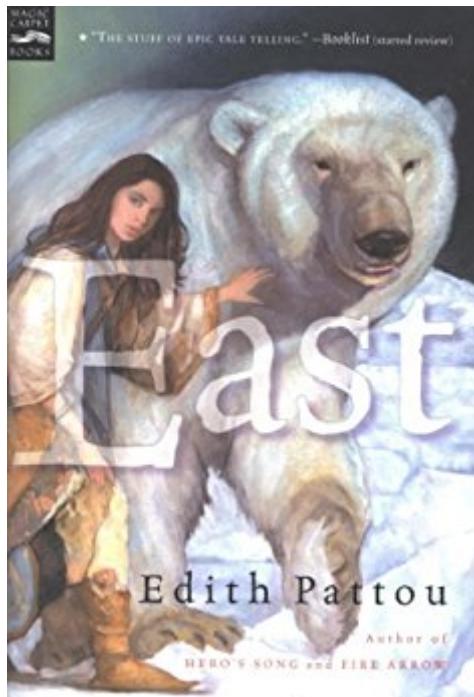


The book was found

East



Synopsis

Rose has always felt out of place in her family, a wanderer in a bunch of homebodies. So when an enormous white bear mysteriously shows up and asks her to come away with him--in exchange for health and prosperity for her ailing family--she readily agrees. The bear takes Rose to a distant castle, where each night she is confronted with a mystery. In solving that mystery, she loses her heart, discovers her purpose, and realizes her travels have only just begun. As familiar and moving as "Beauty and the Beast" and yet as fresh and original as only the best fantasy can be, *East* is a novel retelling of the classic tale "East of the Sun, West of the Moon," a sweeping romantic epic in the tradition of Robin McKinley and Gail Carson Levine.

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Customer Reviews

This is a retelling of *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. To readers unfamiliar with the Norwegian fairy tale, think of "Beauty and the Beast" with an extra adventure tacked on to the end. (The main character is even named Rose.) I'll discuss Pattou's version at the end, but the bare bones of the fairy tale goes something like this: In exchange for her family's future well being, the

youngest daughter offers to live with a bear in a distant castle, whom she suspects to be a prince under a spell. On a visit home (this is a very gentle confinement: our heroine has servants, good food, and can visit her parents if she promises to return), her mother and sisters question her easy acceptance of everything (rightly so, in my opinion) but can not convince her to stay home and forget the bear. Here is where the story diverges from *Beauty and the Beast*. Finally, the girl's mother and sisters convince her that her situation is weird, to say the least. They tell her to sneak up on the bear after dark with a candle and see if, as she suspects, he really does turn into a man at night. Our heroine agrees with predictable results: the bear's human form is very nice but she spills wax on his shirt and wakes him up. The bear's response is one of the things I've never understood about the fairy tale. Shortly put, "You've ruined everything, now I have to marry a troll and it's all your fault! Bye." When pressed for details, the bear (now in human form) explains about the spell and says if she had waited only one night more, it would have been broken. Now, of course, he has to marry the Troll Queen. He leaves wearing nothing but the night shirt with wax stain, but before he does, he mentions that the troll kingdom lies "east of the sun and west of the moon."

Ebba Rose - known simply as Rose to her family and friends - was different from the day she was born. It was clear from that tell-tale day that Rose was destined for something great. However, her superstitious mother keeps the strange circumstances of Rose's birth to herself, silencing her husband - Rose's father - from ever telling a soul, in the hopes that she can keep her daughter from leaving home, and fulfilling her destiny for an adventure. But even concealing the truth cannot stop Rose's inquisitive nature. So, one evening, when an enormous white bear appears at Rose's home, asking the teenager to accompany it on a journey to a magical castle in the woods, in exchange for her sister's health, and wealth for her family, Rose accepts the invitation - much to her family's chagrin - and travels the long distance atop the bear's back, to an empty castle, where, each night, a mysterious stranger joins her each night. But when Rose discovers the stranger's identity, she realizes that her journey has only just begun, and that she is destined for even more adventure. I was instantly attracted to *EAST* by its wonderful cover illustration, but when I read the back cover, the promise of adventure sealed the deal, and I purchased the book. I think it was one of the best decisions regarding literature I have ever made. *EAST* reminds you greatly of the story *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, though it is truly based on the fairytale *EAST OF THE SUN, WEST OF THE MOON*. Rose is an exciting heroine, who takes her daily life in the castle in stride; and the other characters dappled throughout the tale, from Rose's immediate family, to various evils lurking, and a few kind souls, all add to the stories pace, and keep the reader on the edge of their seat.

"East" is Edith Pattou's retold and fleshed-out retelling of the folktale "East O' the Sun and West O' the Moon", a tale that most cultures and countries have incorporated into their mythology throughout history. Motifs such as the animalistic husband, the vengeful sorceress, an interfering mother who gives dangerous advice, the taboo upon seeing the mystery-man's face, the task that only the "true bride" can perform, and the young woman's quest to reclaim her husband can be found in everything from the Greek/Roman "Cupid and Psyche" to France's "Beauty and the Beast." Details change in every version, but the core of the tale is the same each time. Edith Pattou uses the Norwegian version as her template, which has the prince changed into a polar bear through the designs of an enamoured troll-queen. In order to break the curse the bear must take a human companion, who is forbidden to see his face for an entire year. Of course, the young heroine Rose breaks this rule; she must do this of course, or else the reader would be deprived of the quest to undo her wrong and save her beloved. Pattou puts her personal slant on the tale by adding in the superstition concerning "birth-direction." Rose's mother Eugenia lives strictly in the belief that the direction in which an infant is brought into the world has a bearing on the personality and fate of that child. She plans to have only seven children, one for each direction (beginning at north-east and ending at north-west), and missing out on the final compass point: north. The reason for this is that north-born children are wild and reckless, liable to go wandering far and wide. But when her east-born daughter (east-borns being the most sturdy and reliable characters) dies, Eugenia bears another child to take her place.

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