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Ice



Synopsis

When Cassie was little she thought her mother had been taken prisoner by trolls because of a deal sheâ™d made with the Polar Bear King. Just a fairy tale to soothe a child whose mother had died. But on her eighteenth birthday, the âœfairy taleâ•comes true when the Polar Bear King comes to take Cassie for his bride. Realizing she has the power to save her mother, Cassie makes her own deal with the bear and finds herself on a journey against time, traveling across the brutal Arctic to the land east of the sun and west of the moon. It is a journey that will teach Cassie the true meaning of love and familyâ”and what it means to become an adult.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

I had very high hopes for this book. I've read a few East of the Sun, West of the Moon retellings in the past few years (my favorite is Sun and Moon, Ice and Snow, but the illustrated East of the Sun and West of the Moon will always have a soft spot in my heart) and have been on the look out for more. That being said, the best thing about this book is the cover. The main characters, Cassie and Bear, are relentlessly unlikeable to me. Cassie goes into a deal expecting to get, essentially, something for nothing, as she can just nullify it and Bear has to keep his end of the bargain. This did not endear her to me. Bear does something in the first hundred pages that made me want to fling

the book across the room (here's a hint, Bear: if a woman says she doesn't want to have children, you do not mess with her birth control so she ends up pregnant anyway). Granted, this could be put down as a misunderstanding on Bear's part, but it still made me cringe. The relationship between Bear and Cassie is odd to put it mildly. He's a polar bear; there's an indication, early on, that he hasn't always been a polar bear and only assumed the form when he became a munaqsri, but that is still several centuries of life as a bear and it shows. The seal eating scene is particularly telling, in my opinion. Cassie falls in love with this bear and sleeps with him (while he's human), which results in the aforementioned unwanted pregnancy.

I love retellings of fairy tales, and this one's a honey. It would have to be frozen honey, though--there's more snow in this book than you'll find anywhere but in a biography of Admiral Peary. Durst has taken the Scandinavian Beauty and the Beast story, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," and set it in the present day, giving us a girl who lives on an Arctic research station with her gruff father and his assistants. Being a young scientist, Cassie is far from being inclined to believe in magic, though when she was little her grandmother used to tell her a seemingly fanciful story about how her missing mother was the adopted daughter of the North Wind, stolen by trolls after having bargained Cassie away to a magical bear. Cassie thinks her father doesn't believe in fairy tales, either, but when she meets the Polar Bear King, her father panics. She realizes that her father has lied, and her grandmother's story is true. The bear returns, convincing Cassie to accompany him to his icy palace. There she learns to enjoy his company, eventually falling in love with him. (It helps that he takes the form of a man by night.) But each will yet betray the other. In time Cassie wins her mother back, but at the price of her beloved. Now she must journey to the ends of the earth, fighting enemies with snarling faces, with smiling faces, and without any faces at all. The author keeps the bones of the original tale, but uses them to build a new mythology linked to Inuit-type animal gods who preside over birthing and survival. The original folktale, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," is a story about being willing to do anything for the sake of love.

Sarah Beth Durst's *Into the Wild* proved to be an engrossing and unique story formed from the melding of several fairy tales, so when I heard that she had a new book coming out - or, let me rephrase this: when I saw the cover of *Ice* (which is beautiful) I readily picked it up, though the fact that it takes on a fairy tale I enjoy, *East O' the Sun, West O' the Moon*, minus the beautiful cover, would have had me reading it anyway. This version of the familiar fairy tale offers a nice twist by being set in the Arctic during current times. The protagonist, Cassie, is the daughter of a scientist

and has her heart set on tracking polar bears. Her mother (and this isn't a spoiler) is the daughter of the North Wind, which is actually the catalyst that gets this story moving. Eventually, a polar bear shows up, a deal is made, and Cassie ends up married to what would be (in the original story) the polar bear king/prince (depending on what version you read). That isn't the case in this story. Yes, she marries the polar bear...but...he was never a prince...or a king, for that matter. Or human. He's a munaqsri, a bearer of souls, and to be more exact, he's not even a polar bear. That's just the shape he chose to take. I admit to having a problem with this. It is quite odd and is even stranger on paper. Sarah Beth Durst really does succeed in making this story her own and giving the old tale a fresh, new feel (and kudos to her for this), but the feel isn't a good one. And, call me old-fashioned, but I would have preferred that the polar bear was human at one point, and I can explain this a little bit further. Let's put it this way.

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