



Seven: A Lesbian Snow White

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The strange witch girl Neve has skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and a dark secret. Her father Lexander, an alchemist, harbors an evil obsession, and Catalina, his newest bride, made the grave mistake of becoming his wife. When Catalina finds herself falling in love with his daughter, Neve, instead, the deepening bond between the women sets in motion the final chapter of a story that began long ago, with a desperate longing and a handful of apple seeds. Together, Neve and Catalina must venture into the Huntsman's haunted forest to undo what has been done and set themselves free.

The novella SEVEN is the lesbian retelling of the classic fairy tale, "Snow White." It is part of the series SAPPHO'S FABLES: LESBIAN FAIRY TALES.

Seven: A Lesbian Snow White Details

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Sara says

This novella was utterly perfect. Do you like fairy tales? Witches? Ghosts? True love? Jennifer Diemer's retelling of the classic Snow White is haunting, creepy, magical, tender and outright wonderful. If you want all the traditional elements of Snow White, like mirrors, apples, axes, alchemy, and enchanted forests, but with a twist of dark magic and undeniable true love, this is exactly the book for you.

T says

I don't much like that this is called 'A Lesbian Snow White'. Actually, that title almost made me not buy it. I know that retold fairy tales are all the rage now, but they are not for me and what i've seen of some of them, have not been very high quality.

I decided to get this after having just finished [[ASIN:B0050K7NCI The Dark Wife]] by Sarah Diemer and liking it so much. I'm glad i took a chance on this one. I personally thought this story was excellent all on its own without trying to make some long creative leaps to link it to Snow White. I really saw few similarities worth mentioning.(apples, huntsman, 7 people in a cottage...) So lets put that aside. This was a wonderful story of witches, magical woods, and an evil man wanting immortality. And there was a love story lying underneath. The author did a great job of being elegant in her writing, without drowning the reader in prose. It was lovely and kept my attention the whole time.

Lindley Walter-smith says

I really wanted to like this novella, because I love the concept of Snow White from the stepmother's POV and I have a weakness for lesbian retellings of fairy stories, but it is let down by serious writing flaws. It has real problems with purple prose (the emerald eyes and the italics!) and writing mechanics, even for a self published book. It also suffers from a completely unlikable love interest and a passive protagonist who is frequently TSTL, who listens to clear indications over and over that her husband is about to kill her and makes absolutely no attempt to save herself - or even think about it all that much.

The second most irritating writing flaw is the misuse of punctuation. The first half of the book is cluttered with trailing ellipses, Barbara Cartland style, to the extent that I caught myself distracted from the narrative by counting how many occurred per page. In the second half, the author lets up on them a bit (although not entirely) and abruptly switches her punctuation to a more machine gun approach, scattering em-dashes, colons and semicolons all over the page with more abandon than reason or grammar.

Most distractingly of all, though, the author has some of the most egregious "fear of said" I have ever encountered. The characters will do absolutely anything in dialogue tags to avoid actually saying something: they will sigh their words (constantly), breathe (almost as frequently), smile, speak softly, command, urge, murmur, yell, snarl, laugh, hiss, moan, scoff, cut off, admit, admonish, urge, ask, reply, tell, growl, exclaim, explain, whimper, stutter, gasp, mouth, croak, yowl, scream, nod, cry, simper, interrupt, exhale, prompt...

and whisper. Most of all, they whisper. I never seen anything like this obsession with whispered dialogue. It's a good thing none of the characters are short of hearing, or they would never communicate. According to an automatic word count, they whisper 48 times in 63 pages (this is a very short novella.) The results are quite funny, but I don't think funny is what the author was aiming at.

The story isn't helped by the arbitrariness of the central romance. Catalina "hates" Neve until she sees her making out with a maid (there are also weird class issues in this novella that I won't go into here, but basically, don't trust a peasant when money is involved) and then instantaneously switches over to *OMG she's so hawt*

It's a shame, because the concept has promise, and there are Gothic dark fairy tale moments that I really liked. With more careful writing, more length, and a decent editor - or at least a critical beta reader to run an eye over it and eliminate some of the problems with punctuation, purple prose and dialogue tags - the more interesting elements, such as Catalina's predecessors and the role of the Hunter, the glass coffins and the magic apples and the mirror, could have been polished into a really good story. The world needs more lesbian fairy tales, after all.

As it is, I think it should have had a lot more work done on it, mechanics in particular, before it was released into the wilds of selfpublishing. Its potential was wasted, and that makes me sad.

Lucy says

This may be the best retelling of Snow White I've ever read. Although it deviates a bit from the traditional story, all the key elements are there—the apple, the mirror, the glass coffin—spun together into a new and compelling story, which really shows off Jennifer Diemer's skills as an author.

I think the best fairytale retellings take stories, characters, and symbols we're familiar with on a basic, subconscious level, and twist them. *Seven* does this wonderfully, and the story it tells is creepy and touching in all the right places. Snow White has never been one of my favorite fairytales. I don't *dislike it, but it's never resonated with me personally*. But *Seven* has changed my mind. There is so much in this fairytale to play with, and such lovely and powerful symbolism to rework.

I'm really falling in love with Jennifer Diemer's writing. I've read a few of her short stories in *Project Unicorn*, and bunch of her wife's writing, but this is the first longer story of hers I've read. And I have to say, I love her voice. It's richly detailed, and just a little bit sad, which makes the happy moments shine all the brighter. I will be watching her career eagerly.

skadoosh says

An understated retelling of *Snow White*, dark and atmospheric, with interesting twists on the fairytale; but I suspect this would be a more standard fantasy tale to those not familiar with its origins.

In summary:

-believable protagonist and romance

- surface-level interesting but ultimately black-and-white antagonist
- rather standard magic system
- lovely fairytale atmosphere
- author does a great job with small details

But I have a lot more thoughts than that! As you can see from the four-star rating, I really enjoyed this short story - but it did have its issues, and I think they will be less forgivable to those less enamoured of fairytales than I am.

Protagonist Catalina is clearly inspired by the tradition of Gothic heroines. She's naive (though quite bitterly regretful of her naivety at the beginning of the story, she hasn't really grown out of it either), isolated, initially passive and in need of encouraging to action, and in danger from both the supernatural and a malicious male figure. Only instead of rescue from 'the good guy', Catalina forms a relationship with another woman also in conflict with the domineering lord of the house, breaks out of her passivity, discovers both magic and desire within her, and ultimately saves herself. There's a lot of clichés here that may be off-putting to some readers, especially in the first half of the story, but for me, the execution and later subversion of these tropes made Catalina a character who was enjoyable to read about and easy to root for.

The worldbuilding was scant, but I can forgive that in a story as short as this one, and what little there was was effective and evocative. Unfortunately, this wasn't reflected in the smaller atmosphere of Lexander's castle, which was a very flat environment. The pacing was mostly solid, with the singular exception of Catalina's incredibly swift mastery of magic. This is partially excused by the fact that she knows so little about how it can be applied, and so she still relies on Neve for direction; when she doesn't have Neve's guidance, she doesn't look to magic to solve her problems. But still, I like my protagonists to work for things, and that didn't happen here.

I had a few small quibbles with the romance: (view spoiler)

Funnily enough, the Snow White character was my least favourite part of this retelling, but so many other aspects of the original fairytale were reinterpreted in fascinating ways. The mirror, the huntsman, and the apple were all pleasing updates, with my favourite being the stepmother's disguise. (view spoiler)

My biggest problem was the villain, Lexander. In the original tale, he's the 'saintly father' trope, but remains passive enough to be no real obstacle to his second wife's nefarious plans. Making him the villain is seemingly an interesting choice, but the execution lacks nuance: two things that could have potentially added depth to his character (his father/daughter relationship with Neve and the poignancy of Catalina's dashed hopes for her marriage to him) are completely brushed over in favour of making him unremittingly evil. What's more, I felt that though we saw his obsession with his quest (view spoiler), his motivation wasn't clearly shown.

Also disappointing were the titular Seven (view spoiler) They're a string of names, not characters. I suppose I was so disappointed because I've seen this similar plot idea played out to its full potential in *The Spring Bride*, another queer *Snow White* retelling and one of my favourite short stories ever.

The ending also wasn't my favourite (though don't worry, it is a HEA), but only because the story took a sudden step further into the supernatural than it had previously, and I wasn't fully sold.

Would I recommend? Yes. A solid short story and sweet romance, and a particular treat for fans of *Snow White*.

Corrie says

Seven: A Lesbian Snow White is the first part in a series of well-known fairy tale retellings by **Jennifer Diemer** (aka S. E. Diemer, aka Elora Bischoff, aka Bridget Essex). Yeah, the author leaves a somewhat confusing trail of names but I figured it out in the end ;-)

What's most important is that I really like the spin she is giving to this fairy tale. You will hardly recognize it and even though there are quite a number of familiar elements - like the apple, the mirror, the step mother, 7 people in a cottage, the huntsman, the body suspended in lifeless animation - they have been transformed into something totally different. Diemer's prose is dark and foreboding and filled with a sadness that's ultimately well-suited for the genre. You literally feel the dark forest encroaching on you.

Fans of the fairy tale Snow White should really read this version just to see what Diemer did with it. And if you never cared for the original tale maybe this retelling will make you a believer.

f/f they keep it clean folks, just some kissing

Themes: an apple a day, systematic torture, ghosts, the quest for eternal life, lucky number 7, true love.

4 stars

m. moon says

I read the version in Sappho's Fables Volume 1 but I'm checking them off individually so they'll all count towards my 2017 reading challenge, ha. This was on the short side (understandably, since it's part of an anthology) and thus some aspects felt a bit rushed/I wished they'd been expanded on more but overall I found it lovely and it really felt like a fairy tale, as much as it differs from the traditional Snow White stories I'm most familiar with (initially Catalina's husband reminded me more of (view spoiler) than any character in Snow White, but I enjoyed that twist and loved all the story's other twists as well). While reading I kept imagining it as an elegant darkly gothic animated princess movie, honestly, and in that sense it helped scratch my itch for Lesbian Disney Princesses. <3 I'm pretty excited to read more from Sappho's Fables, since I love satisfying quick gay fairytale reads, and definitely going to check out Jennifer Diemer's short stories sometime as well!

el says

When you are sold into a marriage with a man old enough to be your father who abuses you, so you fall in love with his daughter, who is your age, instead! Fair play, really.

I really enjoyed this sapphic retelling of Snow White, although I'd probably call it inspired by Snow White rather than an actual retelling - which I think is a good thing in many ways, as it didn't just read like a copy

of Snow White except with someone's gender changed, it was a great spin on the original story. The romance was gentle and beautiful and I loved watching it blossom and seeing the way that affected both parties. My only complaint is I wish it was longer! I wish it was 300 pages rather than less than 100, as I would have loved to see more detailed development of everything. But honestly, this is a wonderful wlw spin on a well loved fairytale.

W. Tinkanesh says

The young Catalina is sent away by her parents to marry the rich and older Lexander. But this marriage has no love and no companionship to offer the young bride, and eating an apple side by side sitting on the bed every evening is the most intimate act the newly-married couple share.

In truth, Lexander only needs a wife to perform painful experiments on her as part of his alchemic research. His daughter, Neve, is barely younger than Catalina and spends her days as she pleases, hardly ever talking with her father.

'Seven' is a lesbian retelling of a popular tale where the mother-in-law is not the bad guy, and the daughter is far from innocent and naive. The number seven refers to Lexander's marriages, and the Huntsman is not what the readers expect.

Entertaining, unexpected and sweetly written, 'Seven' is a tale of new desires and coming of age for Catalina, and food for thoughts for the readers as once again we are explained why we should be careful what we wish for. This said, this clever retelling has a happy ending of sort.

sinnersandsapphics says

This story has a lot of elements that I expected to like - an ethereal romance, a heroine finding her strength, a villainous man getting his own. I feel I should have liked this more than I did, but between the overly flowery prose, the stilted dialogue, and the delayed exposition that took too long to explain what had already been implied, this story overall felt quite flat, and I found myself rushing through it to try and get it over with.

Cab says

This is a completely new take on the story of Snow White. Originally I thought it was going to mimic the original fairytale. It doesn't, which is not a bad thing. The story is interesting and stands in its own right and it has its own bit of intrigue as you try to figure out the husband's evil plot.

I would recommend this to anyone, it feels like a fairytale that could be enjoyed by anyone. It just happens that the two characters who fall in love are women.

Melinda says

I think this book was a very interesting retelling of Snow White with an LGBTQIA+ theme - there are a couple of similarities but for the most part it reads as its own fantasy novel. I think the plot was captivating

although the novel was a little short for my likes. It's an easy and fast read!

Anna says

This is pretty typical for self-published lesbian short stories- entertaining enough but you can't help but wish it was better.

The thing that bothered me so much about this particular story was that there was *so much potential*. The author really obviously has a complex imagination and eye for detail. The problem is that the writing and pacing were not quite up to par and held the story back. Things that weren't very important got too much time while pivotal moments were rushed through, and some of the scenes and characters that could have been really excellent came off flat and cheesy. It felt like the author had a huge, vivid story in her head but struggled to focus it and put it down in words.

I believe this is the author's first published novella. I think if she continues writing and gets a good editor she will be incredible, which is great news because the world is sorely lacking in fantastical lesbian fiction. I will definitely be keeping an eye out for her future works.

Nikki says

I love this little series of fairytales. It always makes me smile -- and this time, introduced me to a new writer. I'm very familiar with Jennifer Diemer's wife's work, but it was nice to meet the other half too, so to speak. It's an interesting take on the story of Snow White, which somehow manages to evoke that story well while being very little like the version of it we all know. (No dwarves, for example. No evil stepmother.) In fact, it encroaches on the territory of Bluebeard.

For what it is, I enjoyed it, and applaud the theory of LGBT-ifying fairytales, a pet project of mine as well. It's amazing what they're doing with the original stories and what they're managing to make of them.

Mathilda says

I enjoyed reading this! Beautiful imagery; so vividly described that some scenes literally shot out of the pages so that I sometimes felt as if I were reading a cartoon strip. For me it had a taste of the tale of Bluebeard mixed up with Snow White. All characters were interesting, and played their parts well, within the limits of a short story; but if this had been a bit longer I might have wanted some more of the Huntsman, and of the forest- but that's just me being picky and greedy. Overall a satisfying read. This was my first time reading Jennifer Diemer, but most definitely not my last.
