



Winter's Tales

Isak Dinesen , Karen Blixen

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In Isak Dinesen's universe, the magical enchantment of the fairy tale and the moral resonance of myth coexist with an unflinching grasp of the most obscure human strengths and weaknesses. A despairing author abandons his wife, but in the course of a long night's wandering, he learns love's true value and returns to her, only to find her a different woman than the one he left. A landowner, seeking to prove a principle, inadvertently exposes the ferocity of mother love. A wealthy young traveler melts the hauteur of a lovely woman by masquerading as her aged and loyal servant.

Shimmering and haunting, Dinesen's **Winter's Tales** transport us, through their author's deft guidance of our desire to imagine, to the mysterious place where all stories are born.

Winter's Tales Details

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Author : Isak Dinesen , Karen Blixen

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From Reader Review Winter's Tales for online ebook

Nick says

This is just not as good as her earlier collection "Seven Gothic Tales," which has some of the best short stories ever written. That book had a youthful excitement and vigor, full of surprising stories that delighted in the art of keeping the reader on his toes. "Winter's Tales" is much...frostier. Much of it seems cold and dead. It feels as if Dinesen has decided not to be childish any more and instead feels obliged to share great "mature" wisdom with everyone without bothering to tell a ripping good story. Mind you, "Winter's Tales" was written during the dark days of WWII, so there's a reason why she's not as chipper. But as far as posterity is concerned, that doesn't cut the mustard.

L.S. says

I picked up this book in the past summer when I was thinking about the "snow queen" (H. Ch. Andersen) and was just curious to read some more danish fairy tales. But these stories were not what I expected, i.e. for children. They are 11 stories, mostly romantic (except 3 of them). I liked very much the narrative style with colorful descriptions, fjord-ish construction and sometimes unexpected situations. I also enjoyed some of the fantastic elements. But most of all I liked "Peter and Rosa", a love story with a tragic (expected) end.

Mark says

I did not enjoy this collection as much as her "Last Tales", and the review would have been three stars. However, the inclusion of the stunning "Peter and Rosa" is worth the highest of ratings...

Anibalector says

„Sunt vremuri grele pentru vis?tori”, spunea Amélie Pulan în Amélie, acum 14 ani, ?i pot s? continui spunând c? sunt cu atât mai grele pentru scriitorii vis?tori, fiindc? în lumea gr?bit? de azi visul nu prea î?i mai are locul nici m?car în locul unde acesta ar trebui s? fi la el acas?: între paginile unei c?r?i bune. Dar vis?torii adev?ra?i nu se împiedic? de ce e sau nu la mod?, de ce se cere sau nu se cere ?i î?i v?d de treabă lor. A?a face ?i Karen Blixen, autoare pe care am citit-o acum foarte mul?i ani, cu o carte care m-a atras, Din inima Africii, ?i din care nu îmi mai amintesc nimic, doar un sentiment de uimire ?i încântare, a?a cum se întâmpl? uneori cu c?r?ile citite în copil?rie. De data aceasta cu siguran?? o s? ?in minte volumul Povestiri de iarn?, ed. Humanitas Fiction, 2014, publicat pentru prima dat? în anul 1942, în plin r?zboi mondial. Autoarea, Karen Blixen, care a semnat ?i cu pseudonimul Isak Dinesen, a fost o femeie foarte interesant?, care a c?l?torit mult, a scris destul de mult, în special proz? scurt?, dar ?i romane, ?i îns??i via?a ei ar putea fi pus? într-o fic?iune.

de la surs?: Din vis în vis: Karen Blixen – „Povestiri de iarn?” – SemneBune

<http://semnebune.ro/2015/din-vis-in-v...>

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Agnese says

Karenu Bliksenu k? ar dzi?u intelektu apvelt?tu izcilu st?stnieci iepazinu, lasot vi?as autobiogr?fisko darbu "No ?frikas dzi?umiem". "Ziemas pasakas" nav vis pasakas, bet gan vienpadsmit gari st?sti, kuros re?lo dz?vi viet?m paspilgtina m?tiskie elementi. Tie aizrauj ar savu sižetu, notur ar j?gpilno saturu, un gandr?z ikvien? no tiem ietverts p?rsteiguma moments, kas visu apgriež k?j?m gais?, liekot las?t?jam p?rv?rt?t savas prognoz?šanas sp?jas. Bauda izt?lei un pr?tam. V?rien?gi un atmi?? paliekoši.

""Ziemas pasakas" izvirza jaut?jumu, vai cilv?ka sp?kos ir main?t savu likteni? Atbilde ir: j?, ar st?stu un m?kslas pal?dz?bu. Liktenis ir dz?ves pavediens, bet m?kslu veido dz?ve cieš? saist?b? ar likteni, un gan st?stnieks, gan m?kslinieks k??st nemirst?gs."

"Pieredze Simonam bija m?c?jusi, ka ikvienam šaj? pasaul? j?tieki gal? pašam un tikai b?rni un nej?gas pa?aujas, ka citiem ir pien?kums vi?iem pal?dz?t."

"Nekas nekad (..) paties?b? nav t?, k? izskat?s."

"Šie tr?s ir pr?t?gi cilv?ki, un zina, par ko run?. Jo ?auti?i, kas ku?o sava prieka p?c - kad j?ra ir mier?ga un glaim?gi vi?iem smaida tik zil?m ac?m, it k? tai b?tu j?lej asaras, vi?us ieraugot vien, - un kas st?sta, ka m?lot j?ru, vi?i gal?gi nezina nedz to, kas ir j?ra, nedz to, kas ir m?lest?ba. N?, tikai ?sti j?rnieki, ku?us j?ra ir situsi, dauz?jusi un kap?jusi un ku?i to ir nol?d?juši un zv?r?juši neskat?ties ne uz t?s pusi, - tie ir ?stie j?ras m?l?t?ji."

"Vai nav skaisti dom?t par to, ka, ja vien ir paciet?ba, tad viss, kas reiz ir bijis, atkal atgriežas pie mums?"

"Visvarens Dievs! Par cik augst?kas debesis ir p?r zemi, tik augst?ki ir Tavi st?sti p?r m?su st?stiem!"

"..vi?š iedom?j?s, ka cilv?ka runa ir centr?dzes funkcija, past?v?ga b?gšana no run?t?ja paša b?t?bas."

"Zvaigznes, t?s neiek?ro.

Par to kr?š?umu priec?jas."

/Johans Volfgangs G?te/

"?stam p?tneikam un paties?bas mekl?t?jam, kas ne par k?du cenu nepadodas, dažreiz roku pasniedz pats liktenis."

"Ir laiki, kas ir tik skaisti, ka dom?t par tiem uzreiz nav iesp?jams uzdrošin?ties."

"Ir t?ds prieks atkal satikties, un tom?r tikai t?dos gad?jumos ir j?tams, k? rit laiks."

"..šajos pirmajos ziemas m?nešos k?uva skaidrs, ka Jenss nek?d? zi?? nav t?ds cilv?ks, kas var apmierin?ties vai aprimt ar to, ko cilv?ki parasti sauc par laimi un p?rtic?bu. Pati vi?a b?t?ba bija ilgošan?s."

"Man tev j?teic, ka zemes virs? ir d?vaina ž?last?ba, par k?du cilv?kiem, t?diem k? m?s, nav bijis ne jausmas. Pasaule nav než?l?ga un ?auna, k? citi mums m?ca. T? pat nav taisn?ga. Viss tiek piedots, viss. Pasaul? sastopamais c?lums un dai?ums nemaz nevar nodar?t p?ri."

..vai t? ir Dieva griba, ka cilv?ki nekad nesp?j b?t laim?gi, bet allaž ilgojas tikt prom no viet?m, kur paši atrodas, sap?odami nok??t t?d?s, kur vi?i neatrodas un k?das varb?t nemaz nepast?v? Zv?ri un putni ir apmierin?ti ar zemi, k?da t? ir, - vai t? ir par prastu cilv?kb?rniem, ko Dievs uz t?s nolicis? Zemniekiem, kas m?ž?gi vaiman? par gr?to likteni, muižniekiem un baroniem, kam nekad nav gana, un jauniem priesteriem, kas za?a meža vid? ilgojas p?c Parad?zes? (..) vai tad neviens cilv?ks - viens vien?gs starp visiem Zemes t?kstošiem - reiz nevar?tu non?kt pie t?das sapratnes ar Dievu, ka sp?tu sac?t: "Esmu atmin?jis š?s pasaules m?klu, esmu padar?jis šo zemi par sav?jo un esmu laim?gs ar to."?"

"Ir tom?r d?vaini dom?t par to, kas šaj? pasaul? aizrauj cilv?kus. P?r tr?c?giem t?da vara ir ?dienam, bet p?r augstma?iem - v?nam. Med?b?s un kauj? cilv?kus iepriecina asinis. Ieraugot savus b?rnus, vi?i atplaukst (..). Deja t?pat padara sievietes laim?gas."

..ik notikums noz?mi ieg?st p?c to cilv?ku dom?šanas veida, kas taj? piedal?jušies, un neviena ?r?ja darb?ba nav viena un t? pati diviem v?riem uz zemes."

..tikai Dievs zina visu."

..es gan r?gt?, gan jautr? saj?sm? nodom?ju, ka ?ertr?de var?tu atrast gan darbu, gan prieku no t?, pat ja b?tu j?raujas pa elli."

"Š? zeme ir nedroša dz?vesvieta, un kas gan lab?ks te atrodams par s?ro, vienk?ršo darbu, ko Dievs mums liciš ūt veikt? Mums nav j?kurn pret Vi?a gribu un nav j?izdibina Vi?a ce?i."

"Lasot šo darbu, mani izbr?n?ja tas, ka m?s nekad agr?k neesam sapratuši, cik liel? m?r? zieme?nieku mitolo?ija sav? mor?laj? varen?b? ir p?r?ka par grie?u un romiešu. Ja seno grie?u dieviem un dieviet?m neb?tu skaisto augumu, kas l?dz pat m?su dien?m saglab?ti marmor?, neviens m?sdienu cilv?ks neatz?tu, ka tos v?rts piel?gt. Tie bija vieglpr?t?gi, než?l?gi, bez augstsird?bas un ž?luma, paties?b? tie nepazina ar? ?stu varon?bu. Dievi, ko piel?dza m?su d??u sen?i, st?v?ja par tiem daudz augst?k - t?pat k? dru?di st?v augst?k par auguriem. Jo gaišmatainajiem dieviem, kas mita Asgor?, bija cilv?ciski tikumi - vi?i bija užtic?gi, taisn?gi un laipni, lai gan vareni, tie pazina maigumu un l?dzciet?bu, un t?l? barbarisk? senatn? vi?i pazina bru?nieciskas j?tas."

"Tu teici, ka tev mani j?atst?j. Sav? laik? pats esmu ce?ojis un zinu, ko noz?m? v?rds "atst?t". Bet esmu sapratis, ka šim v?rdam paties?b? ir j?ga vien?gi attiec?b? uz to vietu un tiem cilv?kiem, kurus atst?j. Kad b?si atst?jis manu namu - lai gan tas tevi atlaiž nelabpr?t -, tad tam viss b?s beidzies. Bet tam, kurš aizbrauc, ir cita lieta - un nemaz tik vienk?rša. Jo, atst?jot k?du vietu, p?c dabas likumiem tu jau esi ce?? uz otru."

"T?pat k? melodija ir vienota ar balsi, kas to dzied, k? ce?š ir vienots ar ce?a m?r?i, k? divi m?l?t?ji savienojas apsk?vienos, t? cilv?ks ir vienots ar savu likteni - un vi?am tas j?m?l k? sevi pašu."

"Šaj? br?d? ??rlījs bija gandr?z atbr?vojies no nemiera un skumj?m, ar ko bija p?r?emts, ien?kot kafejn?c?, un tagad vair?k v?l?j?s klaus?ties nek? run?t pats."

"Varb?t neviens cilv?ks (..) neatst?j t?du cien?bas iespaidu k? t?ds - lai ar? vi?š b?tu kas b?dams -, kurš ir

pašpietiekams."

"Dz?v?ba un n?ve ir divas aizsl?gtas l?des, un atsl?ga vienai atrodas otraj?.

(..)

V?rietis un sieviete ir divas aizsl?gtas l?des, un atsl?ga vienai atrodas otraj?.

(..)

Valdnieks un ubags, m?su pasaules bag?tie un nabagie, ir divas aizsl?gtas l?des, un atsl?ga vienai atrodas otraj?."

Rowena says

I think short story collections are often a bit hit or miss, but I enjoyed every single story in this collection. I think it was C.S. Lewis who said that one day we'll be old enough to read fairytales again, and I think that's definitely true for me now. These stories definitely had a fairytale-like quality to them and they were very enjoyable; not only were her descriptions of the Scandinavian region inviting, there was also a lot of wisdom to her words. The writing was also infused with biblical language and as found her writing to be deep yet light. Apparently "Out of Africa" showcases Dinesen's/Blixen's writing a lot better so I know I'm in for a treat.

Neal Adolph says

In January of 2016 my life was changing. I had just begun my final contract extension at work and had just decided to move to Colombia to study Spanish in May, after my contract had run its course. I had recently finished reading a wonderful collection of short stories by the great contemporary master of the form, Alice Munro, and was in need of another. So, here I was, my life in a moment of change, and my next several months predetermined to be very busy, and me without a collection of short stories to read in those brief moments of reprieve from the rush of moving across countries. And, as I am not intending on coming home for Christmas this year, I also knew that the winter of 2015/2016 would be my last winter for at least one more rotation around the sun. In celebration of this great season, the one that turns some Canadians into recluses and others into adventurers of the white world, I grabbed Isak Dinesen's Winter Tales from my bookshelf.

It turned out, for reasons which I do not completely understand, that the winter of 2015/2016 would be unusually frail in Saskatchewan. Very little snow fell from the sky, and the mercury rarely dropped below -20C. For a Canadian, a prairie boy, who revels in snow and in cold, in snowshoeing and cross country skiing, this was a tragic development. Unlike many of my friends I was cursing El Nino for taking away that sacredly Canadian season.

It turned out, for reasons which I do not completely understand, that this collection of short stories was also unusually frail and, like the season in which it was read, often disappointing.

Isak Dinesen is one of those names which sometimes pops up as a missed opportunity for the Nobel Committee to award a woman who was certainly deserving and so, having some regard of the prize and believing that it often awards (or almost awards) many writers who are remarkably talented, I came to this

collection expecting something really quite astounding. And, at times, that is what I found. Dinesen is a very good writer, particularly because of her description of the natural world in which her stories are set. There were many times where I was impressed by her words, her poetry, the ways in which she described waves, or lakes, or woods. It was, often, simply lovely, and it is for these descriptions that I decided to keep the collection for some further research into her writing.

The stories, on the other hand, are generally weakened by a poor sense of direction. I suppose that this can be attributed to the style which Dinesen is attempting to mimic. Her stories are mostly set in the late 19th century, that period when Europe hadn't been afflicted by the scourge of total war, and so the stories lilt through an innocence and sense of direction similar to many of the more romantic works which were coming out at the time. For moments I felt like I was watching a period movie but transferred to a period story collection: I felt like I was reading some contemporary of Oscar Wilde or Edgar Allan Poe or some less accomplished student of Trollope or Dickens, a writer who was raised in that same notion of high class humanity and notions of chivalry (I hesitate to say either George Elliot or Jane Austen for reasons related to the quality of the craft on display here - both Elliot and Austen are quite a bit more careful with their writing than Dinesen was in this collection). In my reading, I tend to avoid too many authors who have such unrelatable notions of humanity and charity. This made connecting to the characters here difficult.

Which isn't to say that I didn't connect to the characters or nearly appreciate the stories as they were. Each one contained something that I enjoyed and maybe even adored, but each one took whatever theme or character trait I was connecting to and decided to throw it out the window. False starts followed false starts in this collection. Indeed, if you read my updates from reading this collection, I often noted this frustration. In almost every story I wanted something very different than what I got and I couldn't figure out why. Too often, after completing a story, I found myself wondering "So what? Why did I read this story? What was I supposed to get out of it?" and came away with empty answers. Again, I wonder if it is because I couldn't connect with the ideas of class, gender, romance, and Christianity which were being presented here, and would struggle to say that her descriptions of nature were in and of themselves any true discussion of man's relation to nature. They were merely set pieces, some kind of pathos.

The collection improves with the final few stories, and there are one, two, or three that I would even recommend (The Young Man with the Carnation, The Pearls, The Fish, and A Consolatory Tale come to mind). And ultimately the themes settle down a bit into something a bit more consistent and predictable. Here you have stories which are attempting to make sense of family - particularly of the relationship between child and parents. In some cases the child is biological, and in many others the child is adopted. This is pleasant enough, I suppose, but ultimately, often, quite boring.

All of this made rating this collection quite difficult, and I decided on the default of a three out of five stars because I wanted to generously recognize the writing talent on display here. It is a hard three though, and at times bordered on a two rather than a three. This is in contrast with the threes I have recently assigned to Petals of Blood by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Memoirs of Hadrian by Marguerite Yourcenar, both of which struggled with that fourth star.

Which makes me wonder if I will read Isak Dinesen again in the future. Perhaps I'll chase down the two books which are widely regarded as her masterpieces (Seven Gothic Tales and Out of Africa) and give them a solid shake or two, but this is only because I have discovered that this collection is one of her minor works and largely regarded as a rare misstep by an otherwise impeccable author. But I won't rush to do so. Perhaps one day, in one future January, I'll pick it up and give it a go.

As a side note, I never know whether to call Dinesen by her actual name, Karen Blixen, or by the pseudonym

which is on the cover of this book (but, on my copy of Out of Africa, is followed, in parenthesis, by Karen Blixen). Pseudonyms make life hard. Remember that Elena Ferrante.

As a second side note, it is worth noting that so many of these stories feel as though they are missing a good, strong, threatening winter of the sort that you find in Canada more often than not. The ones where the air hurts your lungs when you breath in too deeply, or when, while walking, you try to balance the needs of the body to stay warm and the danger of having sweat accumulate and freeze to your skin. I suppose the Old World has it so much easier.

Carol says

She was an excellent story writer. Sorrow Acre was my favorite of the short stories. For example, this is the first paragraph -- *"The low, undulating Danish landscape was silent and serene, mysteriously wide-awake in the hour before sunrise. There was not a cloud in the pale sky, not a shadow alone the dim, pearly fields, hills and woods. The Mist was lilting from the valleys and hollows, the air was cool, the grass and the foliage dripping wet with morning-dew. Unwatched by the eyes of man, and undisturbed by his activity, the country breathed a timeless life, to which language was inadequate."* And there are ten short stories which are beautifully written, and so endearing, that they will stay with you years later. In 1931, Karen Blixen began to write under the nom de plume Isak Dinesen. Her book, *Seven Gothic Tales* was her first book and was a literary success.

Sarah Mac says

DNF. I plodded through 3 stories before throwing in the towel.

Several years ago I read this author's full-length pastiche 'The Angelic Avengers' & enjoyed it, but these shorts were interminable. Endless religious & philosophical yodeling, endless metaphors, endless weighty clouds of DOOM hanging over an endless cast of disaffected malcontents who sit around thinking about the misery of humanity. In short: I found these too depressing to enjoy for the language & too wordy to be immersive tales of incident.

This is the sort of fiction I just don't enjoy anymore. Reality is hard enough; I don't want to spend my reading time with talking heads who serve no purpose but to further illuminate the suffering of mankind & then shrug it off as "Well, such is human experience! Lol!"

NOPE. Not for me.

Cole R says

This was a great book. I loved all the different stories this book had to tell! SOOOO much detail!

Katharine says

This is my first taste of Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen and I was in love from the first page. I was encouraged by Victoria Mixon's the Art and Craft of Fiction to study her and I am so glad I did. In fact, I'm planning on buying everything by this author and I rarely am that passionate.

Blixen reminds me a lot of Flannery O'Connor in the religious imagery, the intensity of the characterization and the perplexing endings. She makes me as charmed with 19th century Europe as O'Connor does with Depression era and Post War South.

Mans like with O'Connor, when I'm done, I feel like I've had a worshipful experience.

Pity the poor author who I read next.

Ero says

This is a beautiful and life-changing book of stories. Really something special.

Judy says

In a word - magic!

11 short stories which draw you in quickly - Dinesen has a gift for sparking interest in her characters from the outset and for pulling you into another world... and making you linger there long after the tale is over.
Sigh

Most of the stories are set in the author's native land (Denmark) sometime in the past (frequently the 19th century, though one story takes us as far back as the 13th). Dinesen's nostalgia for her country and its people can be felt strongly, which is part of the spell of these tales. More charm lies in the folk-tale quality of many tales, both in the events recounted and in their unfolding.

Each of the tales reads well in isolation but there is a unity of theme in the collection - one biographer sums up the whole in the notion of 'longing' and I would add that the various protagonists' reaction to longing (particularly wrestling with forces which oppress) is a much explored element throughout.

My favorite story? "Peter and Rosa" is a beautiful, sensitive narrative about two young people whose worlds - inner and outer - are opening up, but also coming together in an unexpected and unforgettable way....
A must-read set of stories for Dinesen enthusiasts - both for their own sake, but also for their status as the author's own favorite.

M. T. Moscariello says

Questa serie di racconti mi ha ricordato diversi autori, dalla Gente di Dublino di Joyce a Mann con la sua Morte a Venezia, passando per i racconti de La casa dei melograni di Wilde. Le ambientazioni e le epoche descritte sono diverse, ma si aggirano tutte nella zona mittel-nord europea.

Pur nella loro diversità, c'è un certo filo comune dato dallo stile della narrazione, che sia nei racconti più fantastici che in quelli più realistici mantiene sempre un'atmosfera onirica e incantatrice.

E' stato il mio primo incontro con la Blixen e certamente fa venire voglia di continuare a leggerla, complice l'aver scelto il momento perfetto per leggere dei racconti d'inverno.

Wendy Feltham says

I read this book on a short trip to Denmark because I hoped to visit Karen Blixen's home/museum outside Copenhagen. Reading the short stories in Winter's Tales, many set in Denmark and often a century before she wrote them, I became immersed in the characters and surprising twists in her tales, making my visit to her home so special! I walked through the forest around her house, appreciating that she had left instructions for it to be a bird sanctuary, and stood under a huge beech tree where she is buried. Years ago, after reading Out of Africa, I'd visited her home/museum outside Nairobi. Karen Blixen was a multitalented and thoughtful woman who created stunning homes filled with art, including her own paintings, interesting furniture, and vases filled with flowers cut from her own gardens.

Hilda says

Love her. The Man with the Pink Carnation is my favorite, the Blue Jar is a great story. <3

George Witte says

I spent a week in thrall to these tales, each one a world that opens immediately--as if evoked, fully-fledged and fleshed, by "once upon a time"--and closes completely, like a stone tossed into a vast, calm, black lake. Blixen/Dinesen considers life, death, sex, fate, faith, magic, history, and time with a knowing, cool, amoral eye and a natural storyteller's gift for just enough detail, but not too much. She understands how to let the reader's imagination fill in between the lines. No-one writes like this anymore; so many writers feel the need to research their fiction and then over-play that research, letting knowledge overwhelm the story rather than inform it. These stories are wholly engrossing and just plain entertaining, the way fables are to children, especially when read aloud. Winter's Tales

Chris says

I went to Denmark, pretty much, to see Karen Blixen's home. It is a beautiful place; the land around the house, including Blixen's grave, has been made into a bird sanctuary. The house is near the water, and at least when I went there, the walk from the train station included passing what looked to be a Nor. Fjord breeding farm. There was even a restaurant with Blixen inspired art work (pricey but very nice) and excellent food.

It seems strange that when reading Blixen's non-fiction what comes across is her love for her farm in Africa, yet reading her fiction what comes across is her love for Denmark and its history. This dual love is actually reflected in her house, with its Africa interior yet its Danish exterior.

In many ways, too, the stories in this volume remind me of that house. Take for instance, "Sorrow Acre", the

story that I always like the most in this volume ("The Cloak" is her best story, at least to me). The story tells of a mother's desperate attempt to save her son, yet juxtaposes this with a relationship between the old lord, his wife, and his nephew, Adam. The story not only calls to mind the Danish landscape, but also Danish history for Adam had been away on a mission involving the punishment of Queen Caroline Mathilde. The Queen, wife of the insane Christian VII, had an affair with her husband's physician Johann Friedrich Struensee, some time after she gave birth to the heir. The two lovers ruled for a brief period (she was queen, he as prime minister) during which Caroline gave birth to a daughter. They lost power to Christian VII's step-mother. Struensee was executed, and Caroline was imprisoned in Helsingør (Elisnore) castle, in what is best described as a cell before she was sent into exile in Hanover. She never saw either of her children after her imprisonment. This whole story hangs over Blixen's story and its theme of youth versus age, for the Queen and her lover were more popular than the step-mother, at least with the common people.

What also flows through these stories is the theme of the influence of art and sailing. There are stories that resemble fairy tales, a Charles Dickens wanders through two of the stories. But there is also a sense of loss, especially in the two stories that deal with children, in particular "The Dreaming Child" and its question of who exactly is dreaming - the child, the wife or the reader? Blixen suffered a miscarriage at one point during her time on her farm (the child was Denys Finch-Hatton's). A reader has to wonder if these stories, written years after her experience expressed in some way her desire for a child. (Is the power of the wives and the weakness of the husbands a comment on her marriage?)

Perhaps it is this question that makes Blixen one of the more honest writers. At times her stories don't seem to be going anywhere, then suddenly, like much in life, something happens, a small event becomes large, something changes and the meaning becomes clear. The stories are small studies in art, the soul, the craft, and love.

Adam says

Halfway through the "The Heroine" (about French ex-pats imprisoned during a 19th century conflict between France and Germany) I realized these stories were written in Nazi occupied Denmark. And then I realized the chill of history blew through these intricate tales especially the harrowing "Sorrow Acre", but these stories are surprising and unpredictable rather than bleak ruminations from Dinesen's strange erudite mind. These resemble short stories or tales (10-20 pages) more so than the dense novellas of "Seven Gothic Tales", they offer similar reflections on identity, defiance, story telling, and history all set in the fantasia that she makes out of 19th century Europe, but while nothing is amazing as "The Monkey" or "The Dreamers" here, but some like "Sorrow Acre" come close.

Audra (Unabridged Chick) says

Like many Americans (I suspect), my introduction to Isak Dinesen was via the film version of *Out of Africa*. I actually never saw it until an adult, but my mother bought the film tie-in copy of *Out of Africa and Shadows On the Grass* which I read cover to cover two or three times in high school -- and my Dinesen obsession was born.

This collection of eleven short stories has the feel of a 19th-century fairy tale collection; while reading, I found myself musing if these stories were the ones Karen recounted to Denys while they were in Kenya.

Some were pure magic while others were meditations on religion, family, or obligation. There were delightful passages in every story, wryly funny and very true, such as:

"Jensine would never have married a man whom she did not love; she held the god of love in great respect, and had already for some years sent a little daily prayer to him: "Why doest thou tarry?" But now she reflected that he had perhaps granted her prayer with vengeance, and that her books had given her but little information as to the real nature of love." (page 109, from "The Pearls")

For those who are new to Dinesen, this is an excellent introduction as she is a writer of more than just memoir; those who have read *Out of Africa* have gotten a taste of the dreamy, meditative way she tackles life, and these stories are an extension of that.
