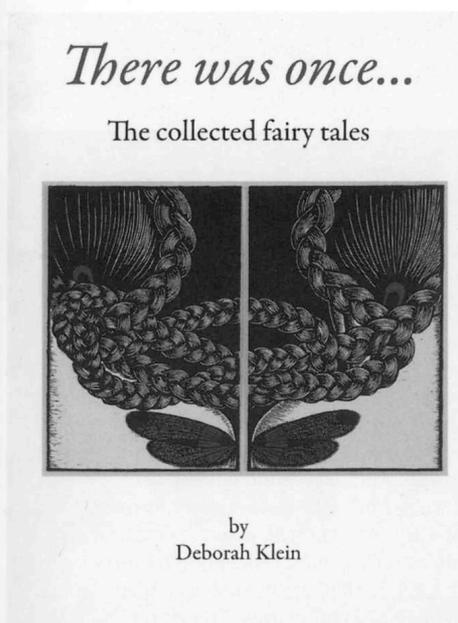


There was once... The collected fairy tales

by Deborah Klein



The double-panelled linocut reproduced on the cover of Deborah Klein's *There was once...The collected fairytales* captures the femininity and self-consciousness of two women with intricately braided hair, who are both guarded by moths. Containing themes of self-transformation, courage and acceptance of the consequences of your actions, Klein's 13 short moralistic fairytales demonstrate that happiness comes from believing in yourself:

'...it came from within, not from plush surroundings and glittering possessions...' (p. 17)

Set in enchanted forests, fine respectable townhouses and ice-cream parlours, and containing protagonists as clichéd as princes and princesses, along with new characters such as moths and wasps, Klein relives traditional fairytales where the ambitious and good hearted prevail over the wicked and vain, but recreates them with a contemporary feminist twist.

Each fairytale is devoid of the genre's typical central love interest; instead, Klein sets out to encourage independence and self-empowerment. Her female characters grapple with beauty as a form of entrapment, overcoming unfounded fears and the constraints of social class, each finding their own way to seek out happiness in the world around them.

An honest and sometimes cynical narrator guides you through the tales with a down-to-earth voice that shows no mercy for the struggling villains. Its light-hearted tone is conveyed by Klein's comedic but generally straightforward language, which contrasts with the more elusive illustrations located opposite each story. The artworks depict faceless female subjects, elaborate hairstyles

that exude beauty with a menacing precision (e.g. hair braided like chains around the head), and companionable insects that seem to replace the traditional knight in shining armour and loving family. These mysterious 'portraits' allude to insecurity, self-doubt and stolen identity, but also allow readers to create the characters' aesthetic identity for themselves.

Moths, butterflies and insects are a recurring theme in Klein's previous artworks. Whereas butterflies are typically associated with beauty, traditional folklore often presents the moth as an omen of death, darkness and negativity; in daily life moths are also regarded as filthy pests, not unlike flies or mosquitos. However, in folklore moths are also linked to the soul. The moths in Klein's fairytale stories are consistently good natured and helpful, expressing shifting female identity as well as providing protection for their fair maidens.

Klein's bold narrative and illustrations leave you feeling strong, happy and prepared to face anything — whether it's befriend insects, escaping prince charming, or following your dreams. •

Design text and illustrations by Deborah Klein

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