This would have been terrifying when I was younger. Now, I'm glad I don't have to babysit anymore. I'll never look at grandfather clocks the same.

A Pocket Full of Posy by Pamela van Hylckama Vlieg:

A very interesting twist to the meaning of ashes. I rather enjoyed this tale. Loved getting a male pov.

The Well by K.M. Walton:

This was such a disturbing take on a well known nursery rhyme. So utterly creepy and haunting, I won't forget.

The Wish by Suzanne Young:

While this story wasn't anything new, I still really enjoyed it. Just when you thought something good would happen, your own wishes comes back to bite you.

A Ribbon of Blue by Michelle Zink:

While this was had a somber undertone, it left me feeling content. A great short story to end the anthology on.

Teno Q. says

Great short story collection! Allegorical, interpretive, and entertaining. Except for a few confusions here and there, I enjoyed it very much. Here are my comments for each tale, in the order they are presented:

As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old

Meh. Not a strong opening story. Perhaps it was because I wasn't familiar with the rhyme this one is based on, or perhaps it was a pile of rubbish.

Sing a Song of Six-Pence

Dark, haunting, and eventually rewarding: A story about the lengths a mother will go to be with her child.

Clockwork

This has got to be my favorite one out of the whole anthology. This story has the mouse who ran up a clock turn out to be a girl; how and why she became a mouse is the mystery the girl explores. It keeps you guessing and arrives at a bittersweet conclusion that I approved of wholeheartedly.

Blue

An invisible spirit who writes stories on peoples' skin meets a boy who can see her. This story could have had potential had it been expanded some, but it ended too abruptly, without taking that potential anywhere.

Pieces of Eight

Eh, a lot of complicated, "mysterious" things happened to develop the worldbuiding, but again, this story wandered around aimlessly and ended without taking its potential anywhere.

Wee Willie Winkie

In this one, a girl who has been lying about her age is warned about a curse targeting under-sixteens. The dark atmosphere is particularly strong here; it's a creepy story that will no doubt scare kids into getting to bed on time.

Boys and Girls Come Out To Play

Started out great, but turned into something less than great. It was trying too hard to aim for "dark" and got a lot of "huh?" instead.

I Come Bearing Souls

This one had an interesting premise, but too much of it was unexplained and left me feeling a little bewildered. Why would the pantheon of Ancient Egypt be incarnated in the bodies of American teenagers, and why would they be performing death rituals on their classmates?

The Lion and the Unicorn (Part One)

This is a promising start, but the ARC I received of this does not include Part Two, so I can't say anything conclusive about the whole story.

Life in a Shoe

In this one, the situation behind the woman with all her kids living in a shoe is explored with a little realism. (With all those children, neglect and poverty are more than probable.) It was okay; not bad, not amazing. A little too simplified and short compared to the other stories.

Candlelight

A sad story about what comes to people, especially teenagers, who are selfish and petty and do not appreciate what they have.

One for Sorrow

A girl is drawn to a strange crow who shows up every day at her window. He wants her to break a curse that has been set on him, but in doing so, she might just set the curse on herself instead.

Those Who Whisper

Reminded me of the novel *Daughter of the Forest* by Juliet Marillier. A young woman is cast from her village after a mysterious string of murders claims her mother. She lives in a hut out in the forest for years, until one day a familiar face shows up at her door with a horrifying truth. Not bad.

Little Miss Muffet

I couldn't make sense of this one. People turned into spiders randomly and ate each other's friends. Seriously.

Sea of Dew

A haunting story about the fate of people lost at sea.

Tick Tock

A very, very creepy babysitter horror story. Great atmosphere, but it was too bizarre and nonsensical to be a great story. I failed to see how or why any of the events in this story could have happened, even in a horror fiction. Usually the villains/spectres in horror have some kind of reason, no matter how twisted, for what they do; in this tale there was nothing I could infer as to what their motives were.

A Pocket Full of Posy

This one caught my interest very quickly. A boy wakes up in a field, with blood on his hands, and finds his girlfriend dead nearby. But he cannot remember what happened, and won't rest until he does. I liked it, but was disappointed by the solution it arrived at.

The Well

What really happened when Jack and Jill fell down a hill? Unfortunate things.

The Wish

Could practically be the poster story for the phrase "be careful what you wish for." A girl makes a wish upon a star, and a moment later a boy appears to unknowingly grant her wish.

A Ribbon of Blue

A sweet tale about death and the release it can provide.

Thanks to NetGalley.com and Month9Books for providing me with the ARC!

Angie says

I received an ARC from NetGalley.

I don't usually read anthologies, but I've seen this one around quite a bit and thought it sounded interesting. I love fairytale retellings, so dark retellings of Mother Goose rhymes definitely piqued my interest, even though I don't know many of the originals (they're included though!). I wasn't familiar with any of these authors, although I did recognize several names. I do think I'll check out some of their other works now that I've gotten a little taste.

Overall, this collection of stories was disappointing. There's only a few that I really enjoyed and stand out from the rest. Most of them are just strange, and the connection to original rhyme is either non-existent or blantly stated.

★★?? As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old by Nina Berry

This one was strange. The connection to the rhyme isn't clear until near the end, where it's just explicitly explained to us. I was interested at the start, but once rape showed up, I wasn't into it anymore. I also had a hard time believing that a girl would get into a car with a strange guy that she literally just met. At the end, I still wasn't clear about what had happened.

★★★?? Sing a Song of Six-Pence by Sarwat Chadda

I loved the idea of a tavern full of ghouls and demons! I also thought this was a clever interpretation of the rhyme. It's definitely dark, and I liked it. I do wish it had been a little longer, since I wanted to see a bit more of what lied beyond "the wall."

★★★★? **Clockwork** by Leah Cypess

This one was really good! Even if the poem hadn't been included, it was clear that this one was *Hickory, Dickory, Dock*. I loved the magical aspect and the royal betrayal. The ending is kind of depressing, but I think the mouse was very brave.

★★?? **Blue** by Sayantani DasGupta

So, I liked the idea of the Children of Ink, but I found the story really boring. It's the shortest of the bunch, and definitely felt less developed than the others.

★★?? **Pieces of Eight** by Shannon Delany with Max Scialdone

This time the rhyme is a prophecy in the story, which was an idea that I really liked. This story is quite action packed, but I just didn't like it. I was honestly expecting something pirate-like, but it was about music instead, which just isn't my thing.

★★★★? **Wee Willie Winkie** by Leigh Fallon

Now this is what I was expecting when I started reading! This one is clearly a well thought out reinterpretation of the rhyme. At the beginning I was a little worried that this was going to be another disappointment, but it ended up being one of the best! The ending is very chilling!

★★?? **Boys and Girls Come Out to Play** by Angie Frazier

I really liked this interpretation, too. The witches calling the children out to the forest to "test" them was interesting, and I think it would make a great full length novel. The one thing I didn't like was the semi-love triangle. It just didn't fit or make sense, since it was so undeveloped.

★★?? **I Come Bearing Souls** by Jessie Harrell

This is another weird one. Too weird for my liking. This one is about gods/goddesses and soul collecting. I'm not a fan of the "I'm not sure how I escaped but.." which is essentially what happened with the main conflict. There is also literally a cow jumping over the moon, which was the only clear connection to the rhyme.

★???? **The Lion and the Unicorn: Part the First** by Nancy Holder

I know this one is on two parts (the second isn't included in the ARC), but it oddly read like a chapter from a historical novel. I felt like we were just thrust into the story without any real context, so I had no clue what was going on.

★★?? **Life in the Shoe** by Heidi R. Kling

This was most the most obvious and literal story of the bunch. A woman becomes pregnant every time her military husband is on leave, but can't afford to take care of them. It was good, but nothing special.

????? **Humpty Dumpty** by Georgia McBride

Unfortunately, not included in the ARC.

★★?? **Candlelight** by Suzanne Lazear

Interesting premise but super predictable. I was put off at the beginning because of Juliet's over-the-top teenage whining, and a commercial for a center where they understand unfair parents? Yeah, right! Sure the idea of Babylon seems inviting, but this was clearly a tale of "be careful what you wish for."

★★?? **One for Sorrow** by Karen Mahoney

This is another one that I think I'd like as a full length novel. As a short story it didn't really work for me, since it's a super extreme case of insta-love. The first part is very *Twilight*-esque: boy comes through girls

window, watches her sleep, "what are you" moment at school, kissing in a field. The only difference is the boy is a crow, not a vampire. The ending was interesting, but rushed.

★★★?? Those Who Whisper by Lisa Mantchev

Another one that actually feels complete! This one has a bit of a murder mystery twist, which I enjoyed. There's also fantasy elements with the talking birds. I liked it.

★★★★? Little Miss Muffet by Georgia McBride

What the heck?! That was totally bizarre, but I loved it! This one gets bonus points for being utterly unique. Yes, it involves spiders which is an obvious choice, but the specifics are what makes this one stand out!

★★★★? Sea of Dew by C. Lee McKenzie

This one is a survival story, and I really liked it. I think this is the only one without some magic or fantasy element, but that's okay. It's about four people lost at sea and trying to survive. However, the dark theme of the book suggests that they don't make it.

★★★★★ Tick Tock by Gretchen McNeil

Children are freaking terrifying!!!

★★?? A Pocket Full of Posey by Pam van Hylckama Vlieg

This one started off really good! Did Jake kill his girlfriend? Even he doesn't know. I was expecting a Jekyll/Hyde type twist and that is not what happened at all. The ending was pretty unsatisfying.

★★★★? The Well by K.M. Walton

This one is set in a kind of dystopian, post apocalyptic world, where Jack and Jill are two of the only survivors. Unfortunately for them, they hate each other. The hostility between these two is super thick, so what happens when they travel up the hill to get some water?

★???? The Wish by Suzanne Young

Another major disappointment and a "careful what you wish for." This one was pretty much ruined by the whole "this is love at first sight, omg we must be together forever" scene that was completely unnecessary. This story was also beyond predictable.

★★★★? A Ribbon of Blue by Michelle Zink

This is a sweet, light story about a girl with CP who finally meets a nice boy. Very fluffy, but cute.

????? The Lion and the Unicorn: Part the Second by Nancy Holder

Unfortunately, not included in the ARC.

Read more of my reviews at [Pinkindle Reads & Reviews](#).

Donna says

Anything that puts a dark twist in an otherwise more innocent tale is something that'll be right up my demented alley and I was not left disappointed by TWO AND TWENTY although I was a bit underwhelmed. I just didn't feel blown away by a lot of these stories and if you know the history behind some of these rhymes (like Ring Around the Rosie, for instance) it's going to be a little weird seeing an

author take the story on a completely different path. It's not necessarily a bad thing but this is a compendium of authors rewriting the history behind these rhymes that already have a history behind them so it's a bit weird.

'A Ribbon of Blue' by Michelle Zink was one of my favorites mainly because it hit a sweet spot for me; its nexus was a carnival. But the story it told was a pretty uplifting one and far lighter than the other stories went. Seeing as how Mother Goose rhymes have an underlying darkness about them to begin with to have this figurative light at the end of the tunnel was a nice departure after all of the demented darkness (which still makes my black soul happy, so don't be fooled that I've gone sap).

'I Come Bearing Souls' by Jessie Harrell was another favorite of mine, focusing on reincarnation and ancient Egypt. Another sweet spot for me, Egypt. It's hard to go wrong there but I liked how the author approached this antiquated mythos with a current age spin and it really made the story relatable. And depressing. Loved it.

'Clockwork' by Leah Cypess, again, hit the mark for me because of the demented and extraordinarily dark route it took. Not to mention it was written seamlessly, interweaving the mouse life and the human life and making them one and the same, the metamorphosis incestuous instead of clean and poof! Human. Not to mention I'm a fan of blood magic, mainly because of its darkness and the characters' need to go THERE with it. There needs to be sacrifice and if the characters are willing to do that then they're willing to go pretty far. What can I say? I like characters that are unafraid to get done what needs to be done.

There are a couple of stories that I genuinely just didn't like, others that I didn't dislike but didn't really impress me and still others that I liked in a passing 'that was pretty good' sort of way. TWO AND TWENTY DARK TALES wasn't an anthology that blew me away but it wasn't a bad one either. There is something intriguing about each and every story in here but sometimes the writing just didn't jive with my mojo. It happens. That particular writing style just didn't impress me and thus didn't liken me to the story as a whole regardless of the overarching premise. I had my favorites, obviously, but I feel this book is a one and done type of deal. Everything will blend together and even your favorites you'll have to be reminded of which ones they were (I had to go through the table of contents to remember which ones I liked). Everything else will get lost in the shuffle and while I'm pretty sure you'll like what you read I don't feel the majority of these stories will be prone to sticking in the brain in any large fashion. Maybe it's the set-up or the style they were written in. I don't know. But I find myself, while overall liking what I read, not remembering most of it.

LiarLiar says

4.5 star. for this one :)

to tell you the truth im not a big fan of
anthologies due to some stories in it. that i want to read in series and i want to read more hahaha ..

i don't know how to start this .

hmm .. let's start this with the foreword .

i love how the foreword written and yeah i agree with Francisco X. Stork

in the line that he said " WISHES ARE NOT ALWAYS FULFILLED AND THE SECURITY AND PERMANENCE OF OUR PARENTS LOVE IS NO LONGER A SURE THING " why ? because parents nowadays is always on the go . but the worst thing is they ignore or don't care about their child . that's it .

this anthology is consists of 25 different rhymes retold . and this is the first one that i read rhymes being retold and rhymes are not stories are they ? yes for those little one i guess. and they like to say it all over and over again because it's cute .

the rhymes are well told with a dark twist that you will absolutely love . but i warn you don't tell this retold stories to the little one because they might get scared hahaha :)

some rhymes told in modern day and the others is well told in the times that people believes in witches devil's child whatsoever .

i love this it is a compilation of mix genre like tragic death , thriller , magic and etc..

before i end this review . if you buy a copy of this it will be donoted or the half of it ? to a charity called YALITCHAT.ORG a literary organization that fosters the advancement of young adult literature around the world (that comes in the book i just copied this for futher info. hahahah)

before i forgot
MANY THANKS FOR MONTH9BOOKS and NETGALLEY
for giving me a chance to review this :)

my closing line will be
EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED in this book :D

Anna says

For the most part I really enjoyed this anthology. All of these authors told very interesting, creepy and highly imaginative stories. There were a few that confused me, but that was mostly because of the fact that I had never read the original rhymes they were based on and had no springboard because of it. This review will give a few insights into my opinions of the individual stories. Beware that as this was an advance copy, some of the stories that will be in the final published version were omitted from this one and therefore I did not review them. Enjoy!

As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old (Nina Berry): This was one of the nursery rhymes that I had never heard before, Taffy and the Welshman. I spent most of this one in a state of complete confusion until things came together at the end. I'll read the original at some point and re-read this one after. Hopefully it'll go better.

Sing A Song Of Six-Pence (Sarwat Chadda): I was very impressed by the story the author built from the original rhyme. Someone cursed into blackbird form, allusions to Edgar Allan Poe's poem The Raven, and the royalty involvement were highly unique. It really chilled me to my bones.

Clockwork (Leah Cypess): I wondered how she would make a mouse running up a clock interesting and boy was I not disappointed! The mouse is really a girl who has been transmogrified and there is royal intrigue, murder, witchcraft and the ending made me wish this had been a full-length novel. But then again I loved Leah Cypess' Mistwood series when I read it. This was probably my favorite in the anthology by far! :)

Blue (Sayantani DasGupta): Unlike some of the other reviews I've seen, I felt like this story was one of the best in the anthology. It was a retelling of Little Boy Blue and I really enjoyed that it focused on a mysterious phantom tattoo artist who works life stories into people's skin, but is not allowed to ever feel for herself. The final interaction was truly beautiful and the writing flows like a river. Not to be missed.

Pieces of Eight (Shannon Delany with Max Scialdone): This one was another based on a rhyme that I had never heard before and it really suffered from that fact. I didn't understand half of what was happening and it alternately dragged and moved too fast at different points. Not one I feel I can fairly judge, but not a favorite for sure.

Wee Willie Winkie (Leigh Fallon): CREEPY AS HELL. It is all about a girl who is moved to an Irish village where all the children under sixteen who aren't in bed asleep by a certain time are taken by a mysterious and villainous figure. She is lying about her age to work in a tavern and the consequences might not be pleasant... I liked it and you could tell the author got enjoyment from giving readers goosebumps.

Boys and Girls Come Out To Play (Angie Frazier): One that was unfamiliar to me, but highly decipherable and well-written, which allowed me to enjoy it more than I thought I would. The whole idea that the witches have their own community and claim a child of the bloodline each year was innovative and fresh. What happened when the heroine tried to trick them made me cling to the edge of my seat.

I Come Bearing Souls (Jessie Harrell): This story was based on Hey Diddle Diddle and had the distinction of including Egyptian mythology, with each main character being the incarnation of a deity. That made it distinguishable from the others, but more disappointing because of how limited the short story forum made it. I wish that I could read a full novel about something like this. It would have made it easier to understand.

The Lion and the Unicorn: Part the First (Nancy Holder): I am extremely PISSED OFF. I loved the historical

influence in this story, it was well-paced and written interestingly. It reminded me of Robin McKinley and Tamora Pierce. I was however un-amused when the second part of the story that was supposed to be in this anthology was left out of my ARC. I am very displeased with the publisher about this. I do love that it showcased the twisted proclivities of royalty of yore though, very nice touch.

Life in a Shoe (Heidi R. Kling): Based on Old Woman who lived in a shoe and the idea that she lives in a dystopian world where birth control is illegal and she has a deadbeat husband who only comes home for sex. The daughter is about to be forced to marry and the Mother is yet again pregnant (even though they are in abject poverty and can't afford the kids they have). So the oldest take matters into their own hands.

Candlelight (Suzanne Lazear): I knew of this rhyme from the book Stardust by Neil Gaiman and was always intrigued by the idea of traveling by candlelight. It gave the idea that you wished upon the candle (as a kid) and were transported to a world without parents and restrictions). It really reinforced the idea that once you leave, you can't go home again. Even if you realize how melodramatic, ungrateful and wrong you were.

One for Sorrow (Karen Mahoney): I was new to this rhyme and found the idea of a reverse Beauty and the Beast story very cliched. I rolled my eyes through most of it and was glad when it was over. If you have more romantic tendencies it might be more your speed. Not for me personally, at all.

Little Miss Muffet (Georgia McBride): Little Miss Muffet as being half-spider and unable to be human all the time until her Mom sacrificed herself and became a spider for good. Muffet has a very selfish sister, but even so I was sort of gagging when she met the end she did. Hugely imaginative but not for those without strong stomachs.

Sea of Dew (C. Lee Mckenzie): I liked this one, even though it was really bleak. It painted a story about teens in a lifeboat following a shipwreck, who die off one by one. It was very sad, but the ending (although slightly cheesy) fit the dreamlike quality of the rest of the story.

Tick Tock (Gretchen McNeil): This story reminded me of everything that I like about slasher flicks, R.L. Stine books and gratuitous violence as an American young-adult. Delightfully stereotypical in the best way, with the babysitter meeting a bad end in an inventive way.

The Well (K.M. Walton):

Based off the rhyme Jack and Jill and it definitely took them to the dark side of sibling rivalry. Jack and Jill hate each other because he is the favorite and a smarmy brat. Also, they each want something the other has and as the last two people in the world there is one sure way to get it: murder. Very in-depth characters for such a short story. Loved it! :)

The Wish (Suzanne Young): I disliked the insta-love trend that this one followed, but I'm not much of a fan of Young's full-length novels either. The idea of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star being interpreted as "Be careful what you wish for" was a good one though. And I liked that the identity of the boy she fell for was horrifying for her at first, as it should be.

A Ribbon of Blue (Michelle Zink): It was about a girl with a sick Grandma, cerebral palsy and a mysterious fortune shadowing her that at the fair she would find light, peace and love. But first she would be given a whistle, a ticket and a blue ribbon. Very bittersweet, but the ending made me smile.

OVERALL VERDICT: 3.75/5 Stars

HIGHLIGHTS: Clockwork, Blue, Life in a Shoe, A Ribbon of Blue, The Well, and Sea of Dew.

I received an Advanced Reading E-book Copy from the publisher, via NetGalley. No money or favors were exchanged for this review. This book's expected publication date is October 16th, 2012.

Shaheen says

4.5/5

An eerie collection of stories adapted from famous Mother Goose Rhymes, *Two and Twenty Dark Tales* gave me chills and some of the stories will haunt me for some time! It's amazing how authors have subverted the nature of the rhymes to something even darker than I could have ever imagined, and there are some stories that I wish were longer, or had full length novels accompanying them!

Very short notes on each of the stories follow:

As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old by Nina Berry

A brilliant choice to kick off the anthology, this is one of the stories I really wish was longer. The idea of re-incarnation is always appealing to me, and this particular story has a wonderfully creepy twist that I loved.

Sing a Song of Six-Pence by Sarwat Chadda

Another one of my favourites, with intriguing world building and themed around fallen angels (but nothing like any other fallen angel book I have ever written). Even the bittersweet ending was perfect.

Clockwork by Leah Cypress

An intriguing story about a witch, a curse and a princess, well realised and told effortlessly. The author uses an old device brilliantly, and slowly unfolds the past so we can see what happened.

Blue by Sayantani DasGupta

Another story I would have liked to be a full length novel. The world-building is intriguing and I loved the characters.

Pieces of Eight by Shannon Delany with Max Scialdone

As one of the longer stories in the collection, this is very enjoyable and reads almost like an epic fantasy where the protagonist goes on a quest to bring music back into the world.

Wee Willie Winkie by Leigh Fallon

Another one of my favourites, it really creeped me out!

Boys & Girls Come Out to Play by Angie Frazier

Not as well realised as the other stories, and while I liked the character motivations, something fell flat about it. But a nice witchy story none-the-less.

I Come Bearing Souls by Jessie Harrell

I love Egyptian mythology, and the clever way in which it is used in the story amazed me. I want more, definitely more.

The Lion and the Unicorn: Part the First by Nancy Holder

I liked this one too, but since the second part of the story isn't in the review copy, it obviously felt unfinished.

Life in a Shoe by Heidi R. Kling

Set in a Dystopian world where families are forced to have as many children as they can, to aid a war effort, with no thought to cost or space, this story will stay with me because of the difficult decisions the eldest children had to make. A scary, scary world, this one.

Candlelight by Suzanne Lazear

This story is for every child who thought their parents were unjust and wanted to run away, and it made me very sad. Even though I liked it, I don't think I'll read it again.

One for Sorrow by Karen Mahoney

A personal favourite, this is a story about a girl who befriends a crow, only to find that one of her classmates is her crow. Although predictable, I think it is a sweet, and brave, story.

Those Who Whisper by Lisa Mantchev

Predictable but enjoyable, the thing I liked about the story was the main character, but I didn't like much else about it. It wasn't very dark either, so I was a little disappointed.

Little Miss Muffet by Georgia McBride

I have this irrational, debilitating fear of spiders, and this story did nothing, nothing, to help. 5/5 for guts alone.

Sea of Dew by C. Lee McKenzie

I didn't like this one. It was directionless and sad. Not creepy so much as darkly melancholy.

Tick Tock by Gretchen McNeil

Another story I didn't like. The MC was really very stupid and should have trusted her instincts.

A Pocket Full of Posy by Pamela van Hylckama Vlieg

I started off liking it, but then it turned into a vampire story.

The Well by K. M Walton

This is about Jack and Jill, two siblings who are somehow immune to the disease that's killing everything else in the world, and how they deal with it. Deliciously dark.

The Wish by Suzanne Young

I really liked this one!! It's a little corny, but I still enjoyed it :)

A Ribbon of Blue by Michelle Zink

Clever, heart-wrenching and cute, this was the perfect way to end the anthology. The more I read, the clearer the end became, but it was great to watch Ruby fall in love for the first time.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher for review.
You can read more of my reviews at [Speculating on SpecFic](#).

Sarah {Literary Meanderings} says

♥ Find my reviews on Blogger ~ Reviews by Bookish Sarah

As the title suggests, this book is a collection of twenty short stories; twenty **dark** retellings of Mother Goose rhymes. Some are darker than others, but the title is spot on, I promise you.

When I review an anthology I like to talk about my top three and my bottom three. I don't choose to review every single story, but that doesn't mean I disliked them. They just landed somewhere in the middle for me. :)

Some spoilers ahead!

I'll start off with my bottom three.

“Little Miss Muffet” by Georgia McBride - Okay, its inspiration is obvious. The story... is disturbing. It's definitely one of the darker tales in this anthology. A family of shapeshifting spiders. The Muffets. Two sisters. One good, one not. One ends up turning human and *eating* her mother in spider form. It's gross and disturbing and just yuck! Cringe! There was, however, a little thread of romance woven in that I did enjoy.

“Blue” by Sayantani DasGupta - Inspired by *Little Boy Blue*. Interesting. Nice prose. Definitely had potential. It's about a mysterious spirit who writes stories into peoples' skin. It was a bit confusing and ended in a weird spot. It was too abrupt and left with with a question mark over my head. It wasn't really what I would call “dark”, either.

“The Well” by K.M. Walton - Inspired by *Jack and Jill*. This was one I could have easily liked. It's got a dystopian twist. Set in a post-virus ridden world. The siblings hate each other for different reasons. It's definitely one that was much too dark for me. It was almost sick. The only thing I enjoyed was the eerie feel to the story because the siblings believed they were the only humans remaining alive.

Now for my top three. It was hard to choose, because I liked ALL of these stories to some degree, even my bottom three. This book was really fantastic.

“As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old” by Nina Berry - This is the first tale in the novel. Inspired by *Taffy and the Welshman*. I noticed that many reviewers didn't enjoy or were confused by this one. It saddens me because I think the symbolism is so so beautiful and the story presents an eerie twist. For a short story, there is a LOT of detail. I think it was a perfect opening for this book. I don't want to say too much and spoil this one, but it is so so beautiful and definitely surprising.

“One for Sorrow” by Karen Mahoney - Inspired by a nursery rhyme of the same title. A strange tale, this one. An extremely lonely girl forms a bond of sorts with a lone crow that comes into her bedroom window at night. She later learns a world-shaking secret about said crow. This story is lyrical. This story is romantic and beyond beautiful. It's a bit eerie, a bit thrilling. It's about magic, love, destiny, and companionship. I really loved this one.

“Wee Willie Winkie” by Leigh Fallon - Inspired by a nursery rhyme of the same title. Oh, I LOVED this one! It's definitely the creepiest one of the bunch. About a girl who moves to a Scottish village where teens under the age of 16 are being targeted by a villainous presence. If not in bed by 8 o'clock, it comes for you. The atmosphere of this one is dark and spooky. The writing was fantastic and the ending was perfection!

Overall? I enjoyed this book immensely! Some of the stories were a bit long-winded; some too dark, but ALL of them were enjoyable, even the ones I didn't care for. Some of them were spooky. Some of them were romantic. Some magical. Some downright icky! The authors explore a wide range of rhymes. Some very well known, others you've probably never heard of. In the beginning of each story, though, they show you the rhyme that has inspired the retelling. It's a great book and I recommend it to anyone who enjoys a retelling, a chilling tale, or a really great anthology.

Book source: NetGalley

Publisher: Month9Books

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: 22 stories (from fantasy to modern to mythology) inspired by Mother Goose Rhymes that aren't the simple poems we think we know.

Opening Sentence: (First sentence of first story) When the girl sneaked in at midnight, he used his penlight to

make a note.

The Review:

Twenty-two authors. Twenty-two stories. Twenty-two rhymes. This is an anthology of twenty-two Mother Goose Rhymes that will have you shuddering in your reading nook, crying in public and looking over your shoulder during the day. These are not the silly rhymes that you used to sing as a child or watch on Barney. These are creepy tales with no happy endings (or bittersweet at the most). From fantasy to paranormal, twenty-two authors dive into the dark side of Mother Goose rhymes.

This was the first anthology I've ever read. Outside of school, anyway. Some of the stories were really good. Others not so much. Some had you quivering in your seat, flipping the pages with hesitant fingers. Others had you confused and snorting at the unbelievability of the world the author drew. Some were really short. Others really long. Each story has its own unique spin on a Mother Goose rhyme, but not all had the suspense that comes with dark thrillers. Since there were 22 short stories, I'm going to highlight three stories (cause reviewing all 22 stories would take all day to read).

“As Blue as the Sky and Just as Old” is the first story in this anthology. It was based off the Mother Goose rhyme about Taffy. This is a great opener to the book with strong characters and suspense like no other. It has a blend of mythology and two points of views (a third party and the heroine). Since the point of this story is to keep you guessing what's going on, I won't spoil what happens, but the writing and plotting of this story is genius. Want to know how to write a story where you're left in the dark until the “ah-ha!” moment at the end? Read this story by Nina Berry.

“One For Sorrow” is an odd story. It was based off the poem I've never heard before (called “One For Sorrow”). This is about a girl who finds a crow at her window and then it turns out the crow is cursed. I'm not quite sure how the story pertains to the poem; it only connects to the poem at the very end. I loved how Karen Mahoney connected the story to Edgar Allan Poe's “Nevermore.” Poe's poem connected to the story more than the Mother Goose rhyme, but the allusions to it were well written. But the story itself was very quick—it didn't take the time to build the story in the middle, but instead jumped from the beginning to the end. It made the story less likable and relatable (nobody falls in love in one day. I wish authors would understand that—even Shakespeare who had Romeo and Juliet fall in love and die in three days).

“A Ribbon of Blue” was the most light-hearted story in the whole anthology. But it still had its own conflicts and obstacles. It is about a girl who has cerebral palsy, who had her fortune told and said “freedom, light and love” were coming to her. The writing was great with symbolism and overall bittersweetness. It was a satisfying end to the anthology.

Unfortunately there were two stories at the end and a poem in the middle written by the editor Georgia McBride that was not included in the ARC. But all of the short stories were worth the read. Some I thought were way too short (like 5 pages total). Some I thought were really long and drawn out (like 25 pages). Overall this was an interesting twist on Mother Goose Rhymes.

Notable Scene:

She nodded and took his hand, understanding now that it had always been about this moment. She sent one last look at her other-self, her body still jerking, the people around her frantic, barking instructions to each other. Her skirt billowed on the ground around her, the blue ribbon trailing from her hair.

Sam started walking, leading her toward something bright and beautiful up ahead—not too far, just a little bit farther. There was a lightening within her, an easing of a burden she hadn't known she carried. As the light enveloped her, the rest of the world faded into the background, into nothing—a pinprick compared to the fullness that waited in the light.

She didn't hesitate as she took the final step, Sam's hand in hers, his eyes soft and warm on her face.

The old woman had been right. There was freedom, light... and so very much love.

FTC Advisory: Month9Books provided me with a copy of Two and Twenty Dark Tales: Dark Retellings of Mother Goose Rhymes. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.
