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Out of the Woods

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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I should start by saying that I hadn't read the prequel to this novel (**Into the Woods**) in which Storm Eden puts paid to the dastardly Dr DeWilde and casts the magical pipe he so desperately desires to the bottom of the ocean, so this was my first encounter with Aurora, Storm and Any, the enchanting Eden sisters. However **Out of the Woods** stands alone pretty well and on the whole I enjoyed it, in a rompy sort of way.

Once again, the Eden sisters find themselves in mortal danger among the trees as they try to escape the cannibalistic clutches of Belladonna, a wicked witch who only likes children baked in pies or grated over spaghetti bolognese. Her specific gastronomic requirement here however is Aurora's heart, which she plans to pluck out and consume, in order to rejuvenate her rapidly ageing body. Just to further complicate things, the pipe homes to Storm's possession, inflaming Belladonna's dreams of world domination still more.

Teaming with references to Greek mythology and fairy tales, as well as more contemporary stories such as **The Picture of Dorian Gray** and **The Lord of the Rings**, **Out of the Woods** unfolds at a cracking pace with regular flashes of humour and lip-smacking references to real culinary treats as well as human offal. Mini Grey's witty drawings also enliven the journey. Overall however it all feels a bit baggy as plot twist follows plot twist in a story which rarely allows pause for thought. I have nothing against a page-turner but ultimately the breakneck speed at which I found myself skittering across the surface of the final 70 pages was disappointing rather than thrilling. Gardner hurtles her main characters towards the dénouement through an Underworld which would have merited more exploration. On the other hand, it feels churlish to express oneself too undernourished by a book which signs off with a recipe for Granny Ridinghood's Double Chocolate Brownies with Hot Fudge Sauce.

Running Order:

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