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*ISSUE 8 | MARCH 2022*

# PERIODICALLY DRAMATIC

*THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE*



A LOVE OF HISTORY THROUGH THE ART OF FICTION

# PERIODICALLY DRAMATIC

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

This is our longest publication yet! Even though it was tough, I loved every moment of it. Despite the stress this magazine may cause me, I love working on it every time. I adore creating a space for like-minded people to gather and update themselves on the goings-on in the community. It's my goal to include more short stories in upcoming releases and having two in this publication is a good way to practice the workload.

With all of the hate and ugliness in this world, I hope this magazine brings you at least a little bit of light. At *Periodically Dramatic*, we maintain that Black Lives Matter, Trans Rights are Human Rights, and we stand with Ukraine.

Stay safe,

  
Marina Hill Editor-in-Chief

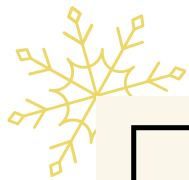
CONTACT

@periodicallydramatic on Instagram

periodicallydramatic.com



Picture: Shannyn / @personally.speaking



# Contributing Writers

ARI M.

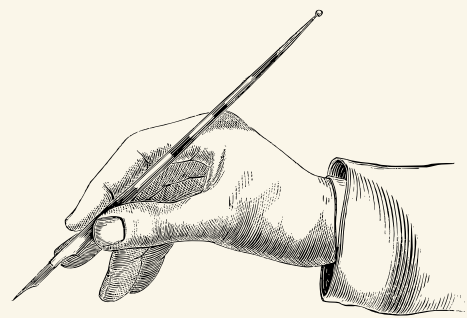
ASHLEY MANUS

PAIGE MARTIN

JACKI MOFFA

GRACE N.

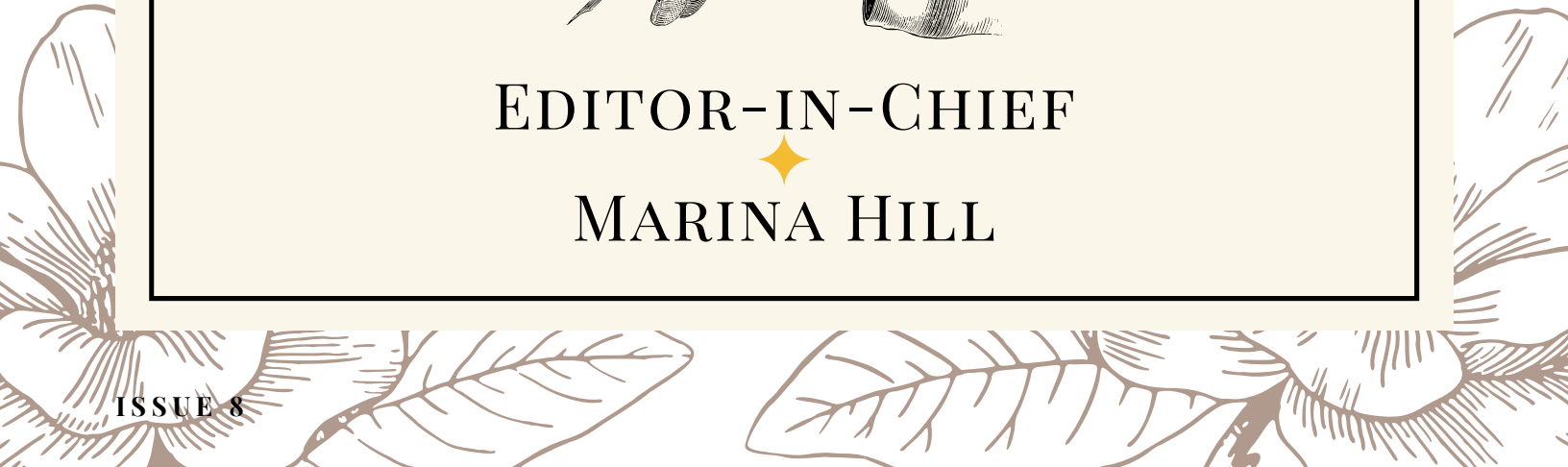
KACEY THIELE



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



MARINA HILL





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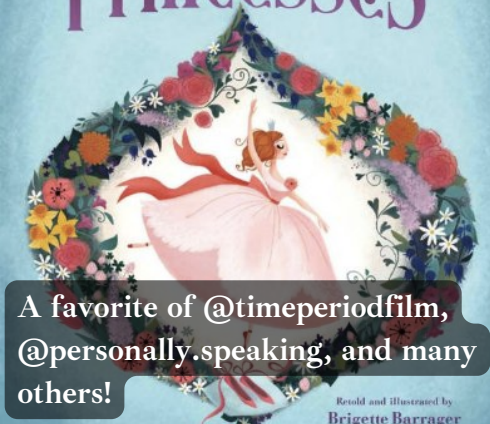
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A favorite of @julialuli's



A favorite of @makushamichaela's

# MANDUKHAI KHATUN?



In the late 1400s, Mandukhai Khatun, the daughter of the noble family Ongud, became Empress of the Northern Yuan Dynasty when she married the ruler of the Mongol Empire. At the time, she was only eighteen.

She took control of the Empire when her husband was assassinated. She led her people to a successful war with the Oirats of Western Mongolia.

She later married a nineteen-year-old noble, whom she'd adopted when he was only seven years old. The two of them led raids against Ming China. Mandukhai personally fought in battles to suppress the rebellion of the Oirats while she was pregnant with twins.

She went on to birth a total of three daughters and seven sons. Mandukhai died in the early 1500s of natural causes, but there is suspicion that Ming spies had killed her. ■



# ALICE'S *Magically* STRANGE ADVENTURE

BY ASHLEY  
MANUS



Let us wind down a rabbit hole to escape the unwanted hand of a man with too many ailments and into a world of watercolor curiosities and talking flowers. There are curiosities to speak of around every corner of Underland; a March Hare and a Mad Hatter having tea, Absalom giving advice to an unwilling Alice. For you see, Alice has lost her memory and there is no time to waste before a coat of armor and the Vorpall sword will need to be placed in her hand to defeat the Red Queen's Jabber baby Wocky, as she calls it.

A Bandersnatch, the bulldog/bear-like creature Alice rides, and a Mad Hatter's hat ride take Alice throughout the world of Underland that can give the glow of the dark and dreary or the vibrant hues of reds and blues not yet seen before. This must be a dream; one or two

pinches to wake from the illusion of a talking rabbit holding his pocket-watch with dire anticipation. Oh, this will not do! One cake to grow tall for the key and one to shrink through the door, up and down with one more up for sure into the form-fitted figure of UM. It is the entrance into the magical, gripping paradox of Underland. Those memories of years before stay hidden in these crevices and threaten to be there forevermore. Memories of a young girl painting flowers red and having tea in a worn-down garden.

Ah, memories, those tricky demons that hide behind the Mad Hatter's fluorescent eyes when recounting a white queen's celebration and the flames that consumed all in its path from a menacing Jabberwocky. A crown has fallen from the head of one queen and been placed onto the undeserving, bulbous head of another. And flung into the dark depths of Crims amongst subjects with terribly fake noses and large bellies placating an ill-tempered Iracebeth, Alice becomes the Red Queen's favorite in the form of UM with a matching red and black dress to fit her towering frame. Even though the color is meant to be warm and inviting, it is in the castle itself where the grim darkness takes hold (*cont.*)



and Alice's power of bravery is unfolding before her as is her will to do what is right. She fights off the advances of the knave and charms the Bandersnatch, off with her friends through the bleakness of Crim and into the land of the White Queen.

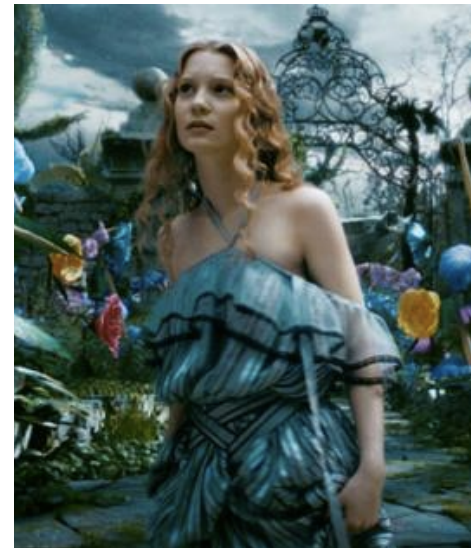
Light has begun to transform Alice further in the White Queen's kingdom and radiates to a now normal size Alice, with the help of the White Queen, of course. Shining Vorpal sword in hand, Alice brings home her treasure to the waiting court and the wholesome thanks of the White Queen. Absalom builds his cocoon and softly conveys his last words of wisdom to Alice in those moments before she is to face the Jabberwocky. And once more, Alice begins to remember her courage. She is the Champion and with the most unlikely sources of support, she will face what awaits her on the chess field of battle.

A shining suit of armor and long, curly blonde locks set against the gray darkness meet on this field with an ever menacing Iracebeth. No one can defeat Iracebeth's Jabber baby Wocky. With the knave at Iracebeth's side, Alice faces her and the Red Queen. Iracebeth has sorely misunderstood and misjudged this once small girl painting white flowers red in her garden, this is a champion standing before her and will slay any dragon within her path.

The Jabberwocky moves forth and taunts Alice before the Vorpal sword meets with its tongue and a slew of red card guards meet with the White Queen's chess defenses. Alice climbs the stairs of a castle where the Jabberwocky meets her at the top. And down with the bloody Jabberwocky's head as the Mad Hatter holds the Knave at sword point.

Stunned and shocked, the White and Red Queen watch as the Jabberwocky's head rolls to the bottom of the castle and stop to the looks of petrified horror from the Red Queen. It is with this that the Red Queen loses her crown and is sentenced to a far-off land with the Knave begging to die as opposed to being a prisoner with her.

Alice's tale of a talking rabbit, Mad Hatter, March Hare, and a queen screaming "off with her head" gives to the fantastical as much as to the amazement of those that watch the tale. Vivid colors and far-reaching lands seem almost within grasp in the minutes that are captured within this tale. As much as the world of reality may seem strange, the world of Underland is a curiosity for anyone brave enough to dive within its depths. ■



# Can You Guess?



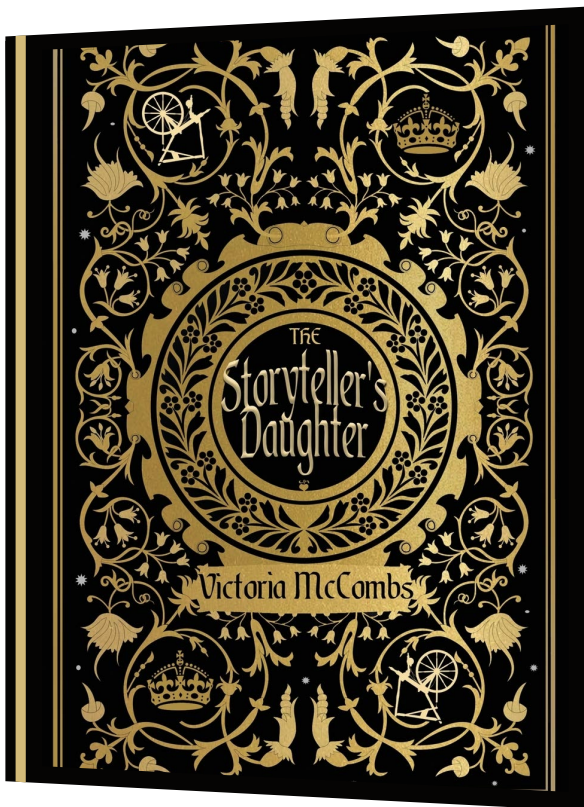
Can you  
guess the  
exact decade  
of this  
fashion  
plate?

*THE ANSWER IS ON PAGE 10!*



# COSETTE'S GOLDEN GIFT

BY KACEY THIELE



As a lifelong reader of fairytale retellings, there is a deep sense of nostalgic wonder that retellings hold for me that is almost impossible to find in other books. And while I do love darker retellings, the ones that strive to keep that old fairytale charm, not unlike *Ella Enchanted*, never fail to capture my smile and attention. *The Storyteller's Daughter*, a retelling of the Grimm's Fairytale "Rumpelstiltskin," fits very comfortably into that traditional fairytale world.

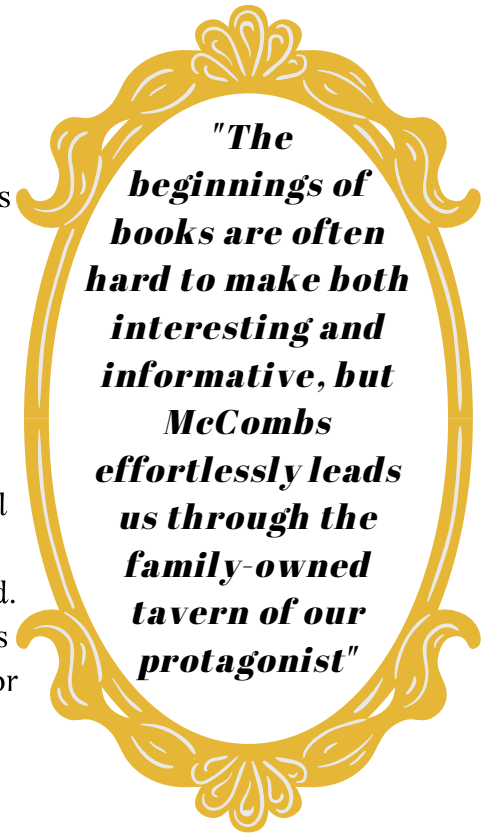
From the opening page, we are introduced to a world of kings and magic with charming names like Autumn Leaf Village and the Riverfront Tavern to set the warm and whimsical atmosphere. The beginnings of books are often hard to make both interesting and informative, but McCombs effortlessly leads us through the family-owned tavern of our protagonist, Cosette,

without boring or overbearing us with too much information. I was surprised by how much I liked spending time with her family. Her parents' differing personalities balanced each other out nicely, and I *loved* her sister, Anika. Cosette is a rather passive heroine for much of the book (almost too much so at times), so Anika was a nice breath of air with her fiery personality.

Naturally, out of all the characters, it was Rumpelstiltskin I was most eager to read. I always like it when Rumpelstiltskin is given a "good guy" role, especially as the king is so awful in the original story, and it churns my stomach to think that the miller's daughter married such a horrible person in the Grimm's version. McComb's Rumpelstiltskin is very much a kind person, and rather elfish in his teasing attitude and antics, which I liked. He has a tragic backstory, an element I am *always* a sucker for. However, I wish there had been a bit smoother transition between him discussing his "old life" and his cheerful moments with Cosette. What had happened to him (*cont.*)

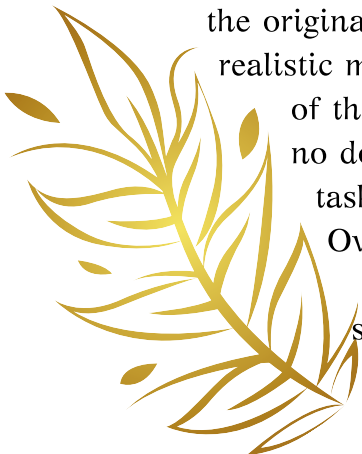
was rather dark, considering the overall lighter tone of the book, so it would have been nice to see him have a bit tougher time opening up to Cosette. But maybe that's just my endless need for angst talking. Overall, I very much enjoyed his character and was satisfied with the route his arc took.

In regards to the plot itself, I loved the concept of the Gifts. In the kingdom Cosette lives in, each person is born with a gift in which they possess a certain magical ability. Some are incredibly talented at singing, while others may be able to speak every language in the world. Though, for some reason, no one can explain, Cosette is born without a Gift, which provides excellent conflict for her. As for her father, his Gift was the *perfect* way to get him to talk about Cosette's "ability" to spin straw into gold, as per the original tale. I was impressed by how smoothly McCombs was able to twist the story so Cosette's father gets his daughter into this mess without him ever seeming like a bad person.



McCombs did a fantastic job drawing on the original fairytale; she certainly made it her own, but still retained key parts that lovers of the Grimm's version would pick up on. As I mentioned earlier, I truly enjoyed how the "spin straw into gold" rumor spread throughout the kingdom. But another callback to the original story that I wasn't counting on was the "guess my name" plot, in which the miller's daughter must guess Rumpelstiltskin's name in order to save her child. As Rumpelstiltskin was no longer the villain in this version, I expected McCombs to have dropped the name plot completely. But that particular plot point wasn't forgotten, and I admit, I gave a little happy gasp once I turned to the page with it. It was the perfect wink to the audience.

I had a lot of fun reading *The Storyteller's Daughter*. I loved how McCombs took the original tale and expanded it, in particular by giving much more realistic motivations to both the king and Rumpelstiltskin. Her descriptions of the spinning itself were written with enchanting accuracy, so I had no doubt both Cosette and Rumpelstiltskin knew how to accomplish the task at hand. In fact, it made me want to learn how to spin myself! Overall, it was a fun book that middle-school me would have been *obsessed* with. It's perfect for that dose of nostalgic warmth one sometimes needs when looking for a fairytale retelling. ■



# Upcoming Period Dramas!

**MY  
NAME IS  
LEON**

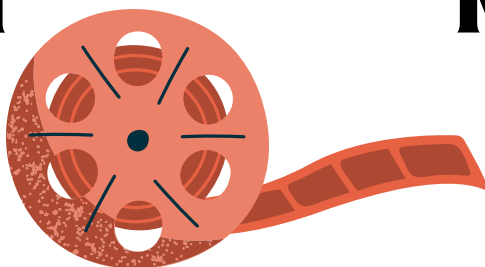


**THE  
NORTHMAN**



**MR.  
MALCOLM'S  
LIST**

**THE  
WOMAN  
RING**



# BELLE'S ETERNAL TALE

BY  
GRACE N.

As a millennial, I grew up loving all of the movies in the Disney Renaissance Universe (all Disney films produced between 1989 - 1999) and as a bookworm, I related especially to Belle. I was swooning more at Beast's enormous library than at the ballroom dance scene!

The 1991 adaptation of the animated *Beauty and the Beast* is based on the 1740 French fairytale "La Belle et la Bête" written by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve. She was a woman who understood what women want most: a quiet space, a cozy chair, a long book, and no creepy Gastons hanging around and bugging us to marry them! To be fair, Disney took liberties with the original story, but the moral of falling in love with someone for what's inside and not on the outside stays the same.



Beyond books, ballroom dancing, and brave women, *Beauty and the Beast* is a fantasy filled with singing forks, matronly teapots, and a flirty feather duster. Belle is also living a fantasy she usually reads about in books! She must heroically save her scatterbrained father from the clutches of an evil monster, explore the dark and dusty recesses of a castle, get a makeover from a talking bureau, and wear a beautiful ball gown for a romantic dance. It is what dreams are made of for a young woman hoping for adventure in the "great wide somewhere." Belle learns to love Beast before his transformation back into the prince as she comes to accept her fate as a semi-prisoner in his castle (yes, Stockholm Syndrome and whatnot let's just skip that debate for the sake of visual aesthetics and adventure).



The 2017 live-action adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast* is a stunning spectacle of color, shimmering lights, and incredible song-and-dance numbers. If you're worried about unfaithful adaptations, put those worries to bed: Emma Watson wouldn't hurt us like that! The live-action story walks side by side with the 1991 animated musical, featuring all the same songs, *(cont.)*

***"I found myself getting choked up in the movie theater hearing the opening strains of 'Belle' on the big screen, remembering seven-year-old me rewinding the VHS tape incessantly to watch it over and over again."***

characters, and settings. I found myself getting choked up in the movie theater hearing the opening strains of “Belle” on the big screen, remembering seven-year-old me rewinding the VHS tape incessantly to watch it over and over again.

What I wasn’t expecting was to adore the additions to the live-action film, including the story of Belle’s mother and the heartstring-tugging song, “How Does a Moment Last Forever” that her father sings (done beautifully by Kevin Kline). I really enjoyed the period-appropriate tale that fleshed out more backstory for Belle and Maurice. I also loved Dan Stevens’ “Evermore” and felt his pain and sorrow while watching Belle leave him behind to rescue her father.

Typically, an animated movie can achieve more visually than live-action due to budget, time constraints, and resources. But I can truly say that the fantastical elements of *Beauty and the Beast* were given the attention they deserve using CGI in the live-action. Just watch “Be Our Guest” and you’ll see what I mean! The grandeur, the showmanship, the ole razzle-dazzle--it blows the original out of the water.

Disney is a family company and *Beauty and the Beast* is a family film that has something for everyone. It doesn’t sacrifice any of the joy of the original while adding more nuance and complexities for adults to enjoy as well. The cinematography, the aesthetics, the acting, the script: it’s sublime, and I can’t recommend it enough. If you have not seen the 2017 adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*, do yourself a favor and watch it! Grab the popcorn, dim the lights, and get cozy because it’s a tale as old as time that’s worth every minute of yours. ■



# Author Interview

WITH  
**CATHERINE  
BAKEWELL**



Many months ago on a Wednesday evening, when we were still adjusting to the early sunsets, a dear friend of mine and I logged onto Zoom to talk about her upcoming releases and her process as a historical fiction author.

Catherine Bakewell is a writer, artist, and an opera enthusiast. She has lived in Spain and in France, where she romped through gardens, ate pastries, and worked on her novels. She is represented by Jordan Hamessley at New Leaf Literary and Media, Inc.

Her debut middle-grade fantasy, *WE ARE THE SONG*, is slated for publication with Holiday House in Spring 2022.

Her debut young adult fantasy, *FLOWERHEART*, will be published by HarperTeen in Winter 2023.

After some technical issues, we finally settle into the interview. Catherine, or Cat, flashes me her sweet smile while clad in a flower-patterned shirt, which is very on-brand for her.



***What did it feel like to learn your book was offered a deal?***

Well, I found out on my birthday! I swore a lot, which doesn't happen a lot. I had to tell the first person I ran into which was the guy fixing our plumbing. Whenever he came by, he would always ask about book stuff. It was amazing.

EXPECTED PUBLICATION: MAY 3, 2022

***What was the hardest part about writing WE ARE THE SONG?***

I wanted to write a story where the protagonist grows up without losing their innocence. That was challenging. Also, going through editing rounds with an editor at a publishing house for the first time was intense but also super exciting.

***What inspired you to write this book?***

I've been in choir since I was, like, eight years old. I graduated college and lived in France for a little bit, and when I came back, I was in this brief period of living at home, trying to find a job, and what made me feel better was joining a choir with my mom. The feeling of singing with a group of people was very magical.

***When does SONG take place?***

It takes place in a fake world in about the 1650s. I'm a huge history nerd and I love the baroque era.

***Did you build SONG's plot in the baroque era, or did you have the idea and have to find an era, or did the two bloom together?***

They both kind of went hand in hand because I knew I wanted to do a music story, and I really love baroque music.

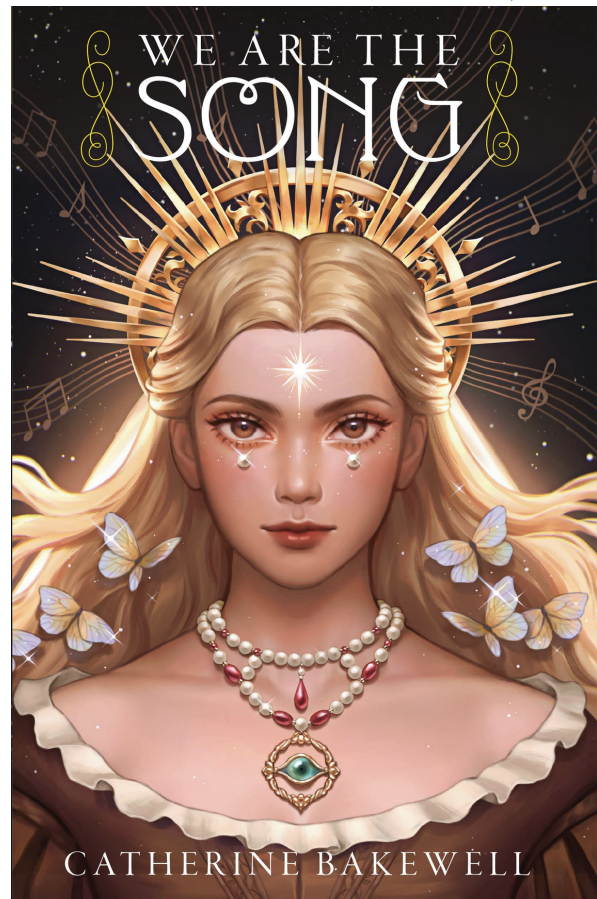
***What is your biggest hack or most used skill for researching history for your work?***

I usually go to Wikipedia and scroll to the bottom; there are a bunch of sources which is a good place to start. Historical fiction books or just history books are also resources I use a lot. If you're in college, this is your time to shine! There are so many free resources for college students.

***What is your favorite part about historical fantasy?***

I really love to see people playing with history. I love seeing books where diversity is explored more and told very authentically. ■

**WE ARE THE SONG is a lush and beautiful fantasy set in a world where music is magic and the fate of many thrones lies with one girl...**





# EVER AFTER



A SHORT STORY

BY PAIGE MARTIN

*Help from her fairy godmother gets Eloise le Brun into the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture despite 18th century prejudices, but only she can help herself get her art recognized.*

"**W**here are you going?"

Eloise stopped, closed her eyes, and imagined that her husband had said it in an interested tone, perhaps a concerned tone—anything but that harsh, demanding tone that recently she'd heard more and more of.

She opened her eyes to find him standing before a mirror, adjusting his coat and hat. His reflection appeared like a perfect portrait—youthful features, expensive clothes, strong posture, all framed in spiraling gold. The background showed the front parlor of their house—a house of artists, complete with its colors, carvings, patterns, and luxury.

"I am painting a portrait for Madame Blanchet. I am to be to her house at half-past eleven." Eloise held her art case in front of her, stood straight in what she hoped was a dignified posture.

Monsieur Vigée did not turn, saying to his reflection, "I told Madame Blanchet that *I'd* be painting her portrait."

"You did what?"

"This way you can be with Julie. The girl needs her mother."

Eloise fought to keep the desperation from her voice, but her distinguished manner crumpled. "I promised Madame Blanchet. Felice is with Julie."

"I informed Madame Blanchet of your circumstances. She was very understanding."

Eloise's voice quieted to a murmur. "But what of the Academy?"



## EVER AFTER

“You really think they’d accept a woman?” The husband sighed, then crossed the room to Eloise, placing a hand on her shoulder. “We have a new dream now... together. Our family.”

His hand slipped from her body. He marched from the house, grabbing his own art case (which Eloise hadn’t noticed atop the sideboard) on his way. The front door slammed. Horse hooves clomped out an even rhythm that soon faded.

Eloise, still standing there, dropped her art case as if she could resist gravity no longer. The case popped open. Paintbrushes and jars of pigment and oil rolled away, under the couch, out of reach.

She left her mess. Instinctively, she sought comfort and made for the nursery. Felice, the nursemaid, was there folding blankets. The servant gave a brief smile, then returned to her work. Felice was the perfect nursemaid. She’d make the perfect mother--all pretty smiles and quiet obedience. Part of Eloise wanted to be that. Part of her resented that.

The mother crossed to the crib and scooped up her baby, swaying side to side.

“Oh, Julie,” she whispered. “What shall I do?”

The baby cooed, then shifted, sinking into her mother’s embrace. She seemed to say *all will be well*.

Eloise stood there for quite some time--she could not leave with her child comfortable in her arms. Thus, she remained, but her mind wandered.

As she cradled her daughter, she gazed dreamily at the painting of an angel above the crib. Her father had gifted it to her shortly after Julie’s birth. Eloise saw the piece for what it represented, watching over her baby girl, and for the joy the artist must have found in crafting the beautiful form. Was it so wrong of her to want that same joy? Could she be there for her family and for herself, raise her daughter, and pursue her dream of painting?

Even if there was only herself to consider, was a career in painting even possible? She searched her mind for the answers to these questions but could not push past her stubbornness. *I cannot give up*, she thought over and over. She’d been toughened like a brush left unwashed, coated in dried paint.

Eloise fell out of her reverie when Julie stirred in her arms. She took that opportunity to place the baby back in her crib.

The mother tip-toed from the nursery. The artist marched to her home studio.

There, in a stack of canvases in the studio's back corner, her masterpiece was stashed. As she searched the stack, she imagined the piece in her mind. It was a history painting, the best she'd ever done. Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture followed a strict hierarchy of genres. At the top was history (scenes and myths of the classical past). History was the most complex genre by far, complete with its landscapes, architecture, and human figures. In the middle were portraiture, genre painting (everyday scenes), and landscapes. And at the very bottom was still life, paintings of mere objects. The Academy allowed the artist to choose the genre for the first round of evaluations. If one made it to the second round, one was assigned a genre based on one's skill. To submit a history painting, the highest of genres, was ambitious, especially for a woman. The few women who'd made it into the Academy were, of course, assigned still life. But Eloise would not win her place in the Academy by playing it safe.

Eloise must have been distracted. She'd somehow missed her painting in the stack. She began again, meanwhile debating if the piece was truly finished. In the eyes of the artist, a painting is never truly complete. The artist eventually must decide to stop. They must determine when the painting has reached its peak when further work would only degrade the vision. It was that time for Eloise. She would not let her doubts nor words like those of her husband hold her back any longer.

Once again, Eloise had skipped her painting. She wiped all other thoughts from her mind and checked a third time... and a fourth... and in her confusion, eventually came across a canvas thick with layers of white paint. The worst possible thoughts came to mind as she pulled the canvas free. She hadn't worked on the piece in days, overcome as she was with self-doubt. Sure enough, as Eloise held the canvas up to the light, she could just make out the curves of trees and corners of architecture, shapes *she'd* carefully laid down. Her own husband had painted over her work as if he could take her dream and white it out.

"No," she murmured, then raised her voice. "No!" She fumbled for a palette knife and scraped at the canvas's terrifyingly barren surface, but it was no use. Once oil paint is dry, there's no moving it, there's only painting over as her husband had done. Eloise fell to her knees.

Her fingers dug into the canvas, warping its shape. If the canvas could feel, it'd probably feel something like the clawing Eloise felt in her gut, but she didn't care. Her masterpiece was already gone. Her dream was already gone.

Through her sobs, she heard a soft voice. “Madame, Madame le Brun.”

She brushed the tears from her eyes to reveal a tiny woman hovering midair--a fairy, like straight out of a painting. The fairy’s dress certainly deserved to be painted with its luscious drapery cascading down. The dress was pale green with pink bunches of material in the shape of flowers. Lace flowed from the sleeves, and ribbon spiraled across the chest.

The dress wasn’t even the most beautiful aspect of the woman’s appearance. From her back sprouted shimmering pink wings, fluttering gracefully at even intervals. Held delicately in her hand was a silver wand. Her white hair stood taller than her head, stacked in a flawless arrangement.

“Pardon me, but I think I can be of some assistance.” The fairy cautiously approached the white canvas.

Eloise loosened her harsh grip. “Who are you?”

The fairy drew away a few wing flaps. “Why, I am your fairy godmother.”

“Fairy godmother? I’ve heard of such a thing, but I never thought I could have one.”

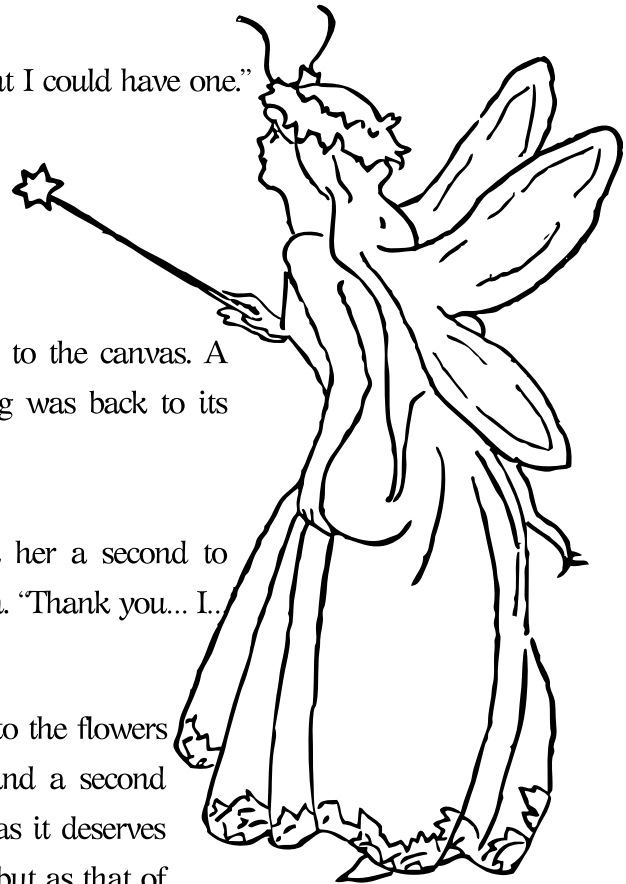
The fairy drew in once more, eyes full of pity. “Why not?”

“Well, I’m just--”

“Just the same as anyone else. Now, let me see.” She gestured to the canvas. A wave of her wand, a shower of sparkles, and Eloise’s painting was back to its before state.

Eloise looked down at the canvas in shock, in relief. It took her a second to remember what one says when a deed so kind is done for them. “Thank you... I... I don’t know how I could ever repay your kindness.”

The fairy blushed, pink spots forming on her cheeks so similar to the flowers on her dress. “There is more to be done.” She waved her wand a second time. “There, now the admissions panel will see your painting as it deserves to be seen--not as the work of a supposed incompetent woman, but as that of the intelligent, worthy woman that you are.”



Eloise stared at the fairy, unable to think of anything to say equal to the deed that had been done for her. Perhaps the look on her face was enough--wide eyes, open mouth drawn up into a smile. The artist knew the power of pictures over words.

“Go, live your dream.” The fairy flapped her wings twice more, and she was gone.



Eloise felt as if she was floating, like she'd crafted her own pair of wings. Her history painting had been reviewed. It had passed the first round of evaluations--*as it deserves*, her fairy godmother had said. Eloise had even been asked to paint another history painting. This one she felt even better about. She'd already submitted that second piece, and in her hand, she held the letter of response.

*“Madame le Brun, we are pleased to inform you that you have been admitted to the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.”* She felt herself fly higher. *“As a still-life painter.”* She came crashing down. She was Icarus, and she'd flown close to the sun.

How could this have happened? They'd evaluated a history painting. So why was she now a student in the lowest division?

Before that straight-postured, proper woman could take over, Eloise was out the door. She glided over the stone-paved streets, unfazed when her heels sunk into the cracks. She looked straight ahead, seeing not the buildings but the gap where the street cut through.

She marched into the Academy and right up to the first person she saw. “I demand to speak to someone from the admissions panel,” she said.

“Madame, you must calm down.”

For the first time since she'd opened the letter, Eloise saw how she appeared to others--a witless girl. She straightened her posture, lowered her pointed finger, took a deep breath.

“Yes, of course... I'm sorry.” She looked the man in the eye once more. “Please... please may I speak with someone?”

The man sighed. “This way, Madame.”

He led her across the large entry room and down a series of hallways. The Academy would look like any upper-class home—classical-inspired pilasters, pastel-colored walls, floral-patterned couches—except that there was twice as much artwork. Sculptures surrounded the furniture, and large paintings covered the majority of the space on the walls in a way that would appear unaesthetic outside of a collector's room. Eloise could not admire the work, for her nerves had overtaken her. It was quite intimidating—all those images of men, a few of proper women, staring down at her.

They came to a dark wood door at the end of the hall. The escort opened the door a crack and murmured something to a man inside. Eloise could just make out the word “hystérique.” More murmuring came from the man in the room.

Then the escort held the door open, his hand gesturing for Eloise to enter. “Monsieur Colbert will see you.”

Eloise nodded her thanks as she stepped through the door. Inside, Monsieur Colbert sat at a desk carved with as much detail as a royal sarcophagus. Decorative molding framed a bookshelf behind him, as well. The bookshelf held various volumes on art, as well as miniature sculptures and vases.

Eloise forced her attention from the beautiful space where she'd soon study to the task at hand. “Pardon the intrusion, Monsieur. I just... I was wondering why I was admitted as a still-life painter when I was instructed to paint a history painting for my second evaluation.”

Monsieur Colbert sighed. Men seemed to enjoy sighing at women—sighs of pity, sighs of annoyance. “Madame le Brun is it?”

Eloise nodded.

“Frankly, Madame le Brun, I fear your instructions were a mistake. There is no denying that you are a talented painter. However, history painting is reserved for only the best, most serious painters. It is not a place for women.”

Eloise kept her lips pressed flat, yet her eyes betrayed her, weighing down in defeat. “But I thought you saw me as more than that.”

His gaze pierced her like a chisel into marble, reducing her to the form he wished to see. “And why would you think that?”

Then it hit her. The fairy godmother's spell had only worked on the one painting. Without the spell, she was just a woman, a woman to be bound to still-life painting. "No reason... My apologies. I'll be going now." She took in his dismissive nod. "Thank you for seeing me Monsieur. And I am grateful for my position."

Monsieur Colbert did not look up from his work.

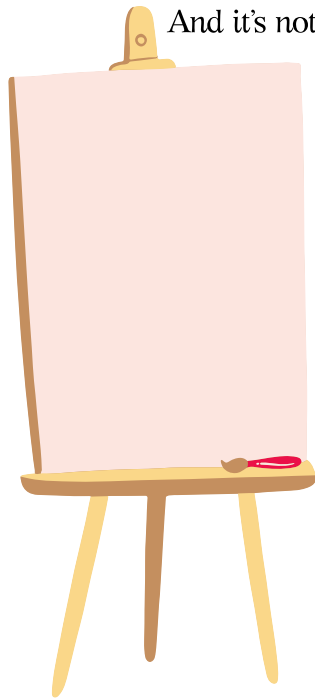


A bowl of fruit, a display of jars, a vase of flowers--the life of a still-life painter was not an exciting one. But Eloise had to admit that her time at the Academy had improved her skill. Her shading had become smoother, her proportions more exact. Yet none of that seemed to matter when it came time for her first salon, and Eloise's tiny canvas was stuck behind the giant history paintings and portraits in the stack of artwork meant to be hung.

When she returned home that day, she went straight to Julie as usual. The artist mother had developed a routine over the past few weeks: she attended class in the morning, played with her daughter in the afternoon, and worked on her own paintings into the evening.

That afternoon, however, she feared she could not enjoy her time with her daughter. She whispered her concerns to the baby girl, hoping for some form of comfort. "Oh Jules, what am I to do? It's just mindlessly recreating the most boring objects. There's no perspective, no voice. It's not even art, really.

And it's not like anyone will see it, not at the salon, tiny and stuck in the top corner. I should just give up, focus on being a good wife, a good mother."



Then, Julie began to cry. Eloise didn't know if it was in confirmation or protest to what she'd said. The mother swayed back and forth, patting her baby's back. When that didn't work, she started to sing. It was Julie's favorite lullaby. It calmed them both every time.

When the crying stopped, Eloise returned her daughter to the crib. She stood there a while, watching the child sleep.

This right here--this was what they were missing. All the paintings were the same--all men, virtue, religion, politics. No one ever captured these beautiful, soft, tender moments. None of those men could.

Suddenly, she was hit hard with inspiration. It was the artist's inspiration, the kind where one feels as though one can do nothing until one's idea is brought into the world.

Then, she was in the studio without remembering ever walking there. She fetched a fresh canvas from the stack in the corner. This time, she'd have to take care to hide it from her manipulative husband. He'd tolerated her still-life classes--he probably figured there was no future to be had in still-life painting anyway--but who knew how he'd react to a painting as advanced as this. Still, nothing could stop Eloise once she reached this state of inspiration. She took a seat in front of the easel.

Two uneven ovals, some jagged lines, curves, and folds. It was the same as still life--all shapes and lines. But it wasn't the same. This image came from her heart, not random objects placed before her.

She worked well into the night, breaking only to eat and get the minimum amount of sleep necessary to function. Her routine changed for the rest of that week--she combined her time with Julie and her time in the studio. A few toys on the rug and Julie posed nicely for her portrait. Eloise would have to work quickly to carry out her plan.

The motivated artist paid extra attention to the soft touch of the figures' arms, the curls of their hair, the natural folding of the drapery. For anything to come of her sneaking her painting into the salon, it'd have to be perfect--realistic and detailed enough to convey her message. For anyone to think anything of her beyond a woman out of place, it'd have to be a miracle, her own work of magic.

Four days in, she met that stopping point, that point where the painting would only get worse, not better. As soon as it dried, she'd make the swap.

A few days later, Eloise snuck her masterpiece into a storage room, where it stayed while she attended class. She waited until the instructional period was over, when everyone was bustling around, carrying their own artworks, to transfer the large canvas from the storage room to the stack of salon paintings in the studio. She made sure to insert her piece with the other portraits; that way, it'd get a better position on the display wall.



It was done. Now all she had left to do was wait, hope, fantasize.



What was she thinking, entering a portrait of herself and their daughter in a salon as if no one would recognize them, see that the painting was out of place?

## EVER AFTER

Monsieur le Brun had decided to attend his wife's art show. He regretted that decision as he stared at his wife's and daughter's likenesses on the wall. The woman had painted the two embracing, their arms wrapped around each other with the softest of touches. They looked straight out at the viewer, expressions of peace and calm spread across their faces. Worst of all, the figures were dressed in classical wear, Greek togas, as if to say that they belonged in this place, that a woman could be both a mother and an artist. He couldn't help but marvel at the painting--the shading, proportions, soft touch, poofy hair, flowing drapery--but he could also do a lot more.

The husband's cheeks flushed with anger and embarrassment. Anger won out when he heard the whispers around him.

"That one there. It's breathtaking. I've never seen anything like it."

"Oh Theo, look at this one, she looks just like our Louise."

"About time they let a woman in, if you ask me."

These whispers came from the other woman in attendance, but then there were those of the Academy councilmembers.

"The audacity! I should have revoked her admission. She came into my office, you know, before the session started, hysterical, ungrateful, complaining that she'd been admitted as a still-life painter. I fear this is my doing."

"Oh, get off it, Colbert. The painting is well-received. The people want something fresh. If she keeps painting, attendance will soar."

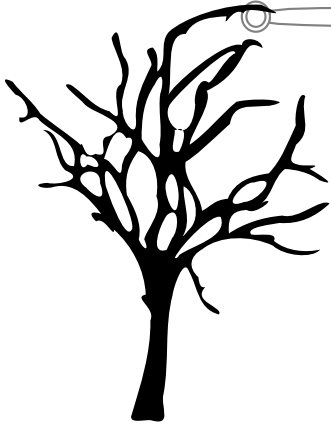
The words rang in Monsieur le Brun's head: well-received, something fresh, if she keeps painting. He never should have married a woman for her mind. ■





# ON MAGES AND MONOLITHS

BY JACKI MOFFA



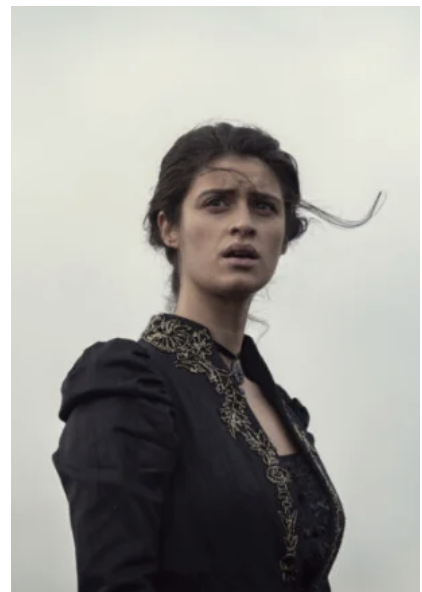
After two years, a worldwide pandemic, and a major hamstring injury, Netflix has finally brought us season two of *The Witcher*. Starring Henry Cavill, Anya Chalotra, and Freya Allan, this fantasy series follows the adventures of Cavill's Geralt of Rivia, a mutant Witcher who hunts monsters for gold. Along with his companions

Yennifer the mage (Chalotra), Jaskier the bard (Joey Batey), and Cyrilla, his child surprise (Allan), they battle fire mages, monoliths, and some of the ugliest hedgehogs I've ever seen. On the way, we question the concept of power, address the ostracization of The Other (both through the rejection of Geralt because he's a mutant, and society's hatred of the elves), and seek to understand the complexities of family.

For all its flaws, *The Witcher* provides beautiful scenery, interesting costumes, and an obscene amount of eye candy.

Season one was a strange ride—with each character following different timelines. But the show's dry humor and interesting characters were enough to stay engaged. In season two, they've given us a linear plot that arches throughout the whole season, instead of the more episodic pace of the first. While nothing about *The Witcher* is groundbreaking, this Tolkein-esque fantasy gives the viewer all the expected tropes: Mages with political agendas, Elves ostracized from a society they helped form, and dwarves with bearded wives. The hero is broody and the love interest is sharp-tongued with the ingenueness to prove herself.

One thing that stands out in this series is its focus on strong women. It's not perfect, but there are a slew of complex and interesting feminine characters that move this fantasy forward in ways I wish other stories did. Both Yennefer and Ciri are strong-willed and intelligent. They have agency and are not always dependent on Geralt to save them—although that does happen, too. This show passed the Bechdel test early on (which means it has at least one scene between two females where they *don't* talk about a man). And Ciri and Yennefer aren't the only two in the series. Many of the secondary characters such as Tissaia (MyAnna Buring), Fringilla (Mimi Ndiweni), Triss (Anna Shaffer), (cont.)



and Francesca (Mecia Simson) all have different personalities, their own agendas, and delightfully foul mouths.

I am here for it.

While *The Witcher* has more people of color than most of its fantastical forerunners and is more diverse than the books (or the games), it is by no means successful. Between restyling some of its actors to look like their whiter video game counterparts (why?) and the lack of any LGBTQ+ characters at all, I'm left wondering why the series that works so hard to move fantasy forward in the feminism realm is still floundering with its diversity. I see they tried... but it wasn't enough. They need to do better.

This season opts to exchange some of its dry wit for emotional bonding, giving Cavill more wiggle room with Geralt, whose stoic demeanor in season one was enjoyable but lacked complexity.

In Geralt's line of work, he comes across all sorts of interesting creatures. He battles kikimoras, deals with a vengeful djinn, and confronts a smart-alek sylvan in league with the elves. But Geralt's stoic mask hides decency that makes him less kill-now-think-later than his peers. He understands that monsters aren't always what they seem; and sometimes, the innocent can be a monster in disguise. He only kills when he must, and has saved many that others would see die—including a golden dragon, and a striga with a secret identity.

But now things have turned a little... odd. His friend has been infected by a leshy (a tree-like creature that shouldn't have that power.) Monsters he's never seen before are cropping up everywhere: huge, centipede-like beings chasing them in the woods, giant basilisks, and those crazy hedgehogs... where are they all coming from? Why do they all seem to be making for Ciri--and what is she's not saying?

And do they have anything to do with the fallen monolith outside of Cintra?

Though the shift toward emotional bonds is interesting and dynamic, especially in its relation to the decisions Geralt now has to make, it does lose some of the spunk that drew me to this series. Between that and Jaskier's limited screen time, I found myself laughing much less this season. But the *(cont.)*

***"I'm left wondering why the series that works so hard to move fantasy forward in the feminism realm is still floundering with its diversity. I see they tried... but it wasn't enough."***



show hasn't abandoned the humor completely. It even pokes fun at itself once or twice, which I appreciate.

While many fantasy writers create songs in their series, few translate to music with as much success as the songs in *The Witcher*. I'm not sure whether these particular songs show up in the novels, but both seasons of the show are peppered with catchy beats and lyrics that get stuck in the head. It's a welcome change from the often-awkward song breaks in other fantasy series, which leave me rolling my eyes and hitting the fast-forward button.

In season two, we also see a new costume designer, Lucinda Wright. Wright's taken a practical approach to dressing her actors while still taking time to explore the fantastical elements of the show, with lovely flowy dresses and exceptional armor pieces that stay consistent with the first season and help further the story.

Gone are a lot of the questionable outfits, including the *Fifty Shades of Grey* lace masks. Both Yennefer's bizarre rope dress and the frumpy silver sack Fringilla wore in season one disappear, as well, once they get a chance to change out of them.

Fringilla kills it in an embroidered silver and black power gown she works to perfection. Yennefer, too, gets an upgrade, to a beaded black, purple, and gold riding coat. The gown that, according to Wright, took the longest to make, was in my opinion the worst. A tight, black beaded number Yennefer wears in Aretuza, with off-the-shoulder sleeves that hit at...the elbow? The dress fits Chalotra beautifully, but because of the sleeves, it looks four sizes too big. It took me out of the story the entire time she wore it.

Each group of characters has a different feel and palette--the elves in jewel tones, the witchers in neutrals, blues, and browns. Triss, with her earth tones and new ginger hair, contrasts with Yennefer's sharp, moody blacks. Geralt's armor upgrade is gorgeous. Wright spent a lot of time working with Cavill to improve on his kit from season one--most notably, he can lift his arms up in it to reach his sword, which he could not do in the other.

All in all, *The Witcher's* second season is a visual feast, a fantastical escape from reality done with humor and intention. Though it has its faults, if you liked the first season, it's an excellent continuation. And if crazy timelines threw you off the first season, perhaps you can give it a second chance with this more linear second series. ■

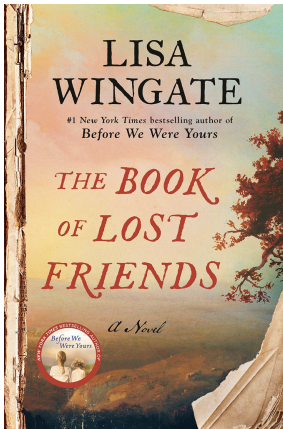


# The Book Nook

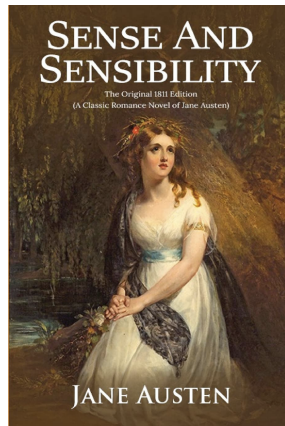


What  
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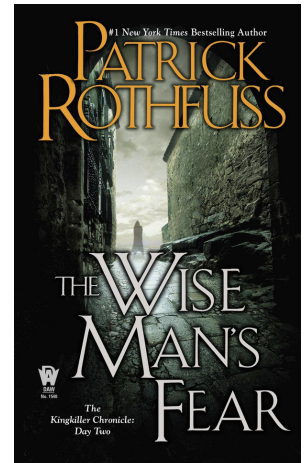
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Friends!*



@personally.speaking is reading  
*The Wise Man's Fear!*



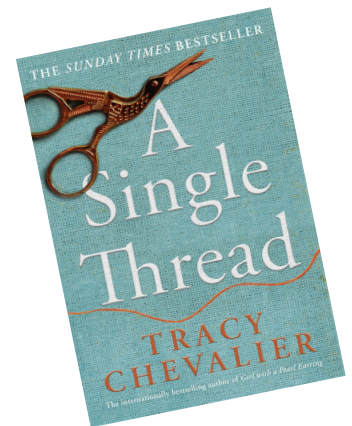
@arlene\_modern  
vintage is  
reading *Sense &  
Sensibility!*



@abigailvcarlson is reading  
*Black Sun!*



@nearonis is  
reading *Ice Planet  
Barbarians!*



@thebookishhistorian is  
reading *A Single Thread!*



# LA LLORONA DE SANTOVEGA

*When Victoria tells a scary story to her friends, she is surprised to find out the real truth behind it.*

BY ARI M.



“...And they say to this day, you can still see her roaming the rivers and canals, searching for her children. She cries, ‘Ay, *mis hijos, ay mis hijos!*’ And if she catches you, she will drag you into the river to drown you, too.”

Victoria sat back with a smug smile and tossed her head a little, but none of her friends nor cousin seemed scared or even amused. She frowned.

“That’s the scariest story I know! Okay, maybe it wasn’t as scary as Delfino’s, but you have to admit it’s creepy,” Victoria protested.

“It *is* creepy, but that isn’t the story of La Llorona,” Lety piped.

“Yes, it is. That’s how it’s always been told in my family and around my neighborhood.”

“Remember Victoria grew up in the north side of town,” Lordi reminded the others. “So she wouldn’t know the story we were told.”

Victoria huffed and folded her arms tight against her chest. Her eyes were a little glassy. How mortifying was it that she’d been invited by her cousin to make friends, but no one liked what she had to contribute?

“I’ll tell the story of La Llorona the way we know it. That way, you know the real story, Torita,” Lordi said soothingly. “Don’t forget to blow out your candle since you told your story.”

Victoria reluctantly leaned forward and blew the candle out so only Lordi’s flame illuminated the room. It was quite a weird atmosphere they had now--it was Dia de Los Espiritus, when the veil between living and dead was thinnest. The group of friends had decided to tell scary stories to each other in the Candelaria sitting room, and now the single light wavered and flickered, casting shadows over everyone’s faces. The old house gave a groan as it settled and Victoria jumped like a nervous cat. Even the moons were hiding away in fear from the stories while the stars glittered like eyes in the deep gloom of the night.

“This story isn’t scary so much as it is sad,” Lordi reminded everyone present, making Victoria shiver, though she didn’t know why. Their friends scooted their chairs closer. No matter how many times they had heard the story, they were always willing to hear it again. “But let me tell you the *real* story of La Llorona...”

## LA LLORONA DE SANTOVEGA

**A** long, long time ago there was a quaint village out in the desert of Santovega. No one can remember the name nowadays, but its villagers worked diligently to make their living and were proud of their home. Every year, the alcalde from Ciudad Santovega came to gather taxes from these people so they could use his canals for their crops. It wasn't fair because before he was given the rancho, everyone had used it freely. The former alcalde was a De La Torre, though, and you can't stop the De La Torre family from selling something if they think it'll make them a quick peso.

Don Alcides Garrido came down every year to gather what pittance the people could make, taking every peso he could. If he wasn't pleased with the amount, he'd only let a trickle of water through. If they managed to scrape together or flatter him enough that year, he would let the canal rush and the people would have enough to eat through the bitter winters.

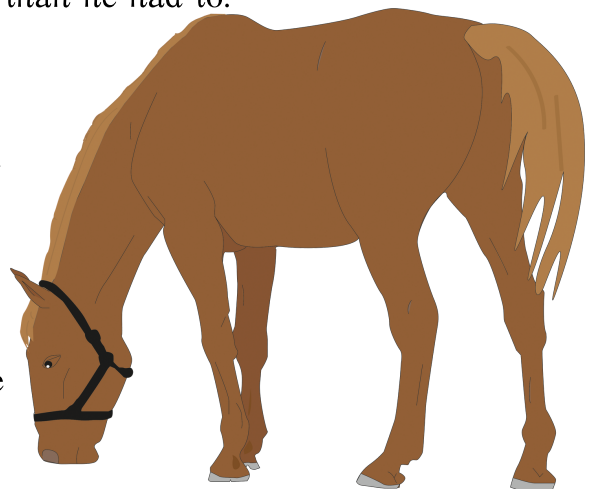
The seventh year he came to visit, the people had not managed to gather enough money to pay him—but that year, the Ibarra's daughter turned twenty and they decided to send her to give him the money. Señorita Ibarra was the most beautiful woman in the village, second to none, and any villager you asked would tell you so. None of the other girls begrudged her the title either, because she was so kindhearted and sweet they couldn't possibly hate a woman like her.

Don Alcides liked beautiful things, and the townspeople knew this. They thought by letting him look at Señorita Ibarra when the money was delivered, he would be content and leave them alone. They were dreadfully right.

Señorita Ibarra wore her mother's wedding dress, the very best and only gown of cashmere the family could afford, and was sent off to meet Don Alcides. He was sitting tall on his horse for a townspeople to arrive, checking his watch again and again. He had to return to Ciudad Santovega in three days for a ball and he wasn't going to bother with this backwater hick town any longer than he had to.

Out of the simmering heat of the summer came the most beautiful woman he'd ever laid eyes on. She presented him with the little leather sack the townspeople used to give him the money, but he knocked it out of her hands.

"I do not need the money," Don Alcides laughed. It was a sound that chilled you to the bones, like the taunting voices in the winds of a blizzard. "This year, my payment will be you."



# LA LLORONA DE SANTOVEGA

He snatched the girl up onto his horse; Señorita Ibarra begged him desperately to at least be given the chance to tell her parents where she was going. Tears came into those beautiful eyes of hers, and he gave in, riding into the village with her to her parents' house. The villagers were horrified by what they had done, but how could they stand up to Don Alcides? He was powerful with many connections in the city. If he wanted, he could destroy the entire village with nothing more than a word to friends in high places.

The Ibarras put on smiling faces when Don Alcides swaggered in and told them he was marrying their daughter—what else could they do? They could only nod and thank him for the honor of allowing her to marry him and let their poor little family be connected to a well-known one as the Garridos.

“Yes, yes,” he said dismissively, then added as an afterthought, “Oh, I suppose there is the bride price to think of. I will send along a few trusted servants to deliver it to you.”

The girl's mother went with a little limp of disbelief next to her husband, even as she forced a smile for the don to see. A bride price? Who had ever heard of such a thing in these parts? When someone wanted to marry their beloved, they came to that person's parents and told them of their intentions! They did not act as though marriage was a transaction at a general store, bartering and trading goods.

The Ibarras thanked him for his consideration, asking if she could stay home to make her wedding dress--she had her bridal goods ready but lacked the dress. Don Alcides only laughed in their faces at the thought.

“I will be dressing her in silks and giving her diamonds. I have no such need for a wife who will wear something as shabby as common cotton,” he retorted. “You can keep her things, donate it to someone less fortunate here.” He turned to Señorita Ibarra and grabbed her, hauling her onto his horse.

“We will be married in two days, and I will present her in society the day after,” he announced to the village. “Say your goodbyes, mi amor, for you will not be returning.”

All that was left of her was a whispered goodbye in the wind as his horse galloped back to the city.

Señorita Ibarra became Doña Garrido as promised and was shown off by Don Alcides as if he had a new toy. Everyone looked down upon her and her countrified manners, laughing behind her back and to her face. Don Alcides told her that night as they went

# LA LLORONA DE SANTOVEGA

home that he would not be taking her out again until she learned how to become a real lady.

She considered not learning at all but worried for her hometown and the fate it might suffer if she did such a thing. Her days after that were spent learning etiquette, the names of all the prominent families, how to speak “properly” to the taste of people from Alcides’s fatherland, and the management of a rich household. She became friends with the servants, for she was more comfortable with them than in high society, but she never could shake the feeling they looked at her with pity. She became the perfect wife to Don Alcides’s tastes, and he took her out again to show her off and laugh at his friends whose wives were now inferior to this girl from the sticks.



Her new lodgings were a grand palace compared to the two-room home she’d grown up in, though it would never be as warm. He let her go everywhere in the house except for one room--Don Alcides had locked it up tightly and even the servants were not allowed to enter it. He claimed it was his study, and a woman was not allowed to see what he did for business. As if to prove his point, he had beaten a maid in front of the door to his study in his wife’s view, screaming at her for disobeying his order to never enter. She woke up in a cold sweat a few nights later, dreaming he was beating her instead.

As expected between a married couple, Doña Garrido eventually found herself pregnant. The servants were more than happy to give her all she needed, the older women watchful of what they fed her and doting on her when she complained of body aches or morning sickness. They prayed over her at night that she would have a boy, and she managed to work out why they did that and why she was always looked upon with pity.

“Doña, you see, the thing is,” Señora Rodríguez, the head maid, told her. “You are not Don Alcides’s first wife. You are not even his second. You are the seventh wife he has had. We do not know what has become of the other women, but we do know that when the daughters they had could survive without their mothers, they disappeared. Don Alcides claims they ran off with other men. We want you to have a boy, Doña, because we want you to stay.”

Doña Garrido felt as though she had been buried in a snowbank. She dismissed the servants to have a moment of solitude. His seventh wife! And all the other women had gone missing after birthing daughters. A cold sweat broke out as she imagined him killing them; given his tendency to violence when angered, she could easily see him plotting their murders. Thus far, he’d had no reason to turn his temper on her as she



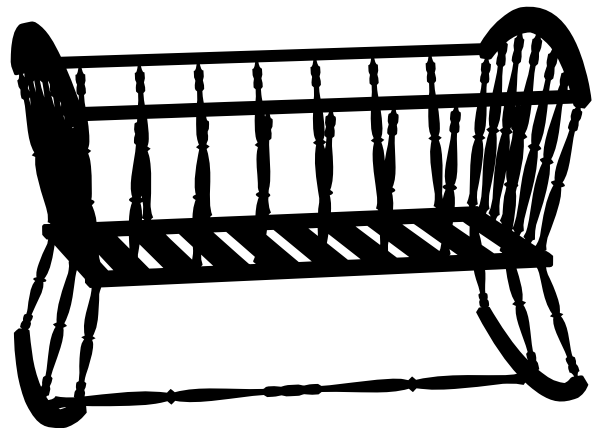
# LA LLORONA DE SANTOVEGA

meekly obeyed him and put no toes out of line, but one never knew. He wanted a boy, an heir, and girls were therefore useless.

She prayed thereafter with the servants, though they all knew it was simply a roll of the dice. She hoped her giving him a son would please him enough to let her see her family again, for she hadn't seen them in two years.

The best midwife in town was summoned when she was in labor. Don Alcides prowled the room and gave his wife glares as if to remind her of what was to come if he didn't get a son. As if she could do anything about it now, as she sweated and panted and finally delivered their child.

Doña Candelaria praised her highly for doing so well, holding up the baby for all to see. A baby boy, squalling and covered with a caul. Doña Garrido collapsed back into bed in relief. *Un niño con el velo*, his life would be full of blessings.



The midwife cleaned the baby up and laid him upon his mother's breast, looking appalled when Don Alcides shoved her out of his way. He scooped the baby up and roared with triumphant laughter, telling his wife they would name him Alcides: he would be the seventh Alcides Garrido. He was in such a good mood, Doña Garrido asked if she could request something of him. He agreed that she might have anything. With her eyes on her lap, she managed to stutter an inquiry if her parents might come to see the baby.



His joy evaporated the moment she said "parents," and his eyes radiated such evil it made her shrink into herself. When she hazarded a glance at him at last, she caught sight of a smirk that made her stomach quiver.

"Mi vida, lo siento," he said in an oily, sympathetic voice. "But your parents wrote to me not long after our wedding and told me they never wished to see you again. They were angry with you for saying yes to marrying me and not marrying the man chosen for you. I never told you because I knew it would break your poor heart.

What a bald-faced lie! Yet there was nothing she could do or say to contradict him. She nodded and instead asked him if instead, she could have a new silk dress, please, and

# LA LLORONA DE SANTOVEGA

he agreed she would have two of them.

By the next year, Doña Garrido bore another child: a girl. The displeasure of her husband was palpable, and she watched his eyes glitter like a starved fox spying on a wounded rabbit. She had to do something. She quietly began planning with her closest maids a way to escape once she was well enough, so she and her children would return home to her parents, or at least the people of the village who had loved her.

It was never to be so.

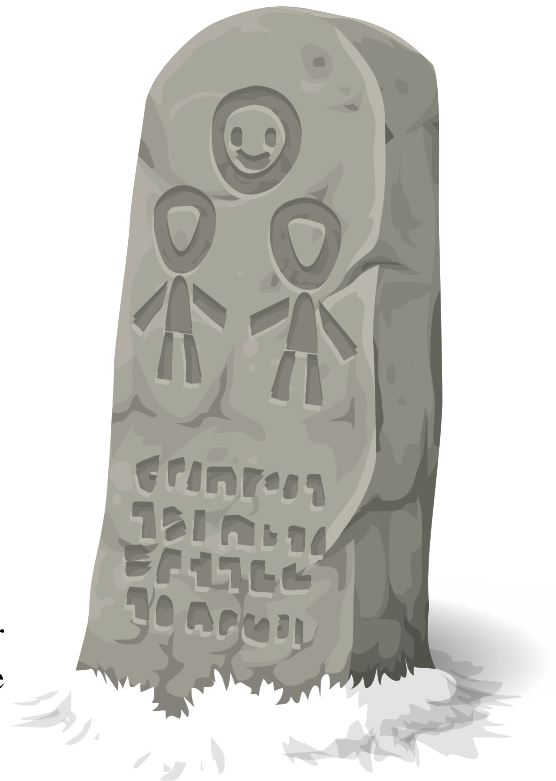
Doña Garrido was lulled into a false sense of security when her husband did nothing about their daughter and actually paraded the baby around at one of the balls they were invited to. He was far less interested in their son, on the other hand, ignoring little Alcides now. No longer did he swing the boy up onto his shoulder after coming home from work, but actually pushed his son down and away before locking himself up in his study. Only at parties was his son trotted out alongside him, like a show pony rather than his flesh and blood heir.

A few months later, in the dark hours before dawn, Don Alcides came into her room screaming with rage at her. How could she do that? Why would she ever do that?

Doña Garrido was disoriented, jerking awake to him howling in her face. Her hands immediately searched for the warm bodies of their children, who slept in bed with her, and found the spaces empty and cold.

“You killed our children!” he screamed. “You drowned them because I paid them more attention than I did you! Pinche bruja del campo, how did I ever bring a wife like you into my home!”

She fainted dead away at his words. She would never hurt her children, but he would. His indifference to their existence had only been a mask. He had no use for them unless they were to be shown off at parties or in public, and, when she awoke in a pitch-black room, Doña Garrido got a sinking feeling he didn't need them because he didn't need her any longer. He must've heard of her plan somehow or he simply didn't want her because she'd given birth to a daughter. She tried to stand,



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only to be stopped by heavy ropes biting into her limbs. Her ears strained to hear something, and only heard the soft lapping of water against a wall.

A glare of light shone into her eyes from a trapdoor, and it gave her enough light to see a bleak basement with a pool of water. Heavy footfalls sounded down a ladder, then toward her. Even though she couldn't make out the face, the heavy breathing told her it was her husband.

“You should've pretended your parents were dead,” he growled. “Didn't I tell you that you were never going to return? Now they're dead, our children are dead, and you are to blame.”

He grabbed her by the ropes, hauling her to the pool of water. Doña Garrido struggled against it, crying out when he threw her in. The water rushed into her nose and burned in her lungs, but she did her best to hold her breath with the hope she could escape her bonds.

With the last light of the trapdoor, she realized she was not alone in this pool. Floating with her were the six wives who had gone missing. She forgot her need to escape, shrieking while the trapdoor thudded closed, and the water took its chance. It was a horrible way to go, and her last thought was a plea to the gods that this would never happen again to anyone.

Doña Garrido jerked awake, holding her hands to her heart. When her eyes adjusted, she looked around, finding well-dressed people bustling around, laughing, talking, and drinking. Don Alcides was sitting at the head of a long table with a pretty girl in a bridal gown.

No one noticed Doña Garrido. When she looked down at her hands, she realized why: she was translucent. The gods had heard and were allowing her to fulfill what she bound herself to do. She couldn't save herself, but she thought she might be able to save the newest bride.

In water, he left her, so in water, she would take her revenge. A river of red wine flowed on the banquet table for the guests, servants ladling it up to the guests. The new

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bride screamed in terror as from the depths of the wine, the seventh Doña Garrido rose out like a bloody apparition. She wailed, letting all present know Don Alcides would not get away with anything, for she would tell what he had done. The man screamed that she was dead, she was supposed to be dead, and the dead could not return to the world of the living.

“I’ve returned, Alcides,” she wept. “I have returned to stop you from killing this poor girl! You may have gotten away with the deaths of our children and all your wives, but it ends here!” She pointed at him. “I will take you into the water with me, Alcides, mark my words! They will find the cellar where you got rid of us seven, and we will see who cannot return then!”

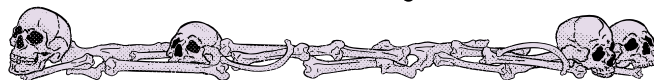


“... La Llorona got her revenge,” Lordi said quietly. “Don Alcides is said to have been arrested for the murders he committed and was sentenced to death by drowning. She walks the banks of rivers and canals to stop young children from drowning and to save young lovers from their own Don Alcideses. She is not an evil figure--she is a betrayed woman who does not want it to happen to anyone again.”

Lordi blew out her candle, and the room was plunged into total darkness. Victoria shrank in her chair to get away from the encroaching gloom, pulling her feet up from the floor so no hand of La Llorona could grab her ankle.

“So, if you see her, leave her be. You never know what she wants to protect you from.” ■

# THE &ND



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