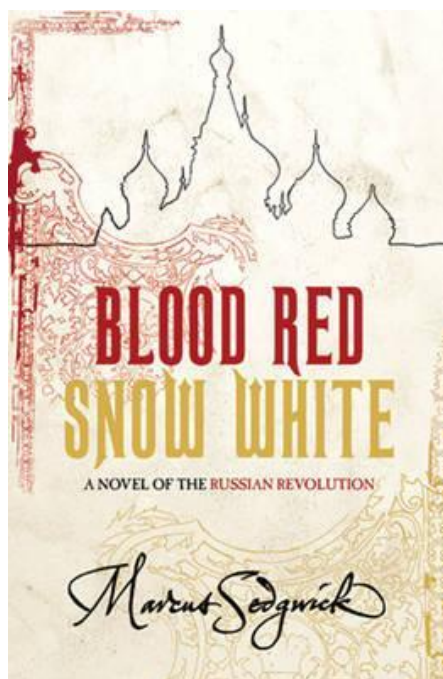




Blood Red, Snow White

Marcus Sedgwick

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Blood Red, Snow White

Marcus Sedgwick

Blood Red, Snow White Marcus Sedgwick

There never was a story that was happy through and through.

When writer Arthur Ransome leaves his unhappy marriage in England and moves to Russia to work as a journalist, he has little idea of the violent revolution about to erupt. Unwittingly, he finds himself at its center, tapped by the British to report back on the Bolsheviks even as he becomes dangerously, romantically entangled with Trotsky's personal secretary.

Both sides seek to use Arthur to gather and relay information for their own purposes . . . and both grow to suspect him of being a double agent. Arthur wants only to elope far from conflict with his beloved, but her Russian ties make leaving the country nearly impossible. And the more Arthur resists becoming a pawn, the more entrenched in the game he seems to become.

Blood Red Snow White, a Soviet-era thriller from renowned author Marcus Sedgwick, is sure to keep readers on the edge of their seats.

Blood Red, Snow White Details

Date : Published July 1st 2007 by Orion Children's Books

ISBN : 9781842551844

Author : Marcus Sedgwick

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fantasy, Cultural, Russia, Fiction, Fairy Tales

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Jenn says

I'm going to be honest, I thought this was a completely different book from the title and cover. So color me a little shocked when I read the description right before starting the book and found out it was more historical fiction set in Russia. And while this book wasn't my normal cup of tea, I found myself completely sucked into the beginning. This wasn't my first Sedgwick book, but it had been awhile since I read him and I had forgotten how different his writing is. He has a way of putting you into the narrative rather than just watching from the sidelines.

Now let's talk about the book. I find it interesting that so many people classified this book as YA. The main character is much older and the subject matter a little more heavy. This book focused heavy on war games and espionage. But that wasn't how it started or what captivated me. The book started off with a young man who wanted to write down Russian fairy tales so other cultures can experience them. So the whole beginning of the book was like a fairy tale come to life as we navigated this new world. Then the war grew and the plot and story changed becoming more serious and spy gamey.

What I found a little offputting with this book was how good the first part was and then as it went on, I found it growing a little monotonous and dragging. It's almost like it was two separate books. I also never really connected with any of the characters and didn't understand why Arthur continually kept leaving his child and I didn't feel his relationship with Evgenia and why he was so in love with her. I don't know. Nothing really clicked for me character wise.

What I did enjoy, aside from the beginning, was the description of the time period and location. I know very little about Russia and their internal wars so this was a nice little look inside. But I just didn't love it.

Cait • A Page with a View says

Usually I can't get into stories written in present tense, but this was totally mesmerizing!

The story's more like a bunch of pieces of Russian history woven around British author Arthur Ransome's character as he writes fairy tales and gets wrapped up in events. He sees the downfall of the Tsar, some rather graphic violence, interviews Trotsky, and eventually becomes a spy. And the part where he had to break into Russia totally reminded me of The Bronze Horseman trilogy.

I'm always fascinated by Russian history, so I loved seeing everything unfold. The writing was gorgeous and some of the symbolism was really neat. But I was definitely more into the first part with its fairy tale feeling!

Alyssa says

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Blood Red Snow White by Marcus Sedgwick

Publisher: Roaring Brook Press

Publication Date: October 25, 2016

Rating: 4 stars

Source: ARC sent by the publisher

Summary (from Goodreads):

Russia wakes from a long sleep and marches to St Petersburg to claim her birthright. Her awakening will mark the end for the Romanovs, and the dawn of a new era that changed the world. Arthur Ransome, a journalist and writer, was part of it all. He left his family in England and fell in love with Russia and a Russian woman. This is his story.

What I Liked:

I actually didn't know much about this book before reading it. I requested it but I admit, it was because of the cover, and the author's name. I've not read anything by Sedgwick, but I've heard of him, and have wanted to read something by him. So I went into this one pretty blind. I'm giving this book a so-so rating, but I liked it.

This book follows Arthur Ransome, an English journalist and writer, who was in Russia during World War I. He is caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, and finds himself caught up in the war. The Bolsheviks want him to send messages to England, and England wants him to spy on the Bolsheviks. Ransome will play a large role in the demise of Tsarist Russia, but also in the rise and fall of Lenin and Trotsky.

This novel is purely historical fiction, though it is somewhat of a fictional imagining/retelling. Arthur Ransome was a real person in history, as was all the characters in this book. It's interesting that this book is marketed as YA fiction, because this book starts with Arthur marrying his sweetheart, Ivy, and this was when he was in his mid-twenties. When I say historical fiction, I mean something like *The Book Thief*. This book was quite moving in its own way.

So the story begins with Arthur marrying Ivy, a girl that he fell in love with. They have a daughter. But Arthur starts to realize that he and Ivy never really loved each other, but rather, they were caught up and attracted to each other, but not necessarily in love. He leaves his family and goes to Russia, where he falls in love with the country. But soon he gets caught up in the war, being in Russia just as the war begins. It's bad timing, but Arthur writes a book and meets a woman that he falls for - for real this time. It just so happens to be Trotsky's secretary. Trotsky and Lenin want Arthur to spy for them, and the English want Arthur to spy on the Russians for them. Arthur leaves Russia, comes back, and eventually, decides that he and Evgenia need to leave Russia for good.

This was a great story to read, because while it was fictional, the historical events and the life events of Arthur Ransome are very real, and very much the same as the real events. The author clearly did his research on the life of Arthur Ransome, World War I, the Lockhart Plot, the Revolutions, the White Movement. Honestly most of the reason why I liked this book is because of the history. I love history, and I knew enough about Russia's role in World War I and their history at the time. I know the story of the Tsar and Tsarina and Rasputin, but it was interesting to see that play out in this book. The author's spin on the historical events is very creative.

In terms of the story, separate from the history (though I must say, you really can't separate the two), I liked it (the story) but found it a little slow and confusing in terms of timing. I'll talk about that later. As a story, there were some boring parts, but I was engrossed in all of the history, and wanted to know what would happen next (according to the story). It was interesting to see things from Arthur Ransome's (fictional) account, a bystander that played a heavy role in this history.

The story is about a man in his twenties/thirties, a man who makes a difficult decision to leave his wife and child in England, and come to Russia. There is a romance between Arthur and Evgenia (Trotsky's secretary). Usually I don't like the extramarital affairs thing, but it was obvious that Arthur never loved his wife, but really loved Evgenia. I don't know how feelings were in the real story, but I liked how the author brought about the romance in this book. Romance was very small in this book, so don't worry if you're not really a

romance person.

I liked this book, and I have no regrets reading it. Historical fiction is fascinating and absolutely necessary in YA fiction. I hope this book will make it into classrooms and curriculum, because it would be worthy for sure.

What I Did Not Like:

I was trying to decide if I should give this book four stars or three, and I went with four stars. However, I was a little bored at times, though not enough to make me stop reading. I love history, and historical fiction, so I knew I was going to read this one from start to finish no matter how much it dragged. Lucky for me, I didn't really have an issue with the pacing, but I did think it was boring in a few spots. I've seen some reviews that were expecting a fairy tale, or the reviewers hate historical fiction, and were bored. I was bored because there were times when the story was genuinely boring - not because I can't handle history.

One thing that confused me was the jumps in time. The author doesn't jump around from past to present or anything like that, but sometimes the lapses in time weren't clear, so I was confused as to how much time had actually passed. Like, I didn't know that Arthur left his wife and child when the child was a toddler - four years after Arthur and Ivy got married. I didn't know how much time passed from Arthur leaving his wife and child, to Arthur escaping Russia with Evgenia (about six years). I didn't know how much time passed between each time Arthur left Russia and came back. I ended up going to Wikipedia and looking up some of the dates. I wish the author could have started each chapter with the date and time, or something like that. This IS fiction, so he could have manipulated dates how he wanted.

In any case, this wasn't a deciding factor; but I was often a little lost when chapters ended and we're suddenly in a completely different scene. I consider myself a pretty astute reader, and I was feeling lost! I reread parts to see if I could get a feel for that point in time, but ultimately, checking Wikipedia was what helped.

Would I Recommend It:

I do recommend this book, because it's a great take on Russia's history in the 1900s (during the First World War, that is). Don't read this book if you're expecting a fairy tale, or a fantasy novel, or something like that. This is literary historical fiction. It's well-written and the story is fascinating, but it isn't for everything.

Rating:

3.5 stars -> rounded up to 4 stars. Liked but didn't love, and I can't recommend to everyone because literary historical fiction isn't for everyone. Heck, I read these types of books very rarely. If it hadn't been marketed as YA, in a YA catalog with a YA publisher, I might have passed it straight! My rating might seem a little low, but I didn't quite love the book as a reader. As a reviewer, this book was solid. As a reader, it was good but not a new favorite. I did enjoy it though!

Marina says

I really enjoyed this novel. The research done by Sedgwick is superb.

I loved how magical the novel was, at least at first, and then the fairytale faded away and the reality of a Russia at war with itself and others became true and brutal. The difference was rather jarring and I almost wished for the fairytale style to have been used throughout.

I enjoyed the naivete and an almost innocence of the main character, his belief in the path of good and that people can get along. He wasn't a good person entirely, not after walking out on his family, but there was still a sort of goodness to him.

Overall, a very good novel.

Suze Lavender says

Arthur Ransome is a British author. Because he isn't happy with his wife he wants to get away from her as far as possible and decides to travel to Russia. He taught himself the language, so it seems like a natural choice to find out more about the country. This is his introduction to journalism. It's a time of unrest in Russia and the English newspapers need someone to report about it. Through his work Arthur makes important friends among the Bolsheviks and he even falls in love with Trotsky's secretary, Evgenia, which makes him an interesting source of information for numerous parties.

Arthur is friendly with many different people and doesn't seem to have taken a side in the war. This makes him a suspect as well. They think he's a spy and they can't determine exactly who for, so he must be a double agent. When things are becoming too dangerous Arthur wants to leave the country together with Evgenia. There's one side he's clearly on and that is the side of love.

Marcus Sedgwick has written a very interesting story. I was fascinated from the start by both the Russian history and Arthur Ransome himself. I always love it when a beautiful story is based on facts. Blood Red Snow White is both informative and compelling. Arthur is an intelligent man. He's easy to like and therefore has a lot of friends. Somehow he always manages to meet the right kind of people. He isn't afraid and I admired him for that. His life is turbulent and perilous and there's always something important going on, which was fantastic to read about.

Marcus Sedgwick's writing flows easily. He mixes facts with wonderful writing. It's clear this novel is based on solid and thorough research. Blood Red Snow White gripped me immediately. I loved to read about Arthur Ransome's life and Marcus Sedgwick effortlessly manages to pass on passion and enthusiasm for his subject. He portrays Arthur as an honest, often impulsive, sometimes naïve and always clever man, which makes him get out of plenty of difficult situations. He's in Russia at a terrible time, but because of that his life is also a big adventure. That had me on the edge of my seat from the beginning. I really enjoyed reading this amazing impressive story and highly recommend it.

Shannon (It Starts At Midnight) says

You can find the full review and all the fancy and/or randomness that accompanies it at It Starts at Midnight This book was such a gem. It's historical fiction, yes, but so much of it is just plain authentically historical, with some fictional bits. So if you are going into this expecting a fairytale, this isn't one. In fact, the protagonist is **a real person**, an author in fact. But the fictional and fairytale bits brought the story together so well for me, and made it so appealing!

The story is set primarily in Russia, in a time of tremendous upheaval, not only in Russia but the world as a whole. I adored that we not only got to see inside World War I, which is so rare in books, but got to see it from a European viewpoint. If you are curious, you may want to read **the synopsis of this Goodreads edition**, because it kind of gives you a bit more to go on than the US version. Because this is part fiction,

yes, but also partly biographical to an extent, and most certainly historical. I also don't really understand its marketing as Young Adult in the US if I am being perfectly honest, because there isn't really much room for even crossover- I think this is just straight up historical fiction, though that's just my opinion, so take it for what it's worth.

I enjoyed all the aspects of this story, it was so eye opening. I liked and empathized with Arthur, though I didn't quite have an emotional connection to him. I still was able to find him incredibly relatable, which is no small feat considering I have basically not a thing in common with this man. There is romance, there is war, there is deception. Family and friendships also play a huge role, as does politics of the time period. Basically, there are a great many things that can appeal to the reader, no matter what you enjoy reading about.

Bottom Line: I loved reading Arthur's story, as well as the story of Russia in the early twentieth century. It's such an incredibly fascinating and somber time in history, and I thought the author did a tremendous job of exploring it. That said, it is most definitely historical, and quite a bit factual, so just be prepared for that going in. If you are into historical books, I absolutely recommend this one!

Batool says

"Let me tell you a fairy tale.

I used to tell stories like this all the time; it used to be so important. It even saved my life once. Now let me see, how do fairy tales begin?"

My first Sedgwick novel was back in June 2015. Like this one, it was historical fiction, but was set in WWI in England. I was gripped by the first few chapters, and soon found myself finishing it in two sittings around two days. I adored the story, the writing style, and the voices of the characters. It was a 5 star read, a favorite even, and Sedgwick became one of my favorite authors, and I knew I just had to get ahold of more of his books.

Once again, Sedgwick does not disappoint.

Blood Red, Snow White is a novel surrounding the Russian revolution, following three different parts:

- ✦ A Russian Fairy Tale
- ✦ One Night in Moscow
- ✦ A Fairy Tale, Ending

The first part introduces us to all the characters that make up the whole novel. It is essentially a collection of short fairy tales, but we get to know how some of them end. The narrator tells us how we're all used to fairy tales having happy endings, but by giving us a few examples within the novel, we quickly learn how quick the twist can come.

That's especially highlighted at the end of the first part, where most of our characters' stories intertwine.

"The time for princes and tsars and holy madmen was gone.

In its place came a world of war and revolution, of tanks and

telephones, murder and assassination."

The second part of the story revolves around Arthur Ransome, the British journalist who wanders in Russia. We were introduced to him as a stranger in the first part, but he's actually a very important part and the main character of this novel, because most of the things that happen are through his accounts.

I won't go into too much detail on that because of spoilers.

We follow up on the Russian Revolution as it's breaking out, and we follow Arthur's life, through Russia and his job as a respected English man, working between England and Russia. And of course, we also meet new characters along the way. A lot of betrayals and shocking things happen as we near the end of the part.

"And how much do we ever know?

How much do we ever know of our own stories, as we live them?

I thought I knew what I was doing, and why. Or should I say, who

I was doing it for, but life is never that simple, and with hindsight

we see our lives laid out behind us and we think; God damn me to

Hell, I was a fool."

The third and last part is all about how the main character reflects upon his choices and the things that have happened since he chose to go to Russia. All his past choices, present, and future is laid out on the table and he's pondering whether or not he's chosen the right thing.

A lot of things happen, wars still going on, both personal and around him. Choices and risks are taken.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the story, though I wish the pacing was a bit faster. I especially loved how it started out as a fairy tale story. I enjoyed all the characters, I loved how the stories came together in a subtle way, and the writing was mesmerizing and lyric.

Definitely an eloquent story, I highly recommend if you want a short historical fiction about the Russian revolution, though be aware that the story can be very slow and dragging at times.

Aj Sterkel says

The Good: You could probably argue that Russia has the most interesting history of any country on Earth. It's full of unruly monarchs, revolution, corruption, secrets, scandals, and whatever the heck Rasputin was. *Blood Red, Snow White* is a fictionalization of real events that took place around the Russian Revolution. The main character, Arthur Ransome, was a real journalist and children's book author who got roped into spying for Russia and England. His story is strange and harrowing. He's a pawn who's being manipulated by forces that are much more powerful than him. Luckily for him, he's resourceful enough to talk himself out of deadly situations.

What I love most about Marcus Sedgwick's novels is that he's not afraid to experiment with structure and writing style. This book is no exception. Arthur Ransome wrote fairytales, so the first section of the novel is written like a fairytale. As the story goes on, it becomes more realistic. I (mostly) like the structure. It's unusual, but it's also jarring, and most of the fairytale stuff gets dropped by the end. I can see why this structure divides readers. You'll either like it, or you won't.

This is going to sound very nerdy, but my favorite part of this book is the real-life documents that the author

includes at the end. I enjoyed reading the communications between British government officials as they're trying to work out if Arthur Ransome is a double agent.

“The time for princes and tsars and holy madmen was gone. In its place came a world of war and revolution, of tanks and telephones, murder and assassination.” – *Blood Red, Snow White*

The Bad: Like I said, the structure is experimental. Toward the end of the book, I got frustrated with it. The chapters are extremely short and choppy. The book covers 14 years of complicated Russian history in a small amount of space. I badly wanted the author to slow down and go into more detail about *everything*. It's a fascinating story. There's just too much information that comes at the reader too quickly. I was tempted to start Googling because I felt like I was missing parts of the story.

The Bottom Line: I love Marcus Sedgwick and will eventually read all of his novels, but I would have rather read a nonfiction book about Arthur Ransome.

Want to see more reviews? I have a blog!

Rosianna says

Sedgwick's authorial voice is nothing short of sensational, the fairytale quality running under his retelling the bloody Russian Revolutions through the eyes of Arthur Ransome. The novel is split into three parts, and Sedgwick jumps between stories until they lace into one another and never once lose pace or connection with the reader. It is an exceptional piece of writing, and reminded me strongly of other quasi-factual works such as *The General* in his *Labyrinth*, *The Red Necklace* and *The Book Thief*.

I enjoyed it immensely and would recommend it without hesitation.

Amy says

Wow. I have to say that this was one of the best historical fictions that I have ever read. The author is absolutely fantastic in the way that he manages to weave such a gripping story while still making it completely historically accurate. I loved the style of writing as well and the way it changed, as though the narrator was speaking right out of the book and reading it to me, in the first third of the book, but then the style was slowly altered until the story was being told from Arthur Ransom's point of view.

I have to say that although I was thoroughly impressed, I also got a bit bored closer to the end of the book. It seemed as though it had lost its sparkle and was dragging on a little. It soon righted itself though. By the final few pages, I was completely hooked again and couldn't put it down.

I absolutely loved this book, but that might just be because I am a complete history nerd. I loved the way that it was different to all the other historical fictions that I usually read in the way that it was more accurate and

focused more on telling the story of the Russian Revolution rather than telling a love story. Although there was a bit of a love story, the author managed to keep it subtle and didn't let it get in the way of the main storyline, which really impressed me. I also really enjoyed the way he managed to portray Vladimir Lenin throughout the book. The way in which he managed to imply that he was either a weak leader or extremely intelligent close to the beginning of the book was simply genius (the scene where Lenin explains to Arthur how he managed to get a neat bullet hole in his window). I also loved loved loved the way he used metaphors disguised as fairytales in the beginning of the book to explain the rise of the Reds against the Tsar (with the bear symbolizing Russia and Vlad and Lev who manage to convince it to eat the Tsar).

It was, overall, an incredible read. I would recommend it to any other history nerds out there who are looking for an accurate but gripping fictional account of the Russian Revolution.

Megan • Reading Books Like a Boss (book blog) says

BLOOD RED SNOW WHITE is a set of three short stories and a fictionalized account of author Arthur Randsome's time in Russia during Russian Revolution. Sedgwick brings readers on a thrilling journey, detailing both sides of war between the Red and the White. I was surprised by how much I enjoyed this book. The writing is quite beautiful in parts, especially in *A Russian Fairy Tale*.

"Once upon a time beyond the sunrise, halfway to the moon, and so very far away it would make your feet weep to think about it, lies a land vast in size and deep in sadness. From where we sit, on the far edge of history, we can see across Time itself, and yet this land is so big we struggle to see all of it at once."

These opening lines of *A Russian Fairy Tale* transported me right into twentieth-century Russia where tsars ruled the land and lived in magical palaces. It written very simply, like an actual children's fairy tale but with imagery that is not censored for children ("Look! Another one is killed; the top of his head blown clean off by a bullet at close range. His hot red blood freezes before it even reaches the ground."). It read like someone was telling you a story. We meet Arthur Randsome, a writer who leaves his unhappy marriage and child in England to embark on a new journey to Russia as a journalist.

The second story is *One Night in Moscow*, which follows Arthur during his years in Russia and his shifting role from journalist to, perhaps, a communist. His own loyalty is a mystery to himself, as he is torn between siding with the Red Bolsheviks and the White Tsarists. He meets and falls in love with Evgenia, a Russian woman who is a secretary for Trotsky, one of the Bolsheviks. Arthur's countrymen begin to question his true loyalty.

Lastly, the third story, *A Fairy Tale, Ending*, is told in first-person and it details Arthur's journey back to England to visit his family. While there, he learns that the situation in Russia has gotten worse and Evgenia could be in the eye of the storm.

As someone who was only vaguely familiar with the Russian Revolution, this book was very educational. Though, I will admit that the magic found in the beginning of the book was lost and I wasn't as captivated in the latter parts of the book. I think if I would have had a firmer grasp on all of the key players I would have been able to pick up on some of the nuances and appreciate it more. There is really very little character development, as it's assumed the reader will have at least some knowledge of the inner workings of

it all.

Overall, this novel was very well-written with moments that kept me glued to the page. Some of the story, particularly in *One Night in Moscow*, was written non-linearly which made it a little difficult to follow at times. The author's note mentioned that most of this book is completely true, with only a few situations changed for dramatic effect. Highly recommend for readers who love reading about Russian history.

** I received an advance copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.*

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★★UPCOMING BOOK RELEASES★★

ALEXA says

What I enjoy most about Marcus Sedgwick novels are how unusual they are and how different they are from one another. It took a bit of time for me to warm up to this one. While it's definitely interesting to learn more about Arthur Ransome, I just found the storytelling style a touch dry.

Olivia-Savannah Roach says

I was highly anticipating Blood Red, Snow White because it was going to be the first Sedgwick novel that I'd ever read. He is an author I am constantly hearing about, so I was very excited to read this book. And although I did enjoy it, I didn't love it as much as I truly wanted to.

This novel is told in a fairytale writing style. In the beginning, I was in awe of it. I thought it added a sense of magic to the entire story, and it worked well with the symbolism that was in place for the Russian Revolution. But as the whole novel continued on, this writing style seemed a little annoying, and the too short chapters became frustrating. I just wanted it to be written a normal writing style and get on with the story. And sure enough, the further into the novel I got, the more the writing style seemed to fade away, almost as if the author was done with that illusion too.

The plot was decently good. It was grounded in the history of the Russian revolution, and then in the world war that followed it. Arthur is a journalist who gets caught up in the political and violent Russia which he has fallen in love with. We get to see a lot of horrors unveiling, but the author keeps us slightly distant from them as he is keeping this a friendly novel than one full of graphics to scare away young readers. I liked the plot well enough.

The characters were decent. We have Arthur, our passionate and slightly clueless main character. He has a

child and a wife who he has left behind in England, and then he falls in love with Eva in Russia. Of course, romance in Russia is hard because there are sides, and Eva and him are on different ones. Also, Arthur does love his daughter, although he doesn't love Ivy anymore. He struggles between the family man and wanting to be with the one he really loves. Although there wasn't a character I disliked, I didn't really feel that invested in any of the other characters either.

When it comes down to this novel, I did like it, but I didn't have a sense of depth when reading this novel. I didn't care about it enough to love it particularly well. I fell in love with the cover, but that's as far as my emotions go for the novel itself.

This review and others can be found on Olivia's Catastrophe: <http://olivia-savannah.blogspot.nl/20...>

Brittany (Brittany's Book Rambles) says

DNF at 25%--my standard policy for DNFing a book.

While I enjoyed the writing style and the premise, it didn't hold my attention. In the beginning, it seemed as if the reader was going to get a Russian fairy tale but it's less fairy tale and more of a Russian history lesson. I kept waiting for the story to take off but up to the point that I read, it didn't. I found the characters, the ones not based on real people, to be confusing and superfluous. Maybe I'll try again at a different time but for now I'm putting this down.

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

Blood Red Snow White is a book about Communist Russia, but above all, a book about ideological hatred. It is a book about how despising all communists and all British is always the wrong idea; people are people above all else.

It's an important message and important story, but somehow, I just ended **underwhelmed**. Let's talk about why.

Perhaps my biggest problem is missed expectations; **the creativity and pull of the story is just not on par**. Sedgwick's books get their power from being *different*; from being non-linear and focusing on subversive or different elements. But this book... focuses on a reporter working and loving in communist Russia. With linear storytelling. And that's essentially all there is to it. It starts off with a **great fairytale element**, but that storytelling element quickly **disappears**, leaving a somewhat lukewarm story. **Sedgwick is just better when he's weirder**.

In terms of storytelling, there's some I liked and some I disliked. The reliance on instalove was a terrible decision, first of all. You can't care about a relationship you barely understand. **I found myself pulled along by the story, but I was just not that invested**.

There is something to be said for **just being really compelling**. I had not read more than thirty pages of anything at once in a week before I picked this up. I read this in two sittings. **Sedgwick is just that readable**.

VERDICT: Just as compelling as the rest of Sedgwick's work, but the story was far less creative than his better works. A decent book, but not a fantastic one.

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Jaidee says

5 "charming, disarming, sweeping, romantic" stars !!

10th Favorite Read of 2017 (tie)

This is one unique and delightful read. This semi-fictional book is about Arthur Ransome (an author and journalist) who was one of Britain's first spies and possible double agents with the Bolsheviks. This is also a love story of his deep feelings and bravery in the rescuing of the beautiful Evgeniya who also happened to be Trotsky's secretary. In the background we have his yearning for his estranged daughter Tabitha and his love of writing children's fairy tales and adventure stories.

The prose is simple yet stylized. Some of it was written in fairy tale form, other parts were like a simplified Le Carre novel and other parts were like a romantic melodrama. This mish mash worked so well and I was transported to England, to Sweden, to Russia, to Estonia and felt like I was really there. What was most magical about this is that although the subject matter is so serious the feel of this book is old world charm, muted grey tones with many hues of lavender.

I absolutely adored this book and think its the cat's MEOW !!

Emily May says

"Stories twist and turn and grow and meet and give birth to other stories. Here and there, one story touches another, and a familiar character, sometimes the hero, walks over the bridge from one story into another."

I think we need to clear some things up about this book.

This is just my theory, but I'm pretty sure something like this happened: Due to the popularity of fairy tales and retellings in American YA, publishers have been scouting out the next bestseller - both among upcoming manuscripts AND in books already published. They found this book, which is written with certain fairy tale elements, and they **rebranded the hell out of it** for the market.

Look at that gorgeous cover! And that title! How easy it was to turn that title into something that screamed "fairy tale retelling" without doing any extra work.

But it's not a fairy tale retelling. It's just not. I can foresee all the people bypassing the blurb and hoping for the next Cinder or Cruel Beauty, and this book just isn't anything like that. It's historical fiction - downright **weird** historical fiction, to tell the truth - and retells the Russian Revolution with allusions to fairy tales and a

lot of strange metaphors.

Sedgwick is actually one of my favourite authors. He isn't afraid to do something new and completely different. I get the impression that he sits down to write interesting and unique stories with no thought for what's trending right now or what genre he's going to fit his stories into. Midwinterblood was wonderful, The Ghosts of Heaven was one of my favourite books of last year, Revolver shouldn't be so damn good, but it is.

This one, though, wasn't one of my favourites. I quite liked it in the beginning because MS just sets the scene so well. I could feel the cold of the Russian Winter penetrating the heat of the L.A. Summer I'm currently sat in. I liked the way he told the story of the Russian Revolution almost like it was a fairy tale - it felt magical; strange.

I also really like when stories reveal small, mostly-unknown pockets of history. Sedgwick's protagonist is Arthur Ransome - a real life author of the Swallows and Amazons series and the author of several books on the Russian Revolution, including The Crisis In Russia and Six Weeks In Russia In 1919. I had no idea there was a link between Ransome and Russia until I read this book.

But, after the magical, atmospheric opening where MS retells the fall of the Tsar and the rise of Lenin and Trotsky, **the book loses its magic** and becomes a dull tale about Arthur as a young journalist and writer. Russia, the Russian revolution, the rise of communism, fairy tales and metaphors... all of these things are interesting, but it just wasn't that interesting to read about a boring British journalist.

Some fantastic ideas here and some interesting metaphors, but definitely not Segdwick's best work, and definitely not the fluffy fairy tale retelling it appears to be.

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