



Brine and Bone

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TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

Magdalena of Ondile adores the crown prince of Corenden, but she'd sooner die than admit it. Ejected from the royal court, she spends her days at a sage's seminary, where her sparkling memories and destructive empathy magic prey upon her.

Until the ocean rips her charming prince into its depths.

When Magdalena discovers him washed ashore, her rescue-by-happenstance draws her back to the glittering palace and its stifling rules. But Prince Finnian's miraculous return attracts more than the nobility of the court. The eerie creature that spared his life would gladly reclaim it, even if staking that claim requires a sacrifice of flesh and endless torment.

This novella is based on H. C. Andersen's "The Little Mermaid"

Brine and Bone Details

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Author : Kate Stradling

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From Reader Review Brine and Bone for online ebook

Nicola Olsen says

Beginning this book with a warning to those of us who love Disney's Little Mermaid that this novel is not THAT retelling, but rather a version celebrating the original by Hans Christian Anderson, I was even more curious about what I had gotten myself into with this short novel. I love the original tale as well, even though it breaks my heart a bit when I read it. Stradlings' adaptation is insightful, thoughtful and has the power of true empathy at its heart in both the real and magical dimensions. I highly recommend this to anyone who wants a poignant, fresh look into the world of the Little Mermaid!

Saffron says

I am in awe of this wonderful story and how well it is thought out and written. This is a really fresh look at The Little Mermaid fairy tale. It emerges enriched with some serious additional facets and great characters that make this book an unputdownable read.

I grew up with the Andersen's version of the Little Mermaid and I never liked it. It is a poignant, but bleak story closer to a stifling nightmare than to a positive affirming fairy-tale. However, I really liked that the nightmarish elements are also present in this book. They give this story a certain timelessness and authenticity that you can find in the older fairy-tales, but very seldom in the contemporary retellings. More so, Brine and Bone has what Andersen's original version lacked - hope and positivity. The ending is intense and poignant, and also so right. I cannot believe how much more sense this version makes than the original. For me it's like the author removed a curtain from the layers of the story that were there, but hidden, or perhaps another metaphor it's like seeing a three dimensional object instead of just a picture of it.

I loved the main characters. They are good, loyal even wholesome people, but their personalities make them complex and not saccharine sweet or flat like pancakes. I loved Magdalena's and Prince Finnian's dialogue. Their interactions make this also an immensely enjoyable and entertaining read. The progression of their relationship and romance was incredibly good. Also, last but not least I really enjoyed captain Gil's interactions with both Magdalena and Finnian. A fount of priceless quips that's Gil and a very good addition to the cast of characters overall.

This is the best book I've read since the Namesake by the same author. I will re-read Brine and Bone a multitude of times of course.

Hayley Haws says

Amazing retelling of, The Little Mermaid, that somehow stays true to the original tale and is completely original. Overall it was an engaging read and I really enjoyed reading a book where everyone is not an idiot (meaning that the main character doesn't have to spend the entire book trying to get people to see what she has already figured out, hallelujah).

Marquise says

Those familiar with Hans-Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* will know that the story is vastly different from Disney's feel-good adaptation and that there's another woman for the Prince. Now imagine how the story would be like from the POV of that "other woman," and you'll have *Brine and Bone*.

I do warn you, though, that this version is tragic--not as tragic as Andersen's, but still quite sad; so if you're counted amongst those who think the mermaid deserved the Prince, this isn't your cuppa tea. But if, on the other hand, you're ready for learning the story from the other side of the aisle and don't like much the happy yet untruthful alternate endings most retellings choose for the tale, then you might enjoy this novel. Props to the author for following the original, and showing her take on what reasons drove the plotline as it went in the fairy tale, and making the reader understand the other side without vilifying anyone.

J.M. Stengl says

Wow, one of my favorite authors has done it again--Kate Stradling has rewritten H.C. Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* into a beautiful story that retains the poignancy of the original yet delights the reader with funny banter and genuine human relationships.

Finnian is a wonderful prince--charming yet a bit devious, clever, whimsical, determined, and essentially lovable. And Magdalena is his ideal foil. The two of them are easy to "ship."

And Lili--so creepy, pathetic, yet wistfully sweet!

The ending is just right, with the perfect balance of tragedy and sweetness.

I devoured this novella in a day, and I highly recommend it.

Maren Hill says

Loved this version of Little Mermaid

This author continues to surprise me. Her novels get more in depth while still holding on to her wit and charm. I loved this short book and would absolutely recommend it to friends and family.

Rose says

This was so lovely and creative! I'm taken aback by it because I've never liked *The Little Mermaid* and didn't expect to be this satisfied with a retelling. Not to mention how clear and wonderful the writing is.

Re-casting the mermaid as a fae creature with ambiguous intentions worked so well. Our protagonist becomes the magical, scholarly Magdalena, a childhood friend of Prince Finnigan. Her emotions are so close to the skin, they almost bubble off the page in spite of her practiced sangfroid. I loved how she could look people dead in the eye and tell them just what she was thinking. She was also refreshingly relatable and I loved seeing the story unfold through her eyes.

The one thing I always hated about The Little Mermaid, in all iterations, was that the prince was so dim and passive. That's not at all the case with Finnigan and I was *so relieved*. He's legitimately clever (and slightly manipulative, but he uses his powers for good...mostly). He and Magdalena make a great pair.

By the end things got a bit forlorn and I missed the sparkling banter between Magdalena and Finnigan but if you're looking for a well-written and intelligent fairy tale retelling, Brine and Bone is well worth a read.

Michael Tanenhaus says

Poignant and funny and beautiful

The author choose to honor the original tale in this retelling, with all the awful implications. She manages it with grace, even addressing the final ending without either turning syrupy or minimizing it. The romance is lovely and the storytelling is excellent. Kate Stradling may be one of my new favorites.

Sylvia Mercedes says

So I am WAAAAAY behind on my book reviews! Sorry, reader friends. Life completely got away from me these last few months, and I've barely had time to READ, much less to offer proper reviews for what I'm reading. But I've encountered some really awesome books recently, and I want to take a moment to give them some love and encourage you to give them a try.

In particular, THIS wonderful story by Kate Stradling. Now you might remember that I read and loved Kate Stradling's NAMESAKE last year. It was one of my top new releases of 2017, it was just THAT good.

But . . . BRINE AND BONE is better.

For starters, it's a retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid." Note, this is definitely a retelling of the ANDERSEN tale, and has nothing at all to do with the famous Disney iteration. Heck, this story isn't even told from the point-of-view of the titular mermaid, but gives us instead the perspective of the OTHER woman in that tale.

I tell ya, what a great twist! But a tough one to pull off. The mermaid is such a compelling character in the original fairy tale and a known and admired heroine. While the other girl . . . she doesn't have a whole lot going for her personality-wise in Andersen's version. Can she possibly be made interesting enough to carry an entire story, particularly when thrown up against that famous mermaid?

In Kate Stradling's hands she can. Magdalena is one of my favorite heroines of recent reading history! She is so well-drawn and so likable, and from her perspective . . . wow, this story takes on a whole new, almost horror-story element that I never saw before. It's brilliant!

I don't want to give anything away, but I will say that Stradling used some incredible twists to make certain that Magdalena truly FELT all the pain and all the sacrifice which usually is felt only by the mermaid herself. Without that pain and sacrifice, the story wouldn't have meant nearly as much, but man . . . it all comes together beautifully in these pages!

Readers beware--this is only a novella. So don't go into it expecting a LONG read. I read it late into one night then woke up early the next morning to finish it. And then was sad I'd read it so quickly! But rest assured, it's the perfect length for the story being told. I was sad to finish because I liked it so much, but I also wouldn't have wanted the author to drag it out unnecessarily. It's a perfectly balanced, perfectly poised story.

In fact, I loved it so much, I went right out and bought a paperback copy, which I mailed to my bestest buddy across the country . . . something I only do with ABSOLUTE favorite books! Last year, I had to compulsively buy and send her copies of STRANGE THE DREAMER and SPINDLE. You know a book is special when it passes the Esther-Must-Read-This-Now Test. ;)

Amanda says

I loved this retelling! It felt fresh while staying surprisingly true to the original.

This version of the story is seen through the lens of the woman the prince is more or less intended to be with before "the little mermaid" arrives. The story retains the heartbreaking quality of the original but provides an ending the reader will be satisfied with - a perfect balance of bitter & sweet.

I really appreciated the skeptical nature of the protagonist and her ever-present struggle between her heart and her mind. I started out wary of the too-charming prince, but slowly trusted him and his intentions along with the protagonist.

I was also impressed that the incorporation of additional magic propelled the story forward and didn't feel like a superfluous accessory. (Kind of a pet peeve of mine when an author adds in magic to "add interest" without giving it a real purpose.)

Overall I thoroughly enjoyed this read and will be reading more by this author!

Leah Johnson says

4 out of 5 stars ONLY because I feel this story should have been longer. The length was too short to hold such an abundant story. There were some parts that were super detailed, whereas others were rushed- these rushed parts I feel could have added much more emotion/action to the book.

The author probably meant to keep this as a short novella, but this story should have totally been a novel.

Either way, the story itself was a fantastic twist on the little mermaid- giving an entirely unheard of perspective from an entirely different character. I quite enjoyed the writing and the big personalities of these characters. I JUST wish there was more.

All in all, I'll definitely be reading more by this author.

Jenny Koch says

This author is an absolutely lovely writer - the storyline was just a bit gloomy for my taste. I liked it but I don't really see myself itching to re-read it.

Kylie says

As Kate says in the preface, this is not your Disney fairytale—it's much better. This reimagining of the original Little Mermaid story is brilliant. A little dark, but not depressing and still brimming with Kate's characteristic witty romance. Brine and Bone is a novella that is easily read in an evening and leaves you longing for more (just me?), but is also a nice, succinct story.

Cedar says

Incredible!

I still have tears in my eyes. I've always hated the despair of the original Little Mermaid, but this book has a touching and beautiful ending that feels so very right. I will never forget this retelling. It transcends all others. I want to thank the author for giving us such a special tale that I will remember always.

Simone Everett says

Gaaaaaah!

I don't think there are enough words to express how much I love this story! It was very well written and as someone who has not heard the original little mermaid this was great. It wasn't littered with unnecessary details and even though she tells you the ending in the beginning you still wonder of the outcome. I will definitely read this again.
