



The Halcyon Fairy Book

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A collection of fairy tales annotated by T. Kingfisher and the complete Toad Words anthology.

The Halcyon Fairy Book Details

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Author : T. Kingfisher

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From Reader Review The Halcyon Fairy Book for online ebook

Anna Hepworth says

Note: because I predominantly read works by the author published as Ursula Vernon, I've referred to her as Vernon throughout this commentary.

This books consists of two very different but thematically related sections, each of which is roughly half the book.

The first of these is a set of annotated fairytales, wherein Vernon effectively live-blogs her reading of them. The stories are from a wide range of sources, and many were ones I hadn't previously encountered. From this alone, I was pleased to have bought this collection. I did find that some of the commentary was distracting, although it was often on point, at least in terms of a modern reading of these stories. Possibly because of this, I found it hard to remember from one sitting to the next what it was that I had been reading.

The second section is an anthology of heavily influenced original short stories, many of them from the viewpoint of a minor character. There is also a smattering of short poetry.

The fiction is lovely -- but I'm a sucker for fairy tale inspired stories, regardless of quality. These stories do a great job of interrogating the original stories, and revisiting them for an audience with a much more sophisticated expectation of what a story Should Be. The poetry is cute, but mostly forgettable. Possibly if I had read the poetry separately from the stories, I'd have more of a feel for it. But as it was, each one is sandwiched between two stories, and the next story always eclipsed the poem before I'd really had time to hold it in my head.

I would say that this is a very readable book, but the fact that it has taken me nearly nine months to finish reading it does somewhat make a lie of that. It is a good book for dipping in to and reading a single story. But I didn't love it the way that I might have expected from my readings of others of Vernon's works.

Helen Patrice says

Glorious snark and biting fairy tales

T. Kingfisher goes through some little known fairy tales with a fine-toothed WTAF. Observations, and snark galore. And then, some of her own fairy tales. Wonderful.

Katie Bee says

Kingfisher is, as always, hilarious. I loved this format of 'annotated fairy tales'. Weird fairy tales from around the world, with a funny narrator making comments the whole time? Count me in, 100%.

Miss Susan says

technically speaking i did not read this book! i did however read toad words and other stories as well as the annotated fairytales series ursula vernon put up in her blog which covers like 98% of the content so i feel like i should get the credit anyways

we all know that vernon's an excellent short story writer but now we also know she is a hilarious commentator on fairytales! definitely a worthwhile way to spend an afternoon

4 stars

Summer says

Kingfisher is in fine form. This is a collection of her fairy tale short stories, some line by line sporking of old fairy tales (and wow did she dig up some weird ones), and a few poems. Much of it will be familiar to readers of her blog.

There is a very particular earthiness to Kingfisher's writing - it is deeply rooted in the practicalities of daily life (especially gardening) and the feelings and desires of people who are far more familiar than perfect. I don't want to call it fairy tales for grownups, because god knows kids can handle some emotional depth, so I will call it well rounded and complex. It would fit beside many of the Datlow and Windling anthologies, but with less glamour and gore, and more middle aged women.

Heather says

Fairy tales are known for taking bizarre left turns and leaps of logic, not to mention having ridiculous plots and characters. Kingfisher both appreciates them for what they are and skewers them at the same time. She clearly pokes fun from a place of love, and it shows.

Kingfisher also includes a few of her own fairy tales, and they're wonderful. She clearly puts to use some of her insight in order to create tales that retain that fairy tale feel yet incorporate insights that give them new and fascinating ground to cover. In particular I love her characters, human and not. They possess a great deal more depth and sense than typical fairy tale characters while remaining magical and weird.

Longer review available on my site: <http://www.errantdreams.com/2017/09/s...>

ambyr says

The annotated fairytale concept that makes up the first 2/3rds of this book was cute at first but quickly wore on me; it felt like the same points of fairytale (il)logic were being harped on over and over. But the original stories that make up the final third are a treat, particularly "Toad Words," "The Wolf and the Woodsman," and "Bluebeard's Wife."

Nancy says

The first half is a collection of blog posts in which Vernon* hilariously annotates various fairy tales. Her pragmatic approach is wonderful and shows a love of these stories even as she points out their ridiculousness. (T. Kingfisher is the pen name of Ursula Vernon.)

The second half is a collection of Vernon's short fiction previously published as an ebook (some of which are available for free on her website). Many of these stories are based on familiar fairy tales (like Peter Pan, The Little Mermaid, Snow White, Red Riding Hood, Toads and Diamonds), but Vernon looks at them sideways, or takes them in a completely different direction. I love her prose, which is lyrical but has a very modern voice behind it. My favorite of the bunch is Toad Words, in which a curse becomes a boon with some determination and smarts.

This is an excellent review: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Brigid Keely says

I have to admit, I'm a sucker for T. Kingfisher/Ursula Vernon. I happily read everything she's written and I've enjoyed it all, way back to when "digger" was being serialized. "The Halcyon Fairy Book" is an excellent addition to her body of work.

The first half of the book is comprised of old fairy tales that are in the public domain and Vernon's commentary on them, which is pretty funny. They were initially published on her blog, and have been tidied up a bit for publication. I'd personally appreciate if she'd expanded further on the commentary, and also if she'd added a bit of analysis, but one can't have everything and I still enjoyed it.

The second half is fairy-tale inspired short stories and poems that were originally collected in "Toad Words." I've read most of them previously, but it was fantastic to read them again, and the new material was wonderful. Vernon is obviously very widely read, pulling inspiration from many sources and combining them in fantastic ways. She maintains a wry wit throughout her work, and a feminist sensibility that is sometimes subtle and sometimes first and foremost.

If you're looking for retellings and reworkings of fairy tales, this is an excellent book to pick up.

Faith says

The first half of this is a collection of blog posts in which Vernon presents some of the more ridiculous fairy tales out there, interspersing the text with her own reactions and comments. The stories are quite frankly totally bonkers, and all of her comments are amusing (some are even hysterically funny).

The second half is the complete Toad Words anthology, which I have reviewed in detail here and which is a lovely collection of writing.

The quality of the book (specially printed for Arisia) is good, though I noted a few formatting errors (and one instance where I am nearly certain one of Ursula's comments snuck into a story segment). Still, it's a lovely hardcover and will look nice on my shelf!

Robin says

Mostly short and amusing stories. The original fairy tales are a lot weird, to the point that I probably wouldn't have enjoyed them without the commentary. The re-tellings in the second part were great.

Tiamat_the_red says

Delightful, as all of Ursula Vernon's work is. This is some of the annotated fairy tales from her blog along with the collection of short stories found in Toad Words. I very much enjoyed all of them.

Ashley Adler says

A strange introduction to Ursula Vernon as I've never read her work, and this is partially not hers. I was a little underwhelmed by the annotated fairy tales (wow were those weird, though no fault of Vernon's of course). The fairy tales written by Vernon, the collection "Toad Words," was excellent.

Melanie says

Half of this book was Toad Words, which I'd already read, and the other half was hilariously annotated fairytales from various parts of Europe. Pretty fun!

Miramira Endevall says

Holy fucking fuck, Ursula - you are both the funniest and most sobering author in my world right now.
