



## **Scarlet in the Snow**

*Sophie Masson*

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A deserted mansion. Empty picture frames. A perfect red rose in a snowy garden. There is rich and powerful magic here, and a mystery to unravel...

When Natasha is forced to take shelter from a sudden, terrible blizzard, she is lucky to see a mansion looming out of the snow. Inside it's beautiful: the fire lit, the table set. But there is no one there. And on the walls, instead of paintings, are empty frames. In the garden, she finds one perfect red rose about to bloom, a vivid splash of scarlet against the snow. Dreamily she reaches out a hand... Only to have the master of the house appear - a terrifying, gigantic creature who looks like a cross between a bear and a man - and demand vengeance on her for taking his rose.

So begins an extraordinary adventure that will see Natasha plunged deep into the heart of a mystery. She begins to realise she has stumbled onto a great tragedy - a spell of revenge laid on the young man the Beast once was, devised by a powerful sorcerer. But even if she can break the spell, the Beast she has now come to love will be snatched from her. Natasha will have a long journey, and many ordeals, ahead of her before there can be a happy ending.

Inspired by two beautiful Russian fairytales - The Scarlet Flower (the Russian version of Beauty and the Beast) and Fenist the Falcon, Scarlet in the Snow is a beguiling mix of magic, romance, adventure and mystery.

## **Scarlet in the Snow Details**

Date : Published May 1st 2013 by Random House

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Author : Sophie Masson

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## From Reader Review Scarlet in the Snow for online ebook

### Rachel (The Rest Is Still Unwritten) says

*Thank you to Random House Australia for allowing me to read and review this book!*

Find my complete review on my blog here: <http://rachybee-the-rest-is-still-unwritten.com/reviews/scarlet-in-the-snow-by-sophie-masson/>...

Scarlet in the Snow by Sophie Masson is a very quaint fairytale retelling, woven together beautiful with Russian folk law.

In all honesty, I'm at a mixed mind when it comes to Scarlet in the Snow. I appreciate what author Sophie Masson has done with this book, but I also felt at times the story fell flat. That being said, while Scarlet in the snow wasn't the best fairytale re-telling I've ever read, I did like it--for the most part.

Beautifully written, Scarlet in the Snow details the story of Beauty and the Beast; mixing romance and danger together with Russian folklaw, and building a story long after the traditional tale of Beauty and the Beast ends.

The biggest draw for me concerning this book was that I enjoyed Sophie Masson's writing style and the fact that Scarlet in the Snow continued on long after where I'd expect the traditional Beauty and the Beast story to end (where the the Beauty professes her love and Beast becomes a man once more). Masson's writing painted a lovely picture of the story within my mind; describing the lucious and magical world within the book in a very rich and detailed manner.

The mythology within Scarlet in the Snow was interesting, nothing I'd ever seen before, although I was a tad confused at times and wished the mythology and magic known to the characters was better explained. The characters, including leading lady Natasha, were likeable, but felt bland in terms of personality and chemistry. The romance, and "love" shared by our Beauty and Beast, unfortunately, to me, seemed to come on too fast and too soon, and in turn never meant much to me. I understood why Natasha risked all she did, but I never felt it.....meaning what was on the line didn't mean as much to me as I wanted it to.

That being said, the story, aside from a few moments when I felt it dragged, was nice enough to read about. I liked how well the author tied everything up and how we left the characters. While this will never be something on my faves list, if you're a fan of fairytale retellings and looking for something fairly quick to read, Scarlet and the Snow may just be the book for you!

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### Kate Forsyth says

I just loved this retelling of the Beauty and the Beast fairy tale, told with flair, dash, and panache, by one of my favourite Australian women writers (yay! Another AWW2013!) Sophie Masson has really found her niche with these books ('Scarlet in the Snow' is set in the same alternative-world Prague as Sophie's previous novel, 'Moonlight & Ashes', which was one of my BEST BOOKS READ IN 2012.) This is YA fantasy at its best - filled with magic, adventure and just a touch of romance. Loved it!

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## **I. says**

Half ~original, half profoundly generic. The real issue for me though is the romance. It seemed like Mason just wanted the "I love you" moment to happen early on so that she could get it out of the way and move to more interesting ground.

Instead, Mason should have scrapped the romance entirely, leaving Natasha on the case because she's a fearless detective. Which is the story she rather obviously wanted to write, imo.

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## **Shaheen says**

A surprisingly good read, especially because when I started it, *Scarlet in the Snow* was in danger of being catalogued as 'just another Beauty and the Beast retelling'. But this story, which intertwines two Russian Fairytales (The Scarlet Flower and Fenist the Falcon), is charming, lyrical and beautiful.

Set in an alternate-world Prague, the novel follows Natasha, who lives in the countryside with her two sisters and mother. The death of her father means the family has had to adjust to a less glamorous lifestyle, and although the change chafes on her sisters, dreamer Natasha is happier. A trip to a neighboring town ends in Natasha getting stuck in a sudden snow-storm, and having to seek shelter in a mansion.

I absolutely love the setting of the novel and I think the world-building is commendable. It's Europe, but not as we know it, and I liked the sense of history and culture imbued into the pages. I also enjoyed the integration of mythology into the story, the mystical elements that seep in through the edges of the story, and of course, the magical Luel and Old Bony. The story-telling matches the ethereal setting well. I enjoyed Natasha's voice - she's believable and I enjoyed her commentary. It shouldn't have surprised me though, Natasha is a talented storyteller and it makes sense that she tells her own story with the same finesse as those she invents.

The whole adventure in the mansion is typical and, honestly, a little lacking. I didn't think it was adding anything new to the whole Beauty and the Beast thing. But I liked the magic mirror, the slow friendship that Natasha developed with Ivan, and even the way she began trusting the housekeeper Luel. Where the story really gets going is after the Disney ending of the tale: there's so much more to come after the Beast regains his usual form.

Natasha has to go through a lot in this book, and my favourite aspect of *Scarlet in the Snow* is how uncliqued her research into Ivan is. Usually protagonists just Google and magically find what they're looking for, find a convenient book or newspaper article that tells them everything, or speak to someone who knows everything and helpfully soliloquies it. However, Natasha tries all of these avenues and they refreshingly (and realistically) only provide glimpses of the truth, and she spends the greater part of the novel trying to connect the dots.

One of the things that disappointed me about the book is the romance - it's too instant and all-consuming and I really don't buy that Natasha would have fallen in love with Ivan so quickly. I was happy with their friendship, but then Natasha suddenly realises she's in love with him and I just had to roll my eyes! She does go through a lot for him though, so perhaps the focus of this retelling isn't the whirlwind romance that Beauty and the Beast had, but the utter devotion they had towards one another.

All in all, *Scarlet in the Snow* surprised me, and I think it's a sophisticated retelling of Beauty and the Beast. I'm eager to read more stories by Sophie Masson, especially her retelling of Cinderella, *Moonlight and Ashes*, which is set in the same alternate world as this book!

You can read more of my reviews at **Speculating on SpecFic**.

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### **Kirsti says**

I was instantly attracted in my this beautiful cover; the fresh red of the rose with the pretty writing caught my eye while scouring the only bookstore in town for something new. I deliberately make my visits to this shop rare, because otherwise there is nothing new. However, this time I was lucky to pick up two books, this being one of them.

This is a retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast' which may turn some people off, but I can assure you there are real elements of original story and ideas here. There is the usual fairytale instant love, but the background stories make it worthwhile. The only problem I had was that the author knew her lands and customs of each race and people that she expected the reader to just follow on, which was difficult at times. I think there are other books set in this world she has created, so perhaps things are better explained there?

Still, I loved the originality, and the characters. It was exactly the kind of book I felt like reading, and I devoured it! I will definitely keep my eye out for more of this author's books, as this one was so enjoyable.

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### **Christina says**

Can't believe it took me so long to read this and I ended up dnfing it, it was just very predictable, plot holes and nothing that much different from the original retelling. Just isn't for me, not gonna try reading it again.

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### **Lara Mi says**

“Good magic fits you. Bad magic makes you fit.”

**Scarlet in the Snow** has a fairly weak start but becomes increasingly more interesting. Unfortunately, the missed opportunities of the earlier chapters are not so easily forgotten.

Set in a fictional Eastern Europe, this is a retelling of a **Beauty and the Beast** variant mixed in with other myths and folktales. The author delivers a very interesting system of magic and society. It's hard to make out when exactly this takes place, as most of the time it feels like a very traditional fairy tale, while there are society and etiquette more fit for a Regency setting, in addition to trains and other experimental machinery that allows for a steampunk vibe. We have multiple countries and regions involved and they are both believable and functional - a setting I really wouldn't mind visiting again.

Our main heroine, Natasha, is likable enough, but I find that she is rather judgmental. She describes herself as a writer and someone who prefers a quiet life while comparing it to her sisters' silly and frivolous attitude. Perhaps her sister *are* silly, but somehow it didn't sit right with me that the author chose to give Natasha two society obsessed sisters while placing Natasha in a most favourable light. I would have much rather seen some more sisterly love rather than *the special good daughter*. And throughout the story, any character who gives but the slightest remark that's not to her liking is automatically labeled arrogant, rich, self-centered or rude.

The writing was one of the main elements that improved as the story progressed. I would definitely not call this a particularly nice writing style - but the beginning felt choppy and amateurish while, once past the midpoint, it has a much better flow and thus is a lot more readable without one being thrown off by a sudden change of scene or awkward choice of word.

My biggest issue lies with the romance. I love my books to have some romance, whether as a main plot point or even just a little side story - it doesn't matter how much of the story the romance takes in, as long as it's *well done*. And unfortunately, Natasha and the beast Ivan do not make that cut. They make a good enough couple towards the end, but their love came out of the blue within the course of - what? Three days? At the point where they confessed their feelings, I had barely begun to see the friendship between them. I just didn't feel their love *at all* and even less so to the point that they'd march through hell to save the over. It is a real shame, this book would have benefited so much from having a better-developed romance.

Romance and awkward writing aside, Natasha goes on a journey through the aforementioned interesting Eastern European inspired setting. It's almost like a mystery case or treasure hunt how she follows one clue after the other and slowly makes all the pieces fit. She meets a couple interesting characters, including an old witch who had an eerie presence in the story even before her actual appearance - if I'd have to name some anti heroes I enjoyed reading about, Old Bony would definitely be one of them! It's also nice that there are several artistic characters involved such as writers and painters.

**Scarlet in the Snow** has some really strong points going for it, but the flaws are there and hard to ignore. However, originality and great world building still justify giving this one a shot - especially if one loves **Beauty and the Beast** and fairy tales!

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### **Maryanne says**

Enchanting and mesmerising retelling of beauty and the beast. Love the references to Russian landscapes, beasts and mythology. Lovely created magic with a strong sense of internal coherence. Beautiful.

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### **Ramille says**

Did Not Finish at 40%.  
(I skimmed the rest of the way to get an idea of how the story turned out).

I'm so sad that I didn't like this - I love Beauty and the Beast & love reading its many different adaptations and retellings. I always have high hopes that such novels will have the same elements I love about B&B. But Scarlet in the Snow just didn't do it for me.

What I didn't like:

1. Natasha & the Beast's relationship wasn't fleshed out.

There was no slow, steady development of friendship then romance that B&B is known for. They didn't spend long hours getting to know each other, being each other's comfort, knowing each other's strengths & weaknesses. Natasha & the Beast spent barely two days together (with two very, very short scenes) and for some reason that was enough for them to fall in love. I didn't buy it. Natasha had more scenes (spent 3 days) working for Old Bony when she was barely in the castle (2 days).

2. The mystery solving aspect was far-fetched & often ridiculous.

Natasha had a whole page of detective notes on what happened to the Beast, based on very, VERY little evidence.

Exhibit A: She literally found a train ticket from a foreign country & thought: "Aha! That must be the Beast's ticket. He was on vacation & came from the foreign country, & when he was going back, that must be where he met the evil sorcerer, & pissed him off, & got this curse on him!" Like WHAT? You got all that from a scrap piece of paper?

Exhibit B: She found a picture in a random library, the same train on the ticket, and thought: "Maybe, in all these random faces of random strangers, from a random photo taken at a random time... maybe I'll find the Beast's face here! Because I found a random train ticket from a random book, even though I don't even know whose ticket it is!"

The way she jumped to conclusions from very vague clues was so far-fetched & unbelievable. The air of mystery didn't work -- it wasn't there at all. Sophie Masson needs more lessons in detective-mystery-suspense writing, because this novel failed at it. Miserably.

3) Things just kind of... happened. Too fast. There was no description of this new world of magic. No description of the castle. No fleshing out of the culture or times or lifestyle. The Author ignored the golden rule of "Show, don't tell." Natasha was at home, then came up & was imprisoned in the castle \* then free and back home all in the first 30% of the book -- fast-paced action is great, but when events just kind of happen together, it's not a story. It's not fleshed out. It's just: this happened, then this, then this.

I'm so disappointed. I had high hopes, but this story was flat & dull & disconnected from page 1.

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**Miriam says**

At first this seemed to be a pretty generic retelling of Beauty and Beast, in a vaguely Russian setting, but soon it became more complex and interesting, with the heroine Natasha doing research (yay! research!) and then traveling.

Kudos for managing to have Baba Yaga, fairies, photography, trains, newspaper archives, milliners, and student art competitions in the same story and make it feel like an organic world.

I'm guessing the werewolf and ship captain couple who give Natasha a lift are from an earlier novel of Masson's, so I'll have to track that down.

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### **K. says**

The bonus challenge for the Aussie YA book bloggers bookclub challenge this month is to read a retelling of Beauty and the Beast. So when I was doing stocktake at work a few weeks ago and stumbled across this one, obviously I grabbed it.

I'm...not a huge fan of fairytales. Or Disney. Or Disney versions of fairytales. But Beauty and the Beast is probably the one I like the most. This was fine? It was fast paced and I was pretty intrigued by the plot. Where it fell flat, though, was the fact that it's total instalove territory. Like, Natasha is at the house for less than a week. In that time, she sees "Ivan" like TWICE?? And for very short periods of time. And yet, basically as soon as she leaves, she realises that she loves him. Girl. Slow down.

I also would have liked to see a little more world building, because we got all these country names thrown at us, but very little sense of what it meant to be from each of those countries, and what the relationships between them were. In short - and it almost pains me to say this - it could have been padded out quite a bit.

But, you know, it was fine. And the romance, despite its instalove tendencies, didn't make me want to throw the book out the window, so I guess that's something.

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### **Marquise says**

Not sure why this retelling of *The Scarlet Flower* (a Russian Beauty & the Beast version) is rated so undeservedly low. If I were to guess, my bet would be it's probably the romance between Natasha and Ivan, which is a bit rushed and doesn't have enough page time to grow credibly. But besides that, I've read a good number of retellings for this story and I can say this is one of the good retellings of this specific fairy tale, much above others out there that have higher averages.

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### **Lauren Coad says**

This book is a complete copy of 'The Beauty and The Beast' its extremely long for the story and it drags on with boring details, i think that Sophie Masson had a 'brilliant' idea to follow the story of Beauty and the Beast but instead of making up her own story based around Beauty and the Beast she completely copied it. I think this book is not worth it AT ALL if you know the story line of beauty and the beast. Blahh BAD!!

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### **Rebekah says**

Cute, fun, inventive, adventure, retelling of beauty and the beast.

I couldn't connect, she was too weepy, sappy and overall a lame character. I liked how she was a nice person but couldn't stand her otherwise. She acted more like a 12 yr old at times and it drove me bonkers.

The beast was fine as well as Luel. I liked how our main heroine had to go through challenges and tests. I enjoyed that she also was sent on an adventure to find the true reason and history behind the beast and the many mysteries involving him.

The romance sucked for me. It was waaaaaaaay to fast which lost me caring about them as a couple which was sad because they were the whole point of the story.

The mystery kept me going but I ended up skimming a lot.

Overall: The overall idea and story line to this book was great! And I liked it sadly the main character drove me nuts I couldn't stand her which made me not really care for the story.

Sexual Content: mild

Language: mild/none

Drugs/Alcohol: mild/none

Violence: mild

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### **Branwen Sedai \*of the White Ajah\* says**

*"The difference between good magic and bad magic is that the first fits itself to you, and the second tries to fit you to it. Remember that and you won't go wrong."*

During a brutal blizzard with the pursuit of wolves behind her, Natasha seeks refuge at a beautiful yet seemingly abandoned mansion. Wandering throughout it, she hears and sees no one. When she however wanders out to a garden and sees a beautiful red rose blooming in spite of the wintery conditions, she finds she cannot help but touch it, thus incurring the wrath of the master of the house, a wild and terrifying beast. But not everything is as it seems, and Natasha must get to the bottom of the secrets surrounding the beast and his enchantment.

This is, obviously, a retelling of the beauty and the beast fairytale, which happens to be one of my very favorite stories of all time. And I must say, this is a very beautiful rendition of it. There were a lot of similar aspects relating to the original tale, but also the storyline had its own flair and uniqueness which really set it apart. Plus, it was enjoyable to see such a brave and daring heroine as Natasha.

Overall just a really great and enjoyable book!

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