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Into the Wildewood: The Faire Folk Trilogy, Book 2

Gillian Summers
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After the recent popularity of series like the Chronicles of Narnia and Harry Potter, it's no surprise that most young adult books published these days are rooted in fantasy. Out of the different series available, *Into the Wildewood*, Gillian Summers' second book in the Faire Folk Trilogy, brings a fresh perspective to the genre with a crackerjack plot and razor-sharp writing.

Like any fifteen-year-old, Keelie longs for the latest cell phone, driving lessons, and designer boots. Unfortunately, being with her wood-crafter father at the Wildewood Renaissance Faire for the summer is severely cramping her style. She works the worst jobs as the faire's Jill-of-all-trades, her friends are miles away, and she has to deal with rival Elia. But Keelie is not an average teen. She is half elf, and, like her elven father, she is a tree shepherd who has special powers to protect forests. That comes in handy when things begin to go wrong at the faire. Keelie can sense that the nearby forest is full of angry, sickly trees and that there's a mysterious unicorn stalking her. Worse, elves at the faire, including Keelie's dad, have a strange illness. Although she's still learning about her elven powers, Keelie is determined to save the forest and her father from danger.

Readers won't be lost if they missed the first installment of the trilogy, *The Tree Shepherd's Daughter*. Summers seamlessly weaves that background into the first part of this book, giving Keelie and her Renaissance faire world a strong sense of depth.

As the story progresses, Summers writes with an energetic wit that will give even the most blasé teen reader a smile. When Keelie is forced to work in her father's shop, Summers relates her drama queen inner dialogue: "Trapped. Enslaved. Confined. Detained. Keelie thought of all the words that applied, but it meant the same thing no matter how she said it."

But the success of *Into the Wildewood* isn't due to the way Summers depicts the elves' world. Here, fantasy is a metaphor for those teenage years when adulthood seems like a world that can be either magical or challenging, depending on how well one understands their strengths and limits. Keelie may not be "the one who lived" or have a magic wardrobe, but she's a character whose struggles, setbacks, and triumphs as a half elf will captivate any reader of fourteen and up, and ultimately have them coming back for more.
KATERIE PRIOR (April 14, 2008)

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