



# Sappho's Fables, Volume 1: Three Lesbian Fairy Tale Novellas

*Elora Bishop , Jennifer Diemer*

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**Sappho's Fables, Volume 1: Three Lesbian Fairy Tale Novellas** Elora Bishop , Jennifer Diemer

The Sappho's Fables series takes well-known, beloved fairy tales and retells them from a lesbian perspective. Volume One contains the first three novellas in the series: SEVEN (Snow White), BRAIDED (Rapunzel) and CRUMBS (Hansel and Gretel), compiled together in an enchanting omnibus edition.

\* SEVEN: A Lesbian Snow White

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.

\* BRAIDED: A Lesbian Rapunzel

Zelda is cursed to spend her days on a platform in an ancient, holy tree, growing her hair long enough to touch the ground. But it wasn't her curse to bear: Gray, the witch's daughter, was meant for that lonely fate. Gray visits Zelda each day, mourning their switched fates, and falling deeper in love with the cursed girl, until one night, at the Not-There Fair, an extraordinary creature outlines a magical plan that could set both of them free. Will Gray's love for Zelda be strong enough to survive the strange dream world of Chimera, or will Zelda remain a prisoner of the curse forever?

\* CRUMBS: A Lesbian Hansel and Gretel

Greta's never ventured beyond the refuge of the Heap. Outside, the Ragers lurk, ever hungry and hunting. But Greta and her brother, half-starved and now alone, must risk death for the dream of safety they hope to find within the metal forest. Once there, nothing is as it seems: in the confines of a crumbling old candy factory, the woman who rescues them with sweet words and sweeter treats harbors a dangerous secret.

## Sappho's Fables, Volume 1: Three Lesbian Fairy Tale Novellas Details

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Bishop , Jennifer Diemer**

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## From Reader Review Sappho's Fables, Volume 1: Three Lesbian Fairy Tale Novellas for online ebook

### I. says

they're very different and they're very sweet.

"braided: a lesbian rapunzel" was was favourite, though the hansel and gretel one was probably the most interesting.

"snow white" was the weakest, though it was still fine. other writers have done better things with snow white & with bluebeard though.

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### Jackie says

Loved it! Give me all the lesbians. The retellings are creative and interesting, and I think my favourite was the Snow White story.

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### Aneko says

Jen tak pro za?átek, ani jeden ze t?í p?íb?h? nemá skoro nic spole?ného se svojí pohádkovou p?edlohou.

První p?íb?h, Seven, byl weird a cute.

Druhý, Braided, weird a..... weird.

A t?etí to zachránil, protože Jení?ek a Ma?enka zombie apokalypsa verze? Sign me the fuck in.

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### Annie (iliveandbreathewords) says

Seven: 4/5

Braided: 4/5

Crumbs: 4/5

I enjoyed each novella and thought they were all very inventive twists on the fairy tales they were based on.

Full review on my blog.

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### Nore says

First time I picked this up, I put it right back down one I reached the part about *I'm a witch* with the pointy black nails - where do you even find black nail polish in a medieval setting? You don't! You just don't. It was so silly, it put me off the entire book at first.

But I'm glad I came back to this - my roommate read it, said it was alright, and I went ahead and worked my way past the first story... Which is the worst story in the book.

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These are not really "fairy tales." Are they inspired by fairy tales? Yeah, a bit! But they aren't rewrites, and the influence is prettttyyyy distant. Just read them as regular old short stories, see if you can't struggle past the ridiculous first story, and you'll be fine.

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## **Grumpy Rat says**

I'd say I liked the first and second story than the third one. I like them because I've always drawn to the ideas of two ordinary girls rescued each other, and there were no princesses or princes appeared in here. Two girls who yearned of freedom, brave, and love. It's beautiful, isn't it? Though I thought the third story about Hansel and Gretel was kind of... rushed and forced by making its sounded horror and scary, I guess? Bishop's writing style annoyed me quite a lot, I cannot understand why she ended the story like this way, eating, doubting, sleeping, and suddenly they found the cures for the Ragers? I expected for more actions and feelings from the main character, and yeah, just expected.

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## **Kat says**

Disclaimer: I received this book as part of a Goodreads FirstReads giveaway.

I really enjoyed this collection of retold fairy tales. The authors seemed willing to really stretch the genre, taking iconic elements from each story but then turning them on their heads. In particular, each of the novels changed the usual central protagonist of the story to the more secondary character, which is an interesting choice. In a way, it puts the reader in the position of examining the title character as the protagonist does, from a more human and emotional perspective than the traditional fairy tale narrator. This is especially the case since each of the stories is written in first person perspective. Although the fairy tale characters have different names, it is still clear who they are meant to be.

The first story is a retelling of Snow White, although it's thematically more similar to Bluebeard. I liked the portrayal of magic and magical beings in this one, and I thought the ending was fitting for all involved. However, I wish they had just called it a retelling of Bluebeard, because the subtext of Snow White -- that beauty is power for women -- is never explored, and I'd really love to see that aspect of it explored more than I have in any retelling I've found.

The second story, a retelling of Rapunzel, succeeds admirably at writing a story without a villain and in rescuing the fair maiden -- or rather, helping her rescue herself -- without forcing anybody into the villain role or being selfish. Hooray for (magical) problem solving!

While the first two take place more or less in Once Upon a Time-Land, the last, a retelling of Hansel and Gretel, takes place post-zombie apocalypse. This was a truly inspired choice for a fairy tale whose plot is so much about food and the lack or abundance thereof. Although I was a little underwhelmed with the ending of this one -- it seemed to undermine the creepy atmosphere of the rest of the story -- the setting change and poor anxious Greta's inner monologue were enough to make up for it.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and look forward to other works by the same writers.

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## skadoosh says

Seven: 4/5

Braided: 3/5

Crumbs: 2/5

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## Jess says

These stories were definitely more fantasy than fairytale. While they had a touch of the originals on them, it was enough to make them really feel based or inspired by the originals. Not a bad thing technically, but I would have much preferred stories that had been a bit more based on the originals besides the bare trappings that were used.

The first two stories were alright besides all that... they were honestly pretty interesting despite the fact they barely resembled the original fairytales. The last one I thought would be the perfect thing... Lesbian fairytale retelling AND zombies??

But alas, it was much more miss than hit with me. It was just too bizarre and felt very disjointed, zombies included.

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## Jessie Quinn (cupofbooks) says

As far as fairy tale retellings go, all three stories are top-notch. Each story is well-written and I loved how both Elora Bishop and Jennifer Diemer kept the original bare bones of the original fairy tales, but still re-imagined them in exciting and unexpected ways. "Seven," the Snow White retelling, has elements of a ghost story; "Braided," the Rapunzel retelling, is a fantastical story that reminded me a little of Neil Gaiman's Stardust; and "Crumbs," the Hansel and Gretel retelling, is a post-apocalyptic zombie thriller. All three stories are worth reading at least once, and despite the fact that all the stories differ from each other, the collection is still a cohesive read.

There's a lot I enjoyed about these retellings, but what really stood out to me is the authors' treatment of the female villains of the original tale. "Seven," is told from the perspective of the stepmother, who is not an evil queen, but a woman forced in difficult marriage with a dangerous man. In "Braided," the protagonist Gray recognizes that the witch's actions were not evil and repeatedly refuses to hate the witch, because she was only doing what she thought was best. Even the candy-maker in "Crumbs" is more than just the wicked witch from the original story. Too many retellings keep the stepmothers evil and the witches wicked, while drastically changing other elements of the story. It's refreshing to read some retellings that challenge these tired characterizations.

The romances in these stories are sweet and heart-warming. I really appreciate the intentionality behind the happy endings in these stories. Too many mainstream novels featuring queer characters end in heartbreak; it's nice read stories where queer couples get to have a happily-ever-after.

Long story short, I loved Sappho's Fables, Volume 1 and I absolutely cannot wait for Volume 2!

## Kathryn says

Let's just set the record straight, these are absolutely not lesbian retellings of Snow White, Rapunzel, and Hansel and Gretel. They are lesbian fairytales that have vague mentions of things in those fairytales, but that's it. Take Seven, the Snow White. Catalina is one of seven wives and she and her husband eat apples....that's as far as the likeness goes, the number seven and some apples. Same with Braided, the retelling of Rapunzel. The only likeness to the actual story of Rapunzel is that Zelda has extremely long hair, that's it. As lesbian fairytales they're not that bad, not good but not bad. What bothers me is that they're advertised as retellings of classic fairytales and they're just not. As far as the stories themselves I didn't like them. False description aside, I found the stories hard to get into and not engrossing.

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## Acquafortis says

I had already read two other books (with great enthusiasm) by Sarah Diemer/Elora Bishop before the unexpected opportunity arrived of having a free copy to review of Sappho's Fables, Volume 1.

So I thought I knew what I was expecting: Lesbian Fairy tales period.

Well, no way it was going to be as simple as that. To say the truth these three Lesbian Fairy tales have gone beyond that expectation.

For sure there is that distinctly characteristic noir leitmotif pulsing through the author's writing. However this time, maybe because she is co-writing with her wife Jennifer Diemer, the pulse has become a strong drumming rhythm.

The three fables retold (for lack of better word) are: "Snow White", "Rapunzel" and "Hansel & Gretel" As I said do not expect a simple retelling. No way.

Yes you have all the elements right for each story but then imagine you add a good dose of fresh magic, a fair share of women sensuality balanced by a fairer share of a dream like quality, dab it with noir and chopped raw determination then mix thoroughly in a creativity turmoil.

And Voilà Sappho's Fables are served. Enjoy slightly chilled with a warm blanket, a comfy sofa and a candle.

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## Siavahda says

Oh, wow. Where to start?

I've been a fan of Elora Bishop since day one, and was really excited to see her working with her wife on their lesbian fairytale series. I was waiting for this omnibus since they announced the start of the project, and gods above it didn't disappoint!

Let's go in order...

Seven, the Snow White re-telling by Diemer, set the tone for the series/omnibus at once: gorgeous and wildly original while still staying true to the 'heart' of the story. Told from the perspective of the stepmother, Seven contains everything you'd expect from a Snow White story - the beautiful princess/step-daughter, the mirror, the apples, the huntsman, and the glass coffin - but in a wonderfully new way: the step-daughter Neve is the witch (and so sensual my heart was fluttering right alongside Catalina's!), the mirror is magical in a very

unexpected manner, the apples are - well. I don't want to spoil you. Suffice to say the apples are important!

But what makes the story, even more than the mingling of Bluebeard-esque themes, quests for immortality and beautiful fairies, is the writing. Neve's gaze is 'like a bite'; Catalina is so sweetly innocent you can't help but love her; 'fairest of them all' is a statement important not because of obsession and revenge but because of love. Even more than a love story, Seven is Catalina's journey into her strength and confidence, and watching her grow was a true pleasure, as was the quiet suggestion that *every* woman and girl possesses the same strength. I hope that message gets through to all Diemer's readers.

Next, Braided. This was without a shadow of a doubt my favourite of the collection (although it was a near thing!) Again, the expected motifs were all in place: the tower, the long, long hair, the witch, the garden, the bargained-for baby, and even (if you don't blink and miss it!) a prince. And again, they are woven into a wholly new and unexpected pattern that had me hooked from the first sentence 'I was born cursed'; a sacred tree and its priestess, wishes braided into hair, a dream quest and a magical fair that I would love to visit myself, complete with delightfully snarky wisdom-dispensing cats and very special music.

Where Seven reminded me a little of Celtic and Greek myths Braided is like a dream - appropriate, since dreams feature in the story. I loved Gray and Zelda's story down to the tiniest details; the love potion for the king's son, Gray fixing the pieces of the broken cup by 'gluing them back together with little scraps of magic', and the wishes petitioners tied into Zelda's hair. And the fair! Gorgeous. But one of my favourite parts have to be how Bishop managed to keep the witch from being evil - keeping her human and sympathetic, even with her flaws. It takes real skill to manage that with the characters readers expect to be villains.

Last but certainly not least is Crumbs. Hansel and Gretel set in a post-apocalyptic, zombie-plagued world (well, they're not QUITE zombies, but similar enough). I wasn't sure I was going to enjoy Crumbs, because dystopian settings are very rarely my cup of tea, and I have never yet enjoyed a story featuring zombies (or anything similar). But Bishop won me over almost at once through one simple fact: Greta is afraid. And really, both Catalina of Seven and Braided's Zelda are afraid for themselves and their lovers in their stories, but Greta is fearful of, it seems, everything. That's not a common trait in the fantasy genre, and I loved Greta just for that, for being so clearly human; I loved her even more as she tapped into her inner strength over the course of the story to protect herself and her brother.

Again, we have the motifs you'd expect - the brother and sister, the loss of the parents, the journey to find them, and the house of sweets. And again, none of them are as you'd expect - the candy house, for example, is actually an abandoned factory that used to make cakes and sweets, and I *loved* it.

My favourite part of Crumbs, though, was the difference in understanding between the reader and Greta. By which I mean: Greta has grown up in this world, post zombie apocalypse, and we haven't. Bishop describes things and concepts that Greta doesn't recognise, but the reader can, because of that difference in worldview, such as Sabine's unicorn bracelet - which Greta describes as a horse 'but there's something pointy sticking right out of its forehead' - or the abandoned city, which Greta calls the steel forest. Again, Bishop pays careful attention to detail - Greta and her brother are given shots to make sure they don't get sick when they eat themselves full after months, maybe years, of near-starvation. That's the kind of thing so many authors forget about, so kudos to Bishop or her editor for paying such careful attention!

So many retellings aren't really retellings at all, just the original story with a bit more detail - a fantasy kingdom, Prince Charming replaced by Prince Insert Name Here. Diemer and Bishop's story are *true* retellings that never let go of the heart of each story; more, each one is exquisitely told and never hesitates to reaffirm that love and magic will *always* triumph, no matter what. I can't wait for the rest of this series.

## Ally says

So, before I talk about the novellas themselves, I want to take a second to be incredibly confused about the authorship.

The intro makes it sound like the two authors are married -- except plug "Elora Bishop" into google, and she appears to have changed her name to "Bridget Essex" and is married to someone else?? But the end notes also make it seem like "Elora Bishop" is a pen name for S.E. "Sarah" Diemer? Who is Jennifer Diemer's current wife, and apparently they've been married for five years.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH YOU GUYS?? They all have separate goodreads and amazon pages, to make it more confusing. =/

The reason why I'm so riled up about this is, to be honest, I didn't really enjoy Jennifer Diemer's parts of this book ("Seven", aka Snow White - as a ghost story/old magic/Bluebeard kinda story, and "Crumbs" aka Hansel and Gretel except zombies).

Something about the prose felt clumsy, and the romance was very "YOU'RE PRETTY AND YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON TO BE NICE TO ME SO I LOVE YOU."

Meanwhile, I absolutely loved "Braided" aka Lesbian Rapunzel. The connection between the two characters felt genuine, and a lot of really cool world building is done in a small amount of words. It reminded me of "After Hamelin", a book I loved as a kid, so having a queer story that felt like that really meant a lot to me.

Anyway, ymmv, obv. I'm off to go continuing to try and find more writing by this mysterious Bishop person.

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## Jem says

I downloaded Crumbs for free from Amazon.com (it is still free). With an author named Elora, I was expecting a mindless, erotic rehash of Hansel & Gretel. But it's the exact opposite. There was barely any sex. The only thing resembling the fairy tale are the names and the tooth-decay-inducing sweets. Our hero siblings live in a garbage heap in a bleak, grungy, post-apocalyptic world gone to pieces. Told from a very effective first person POV, you can really feel the fear and despair as the siblings try to escape hunger, battle raging zombies and figure out the mystery of the lady in the gingerbread house. I was very pleasantly surprised with this novella as most Amazon freebies are barely readable. I love the author's lyrical prose. It wasn't until I got to the credits that I found out Elora Bishop was really Sarah Diemer. No wonder. But I do wonder why she needs to market this book under another name when it's the same genre as her popular 'The Dark Wife'.

Like Crumbs, Seven is just 'inspired' by Snow White. The author turns the whole fairy tale on its head. Snow White is a goth witch (well maybe not really goth as per the author's description, but i can't help visualizing her as Neve Campbell from the 'The Craft'). The step mother is the damsel in distress. The huntsman is powerful like a god. And the father is . This is a heavy fantasy tale with lots of moments of dread and suspense.

Braided, the Rapunzel story was the best developed romance of the three. In the other two stories, especially Crumbs, the romance was too fast...considering Gretel was practically skin and bones, and came straight from a garbage pile. The only part I don't like is a portion of the quest to free Rapunzel read like a drug-

induced hallucination or a dream sequence.

What I liked best: Well-developed original fantasy worlds despite the limited novella length, effective use of 1st person pov to achieve tension and anxiety, lovely lyrical prose, 3 novellas for just \$6 -- a bargain.

What could have been better: development of the romances. This was probably limited by the novella length or the author chose not to let up on the tension/suspense.

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