

Interview with Rosamund Hodge

How did you come up with the idea to mash up the Beauty and the Beast and Greek Mythology? When I began the book I didn't expect that and I honestly can say I loved it!

When I was a child, I was actually not a huge fan of Beauty and the Beast. But I was obsessed with Greek mythology, and one of my favorites stories was the myth of Cupid and Psyche. Briefly: an oracle tells a king he must chain his daughter on a mountaintop as sacrifice to a “monster.” But the daughter, Psyche, isn't devoured by a beast as she expects; instead, the wind carries her to a strange palace with invisible servants who tell her that she is a bride. And every night her husband comes to visit her—but he forbids her to see his face. When her jealous sisters persuade her light a candle anyway, she discovers that he's Cupid, the god of love. But because she broke his command, he becomes a prisoner of his mother Venus, and Psyche must complete a series of impossible tasks—ultimately going to the Underworld—in order to free him.

I never thought about mashing up this story with Beauty and the Beast until much later, when I read the fairy tale East of the Sun, West of the Moon. It's a story about a girl who marries a polar bear after he promises to make her poor family rich, and it's basically a halfway point between Cupid and Psyche and Beauty and the Beast. Immediately, it seemed obvious to me that all three stories were one story. And I wanted to write a novel exploring those links.

I discovered hints from some other famous stories in the book. For example Rumpelstiltskin and Bluebeard. Why did you choose other tales, too and why these ones?

I think it would be very difficult for me to write a fairy tale retelling that drew on only one story. One of the things that fascinates me about fairy tales is how they have so many different versions that seem to meld into each other. I look at the stories, and I feel like they're all hinting at some other story behind them, and that's the feeling I tried to create in *Cruel Beauty*.

I used Bluebeard because it's the mirror image of Beauty and the Beast: in one story, a girl goes to live with a monster, but after she agrees to marry him, she realizes he is really a man. In the other, a girl goes to marry a man, and discovers that he's really a monster.

The name-guessing was, I suppose, inspired by Rumpelstiltskin, but it wasn't a so much a conscious allusion. Knowing somebody's true name is frequently important in fairy tales, and *Beauty and the Beast* is a story about knowing somebody's true nature, so it made sense to use that motif.

Cruel Beauty's cover was love at first sight for me. It wasn't a question that I must read it. What did you feel when you first saw it?

I fell in love too! You hear all sorts of horror stories about authors receiving terrible covers, so even though I've really loved most of the Balzer + Bray covers that I've seen, I was still nervous. But the instant I saw the cover design, I knew it was perfect.

There's a question I always ask when I have the opportunity to interview authors. You're on a deserted island. You can choose one character from *Cruel Beauty* who will be there with you on the island. Who would you choose? Why?

Ignifex, because I'm pretty sure he could use his Demon Lord powers to get us off the island.

What are you working on right now? Would you tell us something about it?

I'm working on my second novel for Balzer + Bray. It's set in a different world from *Cruel Beauty*, but it's also a fairy tale fusion: in this case, Little Red Riding Hood combined with The Girl With No Hands.

Would you like to send a message to your Hungarian readers?

I am really thrilled to have people in other countries reading my book, and I hope there will be a Hungarian edition soon!

Thank you so much for the interview! I hope we can read *Cruel Beauty* in Hungarian soon!

Source: <http://deszy-konyvesblog.blogspot.hu/>