



A Feast of Sorrows

Angela Slatter

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A Feast of Sorrows—Angela Slatter’s first U.S. collection—features twelve of the World Fantasy and British Fantasy Award-winning Australian author’s finest, darkest fairy tales, and adds two new novellas to her marvelous cauldron of fiction.

Stories peopled by women and girls—fearless, frightened, brave, bold, frail, and fantastical—who take the paths less traveled by, accept (and offer) poisoned apples, and embrace transformation in all its forms. Reminiscent of Angela Carter at her best, Slatter’s work is both timeless and fresh: fascinating new reflections from the enchanted mirrors of fairy tales and folklore.

A Feast of Sorrows Details

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From Reader Review A Feast of Sorrows for online ebook

Marquise says

Nice anthology by an author new to me. I liked "The Jacaranda Wife" and "The Badger Wife" best of all the fourteen stories it contains.

Sheila says

I've heard about Angela Slatter for a long time--people who know me have recommended her to me. (I love fairy-tale retellings--especially dark, feminist ones.) And wow was that recommendation correct! Her stories are must-reads for any fans of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, or anyone who loves modern takes on fairy tales.

What I love best is the complexity of her heroines. In most traditional fairy tales, the protagonists are blank slates--they are "good girls" or "clever girls" and that's usually all we know about them. They're rewarded for being good or clever, and thus the reader is taught a lesson. Slatter's characters are sometimes good and often clever, yes, but they're also scared, angry, evil, vengeful, driven, loving, protective, etc. They're very complex, sometimes unlikeable, with varied motives and worldviews (though revenge is a common motivator in several of the stories).

It's hard to choose favorites, but "Bluebeard's Daughter" was an excellent twist on that old gem of a fairy tale, as was "Sister, Sister." And "The Badger Wife." I'd better stop or I'll end up listing them all! :)

Slatter also ties many of the stories together, mentioning previous characters or places or events. This adds a nice touch of cohesion to the collection.

The collection includes:

1. Sourdough
2. Dresses, Three
3. Bluebeard's Daughter
4. The Jacaranda Wife
5. Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope
6. The Coffin-Maker's Daughter
7. By the Weeping Gate
8. St. Dymphna's School for Poison Girls
9. By My Voice I Shall Be Known
10. Sister, Sister
11. The Badger Bride
12. The Tallow-Wife
13. What Shines Brightest Burns Most Fiercely
14. Bearskin

I received this review copy from the publisher on NetGalley. Thanks for the opportunity to read and review; I appreciate it! Especially since Slatter is sometimes hard to find in the U.S. But hopefully that's starting to change.

Diana says

This book contains an array of short stories plus two new novellas written by World Fantasy and British Fantasy Award-winning Australian author Angela Slatter:

1. Sourdough
2. Dresses, Three
3. Bluebeard's Daughter
4. The Jacaranda Wife
5. Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope
6. The Coffin-Maker's Daughter
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11. The Badger Bride
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14. Bearskin

I didn't know what punctuation to give to it, since I don't like books of short stories and I was misled to this one as it was labelled as a graphic novel. That is why I haven't given it any rating, as not to be misleading.

Lulu // RoadsideReader says

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You know how most times, folks tell you not to judge a book by its cover, and it's usually meant to encourage you to give things a try? Well, think of this as the opposite. The cover for *A Feast of Sorrows* by Angela Slatter is amazing. It is so creepy and inviting and wonderful looking; it seemed perfect for autumn. But, the stories within leave me wanting. They don't drive me towards any strong feelings. They aren't bad, they are good. They simply are.

I appreciate that all of the protagonists (not always the heroes) are women and that they need to be quick witted and strong in multiple ways. I loved that one of the characters that pops up in multiple short stories is a lesbian (though am horribly disappointed that she's also shown to be equally as deviant as a pedophile mentioned in a latter story). So, why three stars? Because there were some real gems that had potential. I loved *The Coffin-maker's Daughter* until we realize what sort of collection she holds (from a different story). I love the concept of there being a *School for Poison Girls*. *Bluebeard's Daughter* was absolutely fantastic! But the rest, either seemed too identical to stories heard before (especially the *Rumpelstiltskin* 'retelling') or just didn't seem to matter.

There is no doubt that she is a good author, *A Feast of Sorrows* by Angela Slatter simply did not capture my

attention the way I wish it had. The way the cover made me wish to be whisked away by these short stories. If you're looking for another collection of short stories and retellings that really left me with a great impression, perhaps try Sorrows and Wishes by Cindy Lynn Speer.

// I received this title for free //

Cathy (cathepsut) says

Collection of short stories. Dark, full of vengeful women, witchcraft, punished abusers and greedy women, stolen lovers...

Unfortunately I only read three of the stories, before the NetGalley license ran out. But based on those I think this is a worthwhile collection of wickedly dark stories.

I received this free e-copy from the publisher/author via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review, thank you!

Jacqie says

Angela Slatter is not easy to find in the US, and I've only read one other book by her. I've laid hands on one of her novels and I'm excited to read it!

This book puts together many of her short stories. Slatter works mostly on the theme of reimagined fairy tales, or stories that feel like fairy tales. Some of them take place in the same world, and occasionally characters reappear, but each story stands on its own.

The world of the stories is similar to about our 18th century, I'd say (although this is a rough estimate). Slatter wants to explore women who find their own agency and then what they do with that power. Some women are heroines, but many of her female characters are very much not. I suppose the idea is that women are people, not paragons, and power is just as tempting to misuse if you are female- sometimes especially if you are female and have had to knuckle under to jerks your whole life.

I read most of these stories back to back within a week, and I don't know that I'd recommend doing that. Since many of the themes are similar, the stories can feel repetitive if you read too many of them too close together. I'd suggest a couple a day, and not taking too long between them, so that you can recognize any characters that show up in later stories. Read a couple at time to get your fix of girl power with both nice girls and naughty ones.

Sarah Marie says

[A Feast of Sorrows](#) by Angela Slatter

3.75 stars

This is a short story collection that is dark, gritty, and slightly unsettling at times. Slatter tackles many simple and famous stories and puts her own spin on them. It was incredibly fun and entertaining to read new tales that have connection to the past. I do enjoy a good retelling and Slatter is capable of creating new worlds and building upon old ones and expanding on them. This makes her a strong short story writer and since finishing this collection in 2016, I believe she is one of the stronger modern short story writers I've come across. In fact, I still think about this collection and it's February 2018. I think that says something about these small and simple tales. They stuck with me in a way that some novels struggle to do.

Whimsical Writing Scale: 4.25

Sourdough – **4 stars** This story follows a woman who kneads bread dough and falls madly in love with a witch's soon-to-be husband. I loved the twist Slatter took and I was immediately impressed with her writing style. It's a strong starting story, but it isn't an absolute favorite.

Dresses, Three – **4.25 stars** This story is absolutely immersive. The descriptions of the dresses are amazing-peacock feathers, butterfly wings, and words. I loved the ending and it definitely won me over.

"I live, now, in one room. The rest of the huge house is quiet around me; nothing runs along its artery-like corridors. No life."

Bluebeards Daughter – **5 stars** A stepmother plots to get rid of all of the daughters through fairy tales one-by-one. This is one of my favorite short stories EVER! I think about this one often and how the rug was completely pulled out from under me. I don't want to say too much about this one, but if you read only one short story out of this collection, make it this one!

"We're all bad witches at some point."

The Jacaranda Wife – **4.5 stars** This story follows a woman born from a jacaranda tree. It greatly reminded me of The Brides of Rollrock Islands and the selkie myth. I loved it and thought it was stunningly beautiful.

Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope – **3.25 stars** An interesting take on Rumpelstiltskin! The problem is that I've never been a fan of this story and it has its moments to set itself a part from the tale, but it's not a favorite.

The Coffin Maker's Daughter – **3.5 stars** (I originally gave this 2 stars, but no longer agree with that rating) I changed my rating because this is a story that has stayed with me. I thought the writing wasn't as lyrical as the previous stories and found it to be disjointed. However, the plot and overall theme of this story has stuck with me and I'm glad that my opinion has changed on it. Plus, this story is about a lesbian coffin maker who has supernatural powers. What more you could want?

By the Weeping Gate – **3 stars** Prostitutes and young girls are being murdered by a man obsessed with immortality. Voldemort is that you? Mediocre plot and meh feelings towards this one.

St. Dymphna's School for Poison Girls – **3 stars** Interesting tale about an assassin academy and the man trapped to the earth who is tied the schoolgrounds. There's a reoccurring character in this one and that was super fun, but I think this is one of my least favorites of the collection because it's choppy and far too long.

By My Voice I Shall Be Known – **4 stars** A young woman loses her tongue after a horrible attack. This is a story of revenge – a lover's revenge. It sounds cliché, but this story was wild. Slatter has a way of making cliché stories slowly progress away from the direction you are expecting them to go.

Sister, Sister – **4.75 stars** A former queen now finds herself living as a whore after her sister steals the palace. One, Theodora is a badass. Two, this story has trolls and changelings. How awesome is that?!?!?

The Badger Bride – **3.25 stars** A copier of books is given a dangerous book and finds a badger. This book could destroy her, but the badger could save her. Cheesy, but it's a cute story and I really did enjoy the ending.

The Tallow Wife – **2.75 stars** Incredibly long story about a woman and her family. Yeah, I have nothing to say about this one. It was underwhelming and it didn't stick with me at all.

What Shines Brightest Burns Most Fiercely – **3 stars** This is a continuation of *The Tallow Wife* from the PoV of Theodora's (from *Sister, Sister*) grandson. I loved the deep connections between the stories, but I wasn't a huge fan of this one, but it was better than *The Tallow Wife*.

Bearskin – **3 stars** Cordelia's (*The Tallow Wife*) son, Torden, is forced to be a hunter and it is a sweet story. I don't think it was the best way to end the collection, but it was nice. I really want more stories set in the world because I need to know if Cordelia gets her children back and exacts revenge.

Overall, Slatter's short story collection, *A Feast of Sorrows*, is a strong set of stories that stand out individually and compliment each other. I recommend this to fans of dark retellings and someone who is looking for something along the lines of *Tor Shorts*. I'm definitely looking forward to more from Slatter.

Cover Thoughts: I don't like this cover, but I knew immediately when I saw that it had something to do with fairytales. I also think it may be a little hint to the *Bluebeard's Daughter* and the "Have an apple" line.

Thank you, Netgalley and Prime Books, for providing me with a copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Kelly says

I had been going to knock off like half a star for the weirdly loose ends at the very end, but her afterword explains that they're part of a longer book that will come out later. Just devoured this, and need to read her backlist.

Susana says

Arc Provided by Prime Books
Released on October 4th

This is a collection of stories that feature women as the main characters

Not one of them tries to pass them as perfect, and most of the times, in their imperfections you'll find their strongest asset.

Vengeance links them throughout time and ages, despite (most of the times) not sharing a particular DNA. The language is raw and up in your face. No pretty words here to lighten up the dark in which they take place.

Infidelity, lust, perversion, greed, abuse: you'll find all of them in this collection.

A feast of sorrows this is... and what a dark feast.

This is not my first incursion into the author's writing, although unfortunately I still haven't read "Sourdough" or "Bitterwood Bible" for which I am extremely sorry.

1) **Sourdough**, a tale of love of vengeance. 4 Stars

"My memory is true."

A young baker, Emmeline, falls in love with a groom to be.

Imagine if you could bake your own revenge... and make it as bitter as you'd wish.

2) **Dresses, Three** 2.5 Stars

"Butterfly wings," says Aurora. "A dress of butterfly wings, Cerridwen?"

Really strong beginning, but I felt as if it needed something more.

It is a tale of wishes and its consequences.

3) **The Bluebeard's Daughter** 5 Stars

"My father likes being married and, despite everything, he's apparently catnip for women, whether for his fortune, castle, or the great virile bushy beard, who can say."

With traces of what I've come to associate with Snow White elements, this was unexpectedly dark.

Strong character with a strong mind. Loved it.

Rosaline is well her father's daughter ;)

That ending is a **GEM**.

4) **The Jacaranda Wife** - 4 Stars

"Sometimes, not very often, but sometimes when the winds blow right, the summer heat is kind, and the rain trickles down just-so, a woman is born of a jacaranda tree."

Men: always wanting what they can't have. --

Beautiful imagery in a tale as old as time: some things cannot be stopped. Or changed.

5) **Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope** - 3.5 Stars

A retelling of Rumpelstilzkin.

When Alice's disgusting father announces to all the world to hear, that her daughter can spin straw into gold, the girl has to come out with a way to save her neck

6) **The Coffin-Maker's Daughter** -3.5 Stars

In a world where the dead need more than a simple coffin to be put to sleep (and stay there), Hepsibah Ballantyne, is the only coffin-maker in town. That makes her extremely valuable. Interesting story with a lesbian character, although there could have been more information about those mirrors...

7) By the Weeping Gate - 4 Stars

"She is no longer a girl who can live in the shadows, and she feels this loss."

When beauty is a curse, it will be up to the most plain of all sisters to save them... Here is a story that I would love to know how it ends...

8) St Dymphna's School for Poison Girls - 2 Stars

Here's a short that I've already read thanks to Tor. It started out great, but then I couldn't help feeling as if the character had changed... and not for the best.

9) By My Voice I Shall Be Known - 4 Stars

"If I still had a voice, I would cry out."

Dark. Dark. So dark. And so compelling. Unfortunately, once again, I wanted more. This ending, as others, felt rushed.

10) Sister, Sister - 3.5 Stars

And here it is, a short that would benefited from me having read "Sourdough" and "Bitterworld Bible": or at least that is what I felt.

What if an hea comes betrayal? What will happen then to "our" princes and "princesses"?

11) The Badger Wife - 3 Stars

12) The Tallow- Wife - 4.5 Stars (novella)

Loved this one. Can't wait to read more about Cordelia.

13) What Shines Brightest Burns Most Fiercely - 4 Stars

A follow up of the sorts of the previous novella, but with different protagonists.

14) Bearskin - 4 Stars

Also takes place in same universe of the "The Tallow Wife".

This one follows Cordelia's younger son path.

The "Tallow Wife" novella and "What Shines Brightest Burns most fiercely" are both originals to this collection.

Alexandra says

I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

A praise to strong women as they live through fairy tales! Very emotional and provoking!

Althea Ann says

***** Sourdough • (2007)

When a baker is called upon to demonstrate her wares for a big wedding catering order, the last thing she expects is to fall in love with the groom. But things happen as they will. Although it's an arranged marriage, it's unsurprising (except to the baker) that the fiancée is none too pleased with their affair. The events that transpire will involve curses and revenge. In these stories, there tends to be no 'innocent' party.

***** Dresses, Three • (2008)

Terrible and exquisite. A low-born seamstress of exceeding talent is 'passed-around' by her wealthy society-lady clients. Her young son tags along with her, keeping out-of-the-way in the servants' quarters. But the latest client wants three dresses that will be more remarkable than anything yet created.

**** Bluebeard's Daughter • (2015)

Weaving together elements of the tale of Bluebeard, Snow White and Hansel & Gretel (among others), as usual, Slatter creates something entirely new - and quite disturbing. Our protagonist is used to her father's wives not 'lasting' long in their household. But this latest wife is stubbornly sticking around, and quite possibly, is doing away with her stepchildren.
'At times, we're all the evil witch...'

**** The Jacaranda Wife • (2008)

A selkie story, transposed to colonial Australia - where the nuances and the tragedy work just as well as in a more traditional (Celtic, watery) setting.

**** Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope • (2009)

More traditional than not, this retelling of 'Rumpelstilzkin' puts the emphasis on the emotional relationship between the miller's daughter and her deceased mother.

***** The Coffin-Maker's Daughter • (2011)

Haunting (literally) and chilling story. Although plagued by her father's ghost, a young woman carries on with the family business she inherited from him: she's the only coffin-maker in her town. Her 'monopoly' means there's certain liberties she can take...

**** By the Weeping Gate • (2013)

You can hear the writer reading from this story online, here: <http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcas...>

A hard woman moves to town; running a brothel that's staffed by her multiple daughters. All the girls are available to clients but two - one is judged too 'plain' for the job, and the other, the youngest, is being "saved" for something special - the madam has a plan to sell the girl in marriage to the mayor, assuring herself a step up in society. But even when the daughter/maidservant learns something terrible about the mayor, the madam has no interest in changing her plans. Fairy tale meets Lovecraft in this tragedy.

***** St Dymphna's School for Poison Girls • (2014)

I love all of Slatter's stories, but in this one I found myself identifying with the protagonist more than in most of her work.

A young woman has entered a very special school, masquerading as a bit of a charity student. While most of

the students at St. Dymphna's are rich girls whose families want them to have the skills to kill their future husbands over festering feuds, she is purportedly being trained as an assassin-for-hire. But the truth is something other again - she has her own goals and ambitions - and a reason for being at St. Dymphna's.

***** By My Voice I Shall Be Known • (2013)

It's a familiar and unsurprising story - but never less painful to the one it happens to, for all of that. A devoted partner and longtime girlfriend is thrown over by her merchant lover when he makes his fortune, and can aspire to a wife from a higher echelon of society. Seeking revenge, the jilted woman makes a bargain with the mermaids...

**** Sister, Sister • (2009)

Once a queen, a woman is now reduced to life in a brothel. (A brothel where a remarkable number of characters from earlier stories seem to have ended up.) It's actually not the worst place to live; the woman who runs the place is fair and considerate. But that's not to say that the woman doesn't have plans to leave, or that she doesn't hold serious resentment against her sister, whose lies caused her husband to throw her over and make that sister his mistress.

However, there's more to this story that she realizes... rumors are going around of children disappearing, and this betrayal may have deeper roots.

***** The Badger Bride • (2014)

A copyist-for-hire is assigned to make a replica of a mysterious book. But when a certain something happens, involving a wild badger she and her sisters took in for the winter, she suspects that the grimoire is a dangerous and too-powerful thing... But does she have any choice but to deliver on her father's promises to this wealthy client?

***** The Tallow-Wife •

Just beautiful - and sad. As the story opens, we meet a woman who's been jailed, forced to work making candles from her cell. Flashing back, we see her as a privileged woman; enjoying life with a successful husband, a busy social calendar, and beautiful and beloved children. Her household includes servants that she treats affectionately, and her younger sister. Her biggest worry is that her handsome husband is a little bit too rigid about the proper role of a wife. But it's all about to come unraveled...

*** What Shines Brightest Burns Most Fiercely •

This is a direct sequel to the previous story, and I suspect it also makes reference to other characters previously introduced in stories set in what the author refers to as the "Sourdough world." It settles some questions, and gives a particularly reprehensible character his well-deserved desserts - but as a stand-alone, I thought it was a bit lacking.

***** Bearskin • (2015)

Mixes a number of familiar folk tale tropes and comes up with something entirely new - and beautiful. Following unfortunate family circumstances, a young boy has been apprenticed to a huntsman. He could not be more fundamentally unsuited for the job: a timid, book-loving child who'd hoped to become a scholar. The huntsman is a rough and tumble type with no patience for milksops. When the boy finally kills an animal - a bear cub - it's by accident. But that deed will instigate a cascade of of circumstance in which we discover there's something stranger than we'd guessed about these woods.

Erin says

I was instantly swayed by the cover with its Game of Thrones-esque title. A Feast of Sorrows is a collection of short stories. I felt that the atmosphere of the majority of the stories to be as dark as what we find in a Grimm's fairy tale. A word of caution that this book does have certain words that might not be appealing to a younger audience. In addition, there are themes of rape, murder, incest, and betrayal. As this is a collection, I believe that I will rate the stories as they appear in the book.

Sourdough 3 stars

A baker's daughter enters into a secret liaison with a young bridegroom. A fact that sets his bride on a course of revenge that will end very badly.

Dresses, Three 2 stars

Young Finn and his Welsh seamstress mother have lived sort of vagabond life. The story begins with Finn's mother taking a job with a guardian uncle and his young niece. The dresses created for the young woman set off peculiar happenings in the home and end with tragic consequences.

Bluebeard's Daughter 4 stars

I highly enjoyed the main character, Rosaline, who is given a strong voice by AS that immediately hooked me into the story. Oh and what an ending!

The Jacaranda Wife 4 stars

Set in Australia in the 19th century, this story focuses on a mysterious woman and her connection to a nearby forest. It reminded me of various legends that I have heard over the years.

Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope 3.5 stars

Re-telling of the classic Rumpelstiltskin. It still gets me every time!

The Coffin-Maker's Daughter 3 stars

Entertaining

By the Weeping Gate 4 stars

A little longer than the other stories, our story begins in a port city and revolves around a madam and her group of daughters. While several of the girls are employed as "ladies of the evening", daughters Nel and Asha are kept apart from that type of entertainment. Plain Nel is the only one of the sisters that appears to venture out into the city and witnesses its horrors. While Asha is to become the beautiful bride to a very rich man. A rich man with a very dark side.

St Dymphna's School for Poison Girls 2 stars

Eye-catching title. The characters in this story are all learning the craft of murder in order to avenge past slights done to members of their family. But Merica claims to be different and not the girl that her teachers believe her to be. While I believe that it was a good story, it doesn't really stand out in the collection.

BY MY VOICE I SHALL BE KNOWN 5 stars

The tone of the female protagonist in this story was absolutely captivating and the range of emotions presented in the story kept me at the edge of my seat. I would have to say that the revenge part of the story was well worth the wait at the end.

Sister, Sister 4 stars

We return to the same community that Sourdough took place in. A princess and her young daughter are ejected from the palace and amidst many rumors, take up living in a brothel. Her husband has taken a new lover- her own sister. I really liked the message at the end of the story about who were heroes and who were thieves.

The Badger Bride 3 stars

What happens when a young woman finds herself in possession of an ancient grimoire? A heck of a lot. This story felt a little predictable to me as if I had already read it before.

The Tallow-Wife 5 stars x 5 stars

This was the absolute gem of the collection for me. The characters were so richly drawn and the unfolding events leading up to the big reveal made me wish that the story was a full-length story. Absolutely perfect!

What Shines Brightest Burns Most Fiercely & Bearskin (The only two stories in the compilation that I didn't read because I ran out of time)

Thanks to NetGalley and Diamond Book Distributors for an an ARC ebook in exchange for an honest review.

Erica says

The more I read of this author, the more I love her writing.

In the past five years, I've found a whole new set of authors whom I really enjoy, such as Elizabeth Bear, Catherynne M. Valente, and Margo Lanagan, but I think Slatter is my favorite. Something about the way she tells a story resonates strongly within me.

This is the first of her short story collections I've been able to get my hands on. Typically, I find her work online and read it there. I'm currently trying to track down Vigil so I can then read her newest novel, CorpseLight but it's not as easy as I'd hoped.

Anyway, back to this volume - I'd read one of the stories already and had seen reviews for another (because it's a TOR short) when everyone and their dog read it. Otherwise, this was all new to me and I delighted in that.

Many of these stories can be strung together to create a sort of history while others connect to stories outside

this collection. Some are stand-alones (for now), though, which makes for a nice variety. I'll go ahead and talk about them individually, now, like karen taught me to.

Sourdough - 4 stars

This is the one I'd previously read. I stumbled across it when I was looking for more stories about Patience Gideon from *Of Sorrow and Such*

The sorrow in this story centers on being loved then put aside and how delicious wedding bread can help a gal with her #vengeancegoals.

It takes place in Lodellan, a city that shows up throughout the book.

Dresses, Three - 4 stars

Fairy tale remix! Sort of.

According to the notes in back, this was based on a piece of art! It's not based on a particular fairy tale but incorporates the elements of three challenges and earning the right to one's life and freedom. In this one, the narrator is the son of the seamstress who has to make the three magical dresses.

There are multiple sorrows here, chief among them the seamstresses' servitude and what it costs her as well as the rich young woman's imminent rape by a creepy uncle.

Bluebeard's Daughter - 5 stars

Fairy tale remix! Legit!

So what happens when Bluebeard finally meets the woman with no curiosity? That woman takes over the household (except for one room, of course) and the children from previous marriages start to go missing. Luckily, the daughter in question is a clever and sidesteps not only her step-mother's machinations, but also the nefarious plans of the gingerbread house witch AND the stupidity of cute boys. Hooray!

Worth noting: There was also a Bluebeard story in *Beyond the Woods: Fairy Tales Retold* and since I read the two collections back-to-back, it was fun to compare the tales.

Yeah, there's sorrow here but nothing a little revenge, self-protection, and some adventure can't overcome!

Jacaranda Wife - 3 stars

I need to see a real-live jacaranda tree one day.

This one's a homemade fairy tale based on homemade folklore. Jacarandas can create women every once in a great while and some egotistical guy in the Outback finds one of these women and decides only she is good enough to be his bride. However, he's disappointed to find she doesn't return his ardor.

The wife is nothing but sorrow.

Light As Mist, Heavy As Hope - 4 stars

Fairy tale remix!

It's Rumpelstiltskin! And it stays close to original form but with much better writing, like this poignant line - *From flagged floor to cobwebbed ceiling, the room was filled with straw. Some bales had split and the yellow lengths spilt onto the floor like so much hope gone wrong. A spinning wheel sat, waiting for failure. Alice surreptitiously wiped her sweating palms on her white apron. The king caught the gesture and his smile broadened, dangerous and hard.*

- and a bit of a sad twist ending.

The Coffin Maker's Daughter - 3 stars

This one's a horror story and it introduces a recurring character, Hepsibah Ballantyne. Funny thing, as I was reading this, I thought to myself, "Self, this sounds like a Florence and the Machine song." And then I found out that it pretty much was - Slatter had been listening to "Lungs".

At any rate, this one is creepy for a number of reasons. And there's poison, which is always a fun addition to

any story.

By the Weeping Gate - 5 stars

This was the most poignant of the stories, for me. It deals with a lot of things I have wrestled with - being seen vs unseen, sisters, mother-daughter relationships, power struggles, icky men who look handsome but are horrid, loss and sorrow...you know, typical lady stuff.

St. Dymphna's School For Poison Girls - 4 stars

I'm not sure "fun" is the proper descriptor for this tale, though I enjoyed it the way I enjoy other fun things. I smirked a bit, chuckled here and there, delighted in the idea of a finishing school for girls that turns them into pointless assassins and the one girl who is there to steal knowledge. The only sorrow for me was the end because I'm always saddened when romance gets the way of a girl's ambition.

The witch, Magnus, from "The Weeping Gate" is in this one as is Hepsibah Ballantyne, the coffin maker.

By My Voice, I Shall Be Known - 4 stars

Witch Magnus is in this one, too, this time as the mentor to a young woman who, like the breadmaker in "Sourdough", seeks revenge. This is a darker, sadder story than "Sourdough" in that the guy who spurned the girl was a real ass and the girl is willing to give up everything just to make sure he and his new wife are unhappy.

Sister Sister - 4.5 stars

Ahh, sisters. They're my weakness, or one of them, at least. This begins the second half of the book, if you will. This story introduces the last three stories in the book, all related, all placed in Lodellan. Theodora, ousted princess, now works at an inn/brothel, run by Grammy Sykes and her common-law husband, and raises her young daughter. I suspect some of the characters in this tale have shown up in other stories or will show up again later. At any rate, Theodora was removed from power by her sister Polly and would have gone on with her life had Polly not come after Magdalene, Theodora's daughter.

The Badger Wife - 4 stars

Fairy tale remix! A mish-mash of Beauty and the Beast and all those tales where the dad makes the daughter do a task without giving her any information about said task with perhaps a bit of King Lear thrown in. A disgraced former Abbot lives with his 3 daughters (by 3 different women, thus the disgrace) at Fox Hollow. The youngest is a brilliant copyist and illuminator so is responsible for bringing money into the household by copying manuscripts. But then she has to copy a spellbook and things go awry and there's a badger and a shifty, dangerous rich guy. Chaos ensues.

The Tallow Wife - 4 stars

There are a lot of wives in this book. Troll wives, badger wives, and now a tallow wife, one who should have been listened-to but wasn't and so Cordelia winds up in prison and her sister, Bethany, takes Cordelia's children. This one has the flavor of a Sherlock Holmes mystery. Also, we learn that Hepsibah Ballantyne is now a legend, though she lived so long ago, no one remembers her name.

What Shines Brightest Burns Most Fiercly - 3 stars

Theodora's grandson, Jacopo, has been hired, probably by Cordelia, to get information regarding an amethyst necklace, Bethany's whereabouts, and to punish the disloyal Mr Farringdale, a pedophile.

Bearskin - 4 stars

Not dissimilar to "The Badger's Wife", though not at all the same, either. Cordelia's younger boy, Torben, has been sent to live with a hunter who will train the sensitive, intellectual boy in the ways of

outdoorsmanship. Tove, a girl with antlers growing out of her head, love interest of Jacopo, also lives with the hunter but he says she comes with the house. She knows things but doesn't share her knowledge so Torben ends up becoming one with nature but not in the way that was expected.

I found this collection to be sad, trying, and delicious. I enjoyed it all and hope to see some of these characters again; I love how they weave in and out of stories and I really want to know where they end up.

Jen says

This was an AWESOME set of stories of vengeance and good vs. evil in a fairy tale setting. It's a world similar to ours, only the fairy tale version of it, but not Disney fairy tales. Yes, good does win, but evil gets a LOT of good punches in before going down.

TRIGGER WARNINGS!!!

Infanticide/miscarriages/children being stillborn. Rape, both attempted and successful. Incest, both attempted and successful. Bestiality of a kind, necrophilia of a kind. LOTS of violence and female on female hate. And pedophilia. Nasty!

Most of the above happens off-screen as it were, but it is talked about, mentioned and hinted at. Also, the last major story doesn't end as successfully as this reader would have liked, but the final two stories add more to it and there are apparently other works that deal with it.

Oh, and my favorite thing of ALL TIME, CONTINUITY!!!! Her stories all take place in the same world, but at different times and in different locations, though there are cameos of characters and places in different stories. Sometimes it's difficult to tell when a story takes place, because some characters are rather immortal and not all characters are named. I want to know who HIM is btw.

Fav stories by FAR are Sourdough and Bluebeard's Daughter. The collection started out STRONG, but weakened a bit as it continued. Nothing horrible, but not as great as the first few stories. I WILL be reading more of this author because I want to know more of what happened in her world. The setting was great and the characters, especially the women, were strong. I just didn't like all of the rape-y and incest-y things that were going on. You can have characters with problems without having them threatened with rape.

A solid 4 stars. The sexual violence was a bit much to me and the ending wasn't the full story arc of revenge I had wanted to see completed. Other than that, solid work for advanced YA to adult. These are NOT fairy tales for little kids.

My thanks to NetGalley and Diamond Book Distributors/Prime Books for an eARC copy of this book to read and review.

Angelina says

I enjoyed this book, I haven't read anything like that before. I usually stick with big stories but it was pleasant surprise. I expected that I would get bored in some parts but it didn't happen.

