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East of the Sun and West of the Moon

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Howe, Tina. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. 1994. 72 pp.

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Tove is a maiden who takes care of her kind, injured father, a pair of sympathetic twins, four nasty siblings, and an unkind mother. One day, Tove is approached by a polar bear who tells her that if she goes with him, her family will become as rich as they presently are poor. Tove accepts the bear's offer and her family's wishes are fulfilled. After a long and arduous journey, Tove finds herself in the bear's palace where against her oath, she listens to the handsome prince who sings beneath the palace. When Tove visits her family, her mother convinces her to shine a light on the singing man. Tove does so, against the bear's injunction, and finds that she has banished her prince to a land east of the sun and west of the moon. Tove bravely undertakes an impossible quest to reach this prison before her prince is forced to marry a troll. The language and imagery of the play is remarkably strong and the story is well told. With the exception of the polar bear, the characters are sharply dichotomized as either good or evil. Although few children's theatres have the budget or technical means to remount it, the script no doubt lent itself to a spectacular production in Minneapolis. The play is epic in its scope and covers numerous locations with very specific elements. Complex lighting is crucial to the journey sequences and elaborate costuming is required to realize the vision of the piece. While the play must have been dazzling in its premiere, the script would struggle to find a life beyond its original incarnation.

This play is found in:

Jennings, Coleman A. *Eight Plays for Children: The New Generation Play Project*. University of Texas Press, 1999. ISBN 0-292-74056-5 cloth, 0-292-74057-3 paperback. \$44.95 cloth, \$19.95 paperback. 479 pp.

A Reviewed by John D. Newman