

## Twisted Fairy Tells: The Untold Truths

**William Moore**

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*Approaching classic tales with humor and horror, this is an exhilarating short story collection.*

The short stories in William Moore's *Twisted Fairy Tells* put creepy spins on classic tales and characters, from Santa Claus to Pinocchio and the Three Little Pigs.

The collection begins with a dystopian depiction of Santa Claus as a capitalistic tyrant who uses elves as slaves and makes the parents of the children he gives gifts to pay their dues. This is followed by an otherworldly version of *The Wizard of Oz*, in which Dorothy shoots the witch in the head before carrying on to visit Emerald City. The latter half of the book features stories that are less violent in nature: the interconnected “Robert ‘Rumpel’ Schneider” and “Frog Prince” follow their lead characters on meandering journeys toward redemption. The stories in between represent a mixed bag: there are B-movie horror tales and typical fairy tales.

Throughout the book, regardless of the genres of the adapted tales: the focus is on elevating the inspiring stories via greater character development. Thus, some personalities are twisted in grotesque manners to reveal dark truths about characters' circumstances. Psychotic Pinocchio, for instance, wants to be a real boy with such intensity that he wears the faces of his young victims—a terrifying and fascinating take. Other stories take fewer diversions; the book's iteration of Rapunzel, for example, is much the same, and her story is comparatively less exciting than others. Still, character conversations ably convey the cast's personalities, whether they are psychotic or timid.

With a compelling origin story for Rumpelstiltskin, who here transforms an infant into the Frog Prince, this inventive book leans on short, foreboding sentences that are made to alternate with longer, descriptive paragraphs. Speeding through violent actions and slowing down to develop its backgrounds and settings, the book is often precise and powerful in its executions, though it is impeded by some inexact word choices, unclear diversions, and typographical errors (here, Little Red Robin Hood encounters the wolf).

Strong humor carries much of the book, as does the juxtaposition of iconic characters with their menacing and lifelike counterparts: this version of the child-stalking wolf is a vegetarian, and becomes out of breath after running from the carnivorous three little pigs; he gobbles the girl up only because she won't stop screaming, and because he doesn't have the time to catch his breath to communicate. Such flip-flopped characterizations are hilarious, turning the stories' events around and resulting in considerable entertainment.

The short stories gathered in *Twisted Fairy Tells* prod at the backgrounds of classic fable characters, resulting in exhilarating and horrifying new possibilities.

AIMEE JODOIN (September 27, 2021)

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