



## The Feral Child

*Che Golden*

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"Gripping, mystical and adventurous, young readers will be as hooked as Maddy was the minute she set foot inside that creepy as hell old castle," *Irish World* said of *The Feral Child*.

Maddy, an orphan, is sick of her Irish town, and sick of her cousin Danny, one of the nastiest people you could meet. Mad as hell one evening, she crawls inside the grounds of the castle, the one place she has always been forbidden to go. Once inside, she is chased by a strange feral boy, who she suspects is one of the faerie: cruel, fantastical people who live among humans and exchange local children for their own.

When the boy returns to steal her neighbor Stephen into his world, Maddy and her cousins set off on a terrifying journey into a magical wilderness, determined to bring him back home. To do so, they must face an evil as old as the earth itself.

Che Golden has created a gripping adventure that interweaves Maddy's modern Irish experience with the vivid fantasy of the region's ancient folklore. Readers will enjoy the frank and bold heroine of Maddy, and will be dazzled by *The Feral Child*'s evocative rendering of Irish folklore and richly imagined alternate worlds.

## The Feral Child Details

Date : Published June 3rd 2014 by Quercus (first published December 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781623651206

Author : Che Golden

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Paranormal, Fairies, Young Adult

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## From Reader Review The Feral Child for online ebook

### Tandie says

I liked the story, but the execution was a bit rough. Maddie was a hard MC to like, even given her difficult circumstances. I enjoyed Roisin, but found Danny's character transformation too drastic to be believable. Maddie's dog George was a favorite character and I thoroughly enjoyed it when he peed all over her. I felt the descriptions of the Fairy Court and its politics very vague. Not super wowed by this one.

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### Reeka (BoundbyWords) says

As seen on my blog:

Dear *The Feral Child*: While reading you, I was, quite possibly, the most terrified I've ever been while reading a book. Seriously, this book is intended for the 9-12 age group!? 9...to 12?!! I had nightmares. Legit, real, there's a horrid monster at my window, NIGHTMARES. But *The Feral Child* was a fantastic book, a fantastic, action-packed, gem of a book.

I've grown quite intensely fond of Irish folklore, and this book fit perfectly into that new found obsession. *The Feral Child* follows Maddy, a newly orphaned child who has been shipped off from her beloved London, to live with her Grandparents in Ireland, where she grumbles incessantly about her displeasure of being uprooted. The brunt of teasing from her cousins, especially her cousin Danny, Maddy constantly ventures out on her own in search of things to quell her boredom. One particular dark, and dreary (of course it's dark and dreary!) evening, Maddy sneaks into the grounds of a local castle, one in which she's been, very clearly, forbidden from entering. From this point on, I wasn't able to read this book alone, at night...especially not at night!! \*shudder\*

Inside, Maddy is greeted by what appears to be a little boy, who claims that he only wants to play. As if that wasn't creepy enough, the boy turns out to not be a little boy at all, but a disgustingly disfigured faerie, who seems to be up to no good around town. The following night, in one the most disturbingly scary scenes I've EVER read, a local child, neighbour, and friend of Maddy's is kidnapped by the faerie, right in front of her eyes. What ensues is a rescue mission. With the help of her miserable cousins, Maddy gathers all of the knowledge she's gained from her suspiciously persistent Grandfather, and sets off to rescue her friend Stephen. Of course, Stephen hasn't just been taken to the local park, but an entirely different realm of existence: Tir na nOg.

The imagery, dialogue and folklore fact dropping in *The Feral Child* was mind-blowing, and fantastical. The tone was the exact right level of darkness, and foreboding, and I could not get enough of **any** of it. I'm still there, if I sit back and close my eyes, I'm still roaming a dreamland filled with dryads (tree faeries), selkies, unicorns and everything you've ever wanted to read about when you were just discovering the power of your imagination. Che Golden's writing was beautiful, and absolutely filled with magic. I completely loved that she even provided a glossary of terms at the conclusion of the book, it was endlessly helpful. If you're in the mood to go on an adventure beyond the realm of the one you reside in, read *The Feral Child*, and then sigh a million happy sighs once you turn the last page because, my GOD, there's a second book waiting for me/you

to read!

**Recommended for fans of:** Middle Grade Fiction, Fantasy, Adventure, Irish Folklore.

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### **Liviania says**

THE FERAL CHILD is a story of imagination, loyalty, and bravery inspired by Irish folklore. Orphan Maddy lives with her grandparents, and has been acting out some (understandably). When she first encounters a strange boy in the woods, she doesn't know what's happening. But when he kidnaps Stephen, the toddler next door, she sees him for what he is: a faery.

Maddy sets out to save Stephen accompanied only by her dog and her Grandpa's stories, but her cousins join her. (They're a bit over their heads, as they meant to keep her from getting into trouble, not getting involved with actual, existing faeries.) The adults won't do anything, because they think Stephen has been found due to a changeling left in his place.

There is nothing particularly new done with the mythology, but Maddy's journey is still captivating. She has a lot of inner turmoil that needs to heal. The adventures are fun in and of themselves, too. Watching the children try to outwit the clever and devious faeries is a treat - especially because Maddy isn't always the one who has the good ideas. Her cousin Roisin, in particular, becomes integral to the quest's success.

The ending felt a touch rushed to me. The opening of THE FERAL CHILD takes its time setting up Maddy's life in Ireland, the woods, the strange encounter that becomes stranger. There is no time at the end, however, for wrapping up the plot about Maddy's overbearing aunt who wants to take custody. There is lots of sequel bait, so perhaps that is saved as an ongoing plot.

THE FERAL CHILD will appeal to young fans of fairytales and folklore.

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### **Beth says**

Synopsis:

“Gripping, mystical and adventurous, young readers will be as hooked as Maddy was the minute she set foot inside that creepy as hell old castle,” Irish World said of The Feral Child.

Maddy, an orphan, is sick of her Irish town, and sick of her cousin Danny, one of the nastiest people you could meet. Mad as hell one evening, she crawls inside the grounds of the castle, the one place she has always been forbidden to go. Once inside, she is chased by a strange feral boy, who she suspects is one of the faerie: cruel, fantastical people who live among humans and exchange local children for their own.

When the boy returns to steal her neighbor Stephen into his world, Maddy and her cousins set off on a terrifying journey into a magical wilderness, determined to bring him back home. To do so, they must face an evil as old as the earth itself.

Che Golden has created a gripping adventure that interweaves Maddy's modern Irish experience with the vivid fantasy of the region's ancient folklore. Readers will enjoy the frank and bold heroine of Maddy, and

will be dazzled by The Feral Child's evocative rendering of Irish folklore and richly imagined alternate worlds.

My review:

*The Feral Child* is a dark adventure into the fairy realm to save a small boy stolen into the mound. Our adventurers are an unlikely band of young cousins that don't really get along. Maddy, an orphan, shipped to live with her grandparent becomes the leader in this terrifying trip through the vale. Our heroine is moody, angry and damaged by the life circumstances she has been dealt. Maddy faces the quest with gusto even when the adults are afraid. She is willing to risk herself to save her young neighbor.

I know this is set for 10 yr old plus but I found this story was Dark with a capital D. The evil is not glazed over but in your face real and ghastly. The fairy world is based more on traditional celtic mythology and not the glossy fairy book land, with real dangers making our cast face their own mortality.

Gripping and vividly detailed world building with wonderful character growth, this is a fabulous story for all ages.

I received this ARC copy of *The Feral Child* from Quercus in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication June 3, 2014.

Written by: Che Golden

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

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Genre: Science Fiction | Fantasy

Find this book on: [Amazon](#) | [Barnes & Noble](#)

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## Bea Charmed says

I got this book because I liked the cover and the blurb called to me. I like when modern stories retain the feel of traditional fairy tales and keep the spirit of the fairies - tricksy, otherworldly, and not necessarily friendly.

We definitely got that in this book; these fae are not cute, cuddly, or lovable. They are clearly different from humans, not just in looks, but in thinking and behavior. That said, a few did try to help Maddy and her cousins in their quest and there were some similarities to humans. To be honest, I liked the fae more than I did the humans. Maddy's grandpa is scared and offers little help to Maddy when she becomes aware of the fae, while her grandmother just doesn't seem to understand Maddy, or children, at all. To be fair, they are all grieving the death of Maddy's parents and coping, or not coping, in different ways. I understood Maddy's anger and could empathize to a degree but I never really connected to her or any of the characters. Maddy was hard to like at times, as was all of her family, and her aunt just seemed a bad caricature.

The blurb promises adventure and we get that for sure; Golden doesn't stint on scary scenes or action. Did I

mention these fae are not nice? \*shudder\* What we don't get much of is character development. The only one who really undergoes any change is Maddy's cousin Danny and it wasn't believable. We get small hints of possible growth for Maddy but nothing that comes to fruition in this installment. There was a twist at the end that was a genuine twist and it might be enough for me to read book two, especially as I already have it.

I didn't love "The Feral Child", which is aptly titled, but it did hold my attention most of the time. It's dark, angst, and full of wonderful traditional fairy tale details and themes.

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### **Anni (Tea in the Treetops) says**

A wild and relentless story about Maddy and her cousins on a perilous quest to rescue Stephen from the Winter Queen's court. It's been a while since I picked up a middle-grade book so I was looking for an exciting one, and The Feral Child certainly didn't disappoint – this dark faery tale had me hooked!

Thirteen-year-old Maddie tragically lost her parents in a car accident and has been sent to Blarney in Ireland to live with her grandparents. She hates it there, isn't getting on with the local kids including her mean cousins, and is generally displeased with life. One evening, she meets a strange and otherworldly boy while walking in the castle grounds. Later, Maddie's three-year-old neighbour, Stephen, is stolen by faeries and taken to their realm, and it's up to Maddie and her two cousins Roisin and Danny to save him.

To be honest, Maddie was a bit of a brat. She was rude to her just about everyone and especially her grandparents, and while I can appreciate that troubled thirteen-year-olds might actually behave in this way, it was hard to read. Thankfully once the adventure in Tír na nÓg began she began to appreciate her cousins a bit more. Her cousin Roisin was lovely, and Danny didn't really seem to be the bully he was supposed to be at the start.

Where this story really shines is in the fast pacing and brilliant descriptions of locations and action. I actually felt this might make a great (although scary) film – it almost reads like a screenplay.

The Feral Child would suit the more mature of the middle-grade range – there are some downright creepy sections in this book and I wouldn't like to walk anywhere at night after reading it! The fae in general are quite nasty, stealing children away and torturing them (thankfully not discussed graphically).

Any child, or adult for that matter, who enjoys a creepy faery tale should really enjoy it. This is actually the first book in a trilogy, so I'll be looking out for the next one.

This review was originally posted on Tea in the Treetops in July 2014.

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### **Jessica says**

It's been a while since I've read a middle grades book and this one is set in Ireland so it seemed like a good idea...plus I'm going to Ireland on vacation so it seemed a doubly good idea. Too bad this book was just ok.

Maddy is a typical character - angry girl whose parents die and she must overcome her angst for the survival of her loved ones and self. Pretty basic but always a good plot line in general. The problem with this book

though is that I never felt a real connection with anyone. Maddy is mad and sad and alone after her parents die and normally I relate to these characters. No, my parents are not dead, but I was an angry kid and typically feel a bond with these characters. Maddy and I didn't connect some much.

Golden tries to make the cousins, Roisin and Danny interesting and, for the most part, likeable. Only, I didn't find them all that interesting and wasn't all that impressed by them. They were fairly flat and there were some moments, like when Danny doesn't stand up in the field for their guide, that were there to make them richer and allow for growth. Too bad it didn't work for me.

The story line isn't bad but it feels underdeveloped. Think Jim Henson's Labyrinth goes to Ireland with middle schoolers. Sounds great actually, because really, who doesn't LOVE Labyrinth?! And middle school is full potential and hormones and fun but everything got right up next to the edge of the cliff of good story telling then never took the plunge. The characters and creatures in the world of underhill just don't come to life. I wanted the world to be magic and vibrant but it wasn't. The world fell flat for me and the story seemed to battle itself - needing an older cast of characters but not allowing them.

This is a middle grades book and I've not read a mg book in a while so I might be a bit harsh here but ugh. I've read some amazing mg books, such as the Books of Beginning and Wondla. This wasn't one of those books. I think kids will like it because it has many of the elements of a cool story but it was just lacking for me over all.

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### **Keeley says**

3.5 for this book. I'm torn. I enjoyed it so much up until the big fight scene and then something about the writing seemed off and it took me out of it. The very end was a nice wrap up, but it was that one chapter that just didn't flow as well as the rest of the story.

Maddy is a girl that lives with her grandparents in Blarney Ireland. She was living in London, but both of her parents were killed in an accident so she moved to Ireland to live with her grandparents. Maddy hasn't been happy since she's lived with them. She is constantly being picked on by her cousin Danny and her Aunt seems to think that Maddy can't do anything right.

Maddy's grandfather works on the grounds of a castle that Maddy is constantly told to avoid. But since Maddy is tired of being told what to do, she decides to venture into the castle grounds anyway. She is wandering through the woods when she is confronted by a little boy. He refuses to leave her alone and once she tries to get away from him he grabs her arms and won't let her go. If it weren't for her dog George knocking the boy over, Maddy would have been kidnapped that night. However, no one seems to believe her and plays off her story as just two kids fighting because she didn't want to play with him.

That night Maddy awakens to a scratching on her window. She looks out to see where the noise is coming from and is greeted with the face of the little boy she met in the woods. Only something is different about him now. His skin is older, his ears are pointed, he has a snout like nose, and his fingers have long yellow fingernails. He accuses Maddy of Seeing him and says that he is going to make her blind if she doesn't come with him. When she refuses he seems to change his mind and disappears. Maddy has a feeling that he wouldn't give up that easily and watches out her window as he kidnaps the little neighbor boy Stephen.

Maddy wakes up her grandparents to tell them what happened but her grandmother plays it off as a

nightmare. Her grandfather seems to think otherwise though and goes to the neighbors house just to be safe. It is discovered that Stephen is missing and a search party is created. Maddy is interviewed by a police officer and when she tells him about the little man she saw taking Stephen, everyone thinks she is lying and she is accused of hindering the investigation.

Stephen is suddenly found on the grounds of the castle and everything seems to be back to normal. That is, until Maddy goes to visit Stephen and realizes that while it may look like Stephen to a regular person, Maddy can tell that this little boy in Stephen's house is an impostor.

The rest of the story follows Maddy and her cousins as they try to save Stephen from the land of ancient evil beings that have been at war with humans for hundreds of years.

I enjoyed this story, but felt that some of the dialogue in the fight scene toward the end wasn't very well done. I can't really pinpoint exactly what it was about that scene that took me out of the story, but something wasn't right. Overall though I did enjoy it.

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### **BookLoversLife says**

Maddy is an orphan and her grandparents are looking after her. She hates it in Blarney and is fed up with getting bullied by her cousin and ignored by her class mates. Her Granddad has always told her to never go into Blarney castles ground after dark. She has an argument with them one evening and decides to go into the grounds anyway. There she meets a weird boy who tries to get her to go with him. She is freaked and runs away from him.

Later that night she hears a scratching at her window. When she looks she sees the strange boy taking her next door neighbours young son Stephen. She runs and tells her Grandparents that a weird looking savage boy took Stephen but no one will believe her. The next day Stephen is found on the grounds of the castle and everyone is relieved. Maddy goes to visit him only to see that its not Stephen but a feral changeling. Maddy knows she has to venture into the world of Faerie to bring him home.

Maddy ends up going into the mound with Roisin and Danny. Not the people she would have chosen but circumstances worked against them. Now all three are in a strange and deadly world and have to rescue Stephen.

Well this was a complete surprise. The cover drew me in but when I read the blurb I knew I had to read it! I'm Irish so love anything to do with Irish folklore and Faeries. I also loved that it was set in Blarney. Its not too far from me so I've been there before and its beautiful.

Maddy was an awesome heroine. She lost both her parents in an accident and had to leave London to live in Blarney. It was a big upheaval and she still finds it hard. Her cousin Danny is always bullying her and she has no friends. She is angry a lot and at times hard to like but she is also brave, selfless, strong and kind. The minute Stephen gets kidnapped she knows what she has to do no matter the cost.

What follows is an adventure that the unlikely heroes have to survive. They are thrown into a world where the trees have faces, the horses can eat you and the wolves talk. Its unlike anything they have ever seen but because they know the old folklore tales they realise that if they follow the rules they may just survive.

The Feral Child is brimming in action and adventure. Its non stop from the first page and I flew through the book. Its a dark and dangerous world they enter but also really beautiful. I loved the lore and the fact that the Faeries weren't the glittery kind ;) Che Golden has captured the beauty of Ireland along with the fascinating tales we have here. From its vivid descriptions and creepy atmosphere, the Feral Child is a must read. Its a gripping Faerie Tale and I'm really looking forward to the next installment of this trilogy.

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### **Karissa says**

I got this book through NetGalley for review. It is the first book in a planned trilogy. It was a simple and quick read about a young girl who gets involved with the Fae. I really enjoyed it, it was engaging and I enjoyed the subject matter.

Maddy is an orphan who is living with her grandparents in Ireland. She hates the Irish town she lives in and runs away to an old castle at night, a castle she has been warned to never set foot in. There she meets an evil fae. When the fae comes to steal her young neighbor Stephen, Maddy and her cousins end up on a deadly quest to save Stephen from the evil Winter Queen.

Maddy is a preteen with a serious chip on her shoulder. You can tell she is still hurting from the death of her parents. She deals with this by being vicious, mean and confrontational with everyone. Even her grandparents, who obviously love her, are stuck dealing with her disobedience and sharp tongue. Part of the reason the fae boy she meets in the castle singles her out is because of the darkness and pain he sees inside of her.

The fae are portrayed as absolutely vicious, which I enjoyed...really it is more true to the fae from classic literature and mythology. Golden does not shy away from fae who harm, torture, and manipulate in the most cruel of ways. It never gets too gory or disturbing though so I think it should be fine for the middle grade age group.

The plot is fairly simple and straight-forward. It was a fast-paced and engaging read. The story wraps up at a good spot and the book is very readable and well written.

Overall I really enjoyed the book. This is a quick read, with a simple plot, but I enjoyed it all the same. It's fast paced and I love reading books about the fae as based in mythology. The characters are engaging and there is a lot of room for Maddy to grow from a lonely and mean girl to something more. Recommended to those who like to read about fae (and I am not talking about the glittery and fluffy type of fae either).

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### **Elisheva Rina says**

Typical fairy story of "unlikely" heroine venturing into Fairyland to save kidnapped child.

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### **Kysha says**

\*I received this review copy from NetGalley\*

Oh no not another modernized/retold fairy tale! Ugh!

Wow was I wrong. I really enjoyed this tale. It is not really a retelling or a modernization. It just takes a contemporary girl and throws her into the fairy world she has always heard about.

From Goodreads: Maddy, an orphan, is sick of her Irish town, and sick of her cousin Danny, one of the nastiest people you could meet. Mad as hell one evening, she crawls inside the grounds of the castle, the one place she has always been forbidden to go. Once inside, she is chased by a strange feral boy, who she suspects is one of the faerie: cruel, fantastical people who live among humans and exchange local children for their own.

When the boy returns to steal her neighbor Stephen into his world, Maddy and her cousins set off on a terrifying journey into a magical wilderness, determined to bring him back home. To do so, they must face an evil as old as the earth itself.

Che Golden has created a gripping adventure that interweaves Maddy's modern Irish experience with the vivid fantasy of the region's ancient folklore. Readers will enjoy the frank and bold heroine of Maddy, and will be dazzled by The Feral Child's evocative rendering of Irish folklore and richly imagined alternate worlds.

Honestly at first Maddy was irritatingly average and boring. Her whole family is a little off, especially her mean aunt. I was upset at Maddy for not seeing that her cousin, Roesin, was her only friend. Once they got into the fairy world I was pleased to see the personal growth of all 3 children.

The world building is fascinating. Maddy is very descriptive both in the real world and the fairy world. Her descriptions of the fairy folk made me smile as I could see them in my mind.

I tried not to compare this story to others I have read but I could not help it. I recently read and reviewed Thorn Jack by Katherine Harbor here. They are very similar in scope and tale but also very different. The closest thing I could think to compare Feral Child to is the Immortal Nicholas Flamel series by Michael Scott. Both tales are of children thrust into a folktale/fairy tale/myth world where they must battle ancient creatures, their friends and themselves. In the end both sets of children triumph.

I was so happy to receive this book and to be asked to be on the "street team" to get the word out. I am also excited that it is a trilogy. So that means that I will get to see more Maddy and more fairy folk.

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### **Nilsson says**

Maddie seemed hateful when she should have been in a perfectly jolly mood. Leastways I'm sure most people would be if they got into a Fairy Mound, but to each their own.

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### **Tasha says**

Maddy's parents died recently, so she is sent to Ireland to live with her grandparents. She misses London and her friends dreadfully and doesn't like her cousins or the town of Blarney. Though she has been told not to enter the grounds of the castle in town, she does anyway one evening because she is so angry and just doesn't care. She stays longer than she means to when her grandparent's dog George runs off. It is then that

she meets a strange boy. That same boy returns to her house later, tapping at the window and asking Maddy to join him, but she refuses to go to the window at all, because she has realized that he is not what he seems to be. When the boy goes to her neighbor and steals their little boy from out of his bedroom window, Maddy sees it all. But with a changeling in the little boy's place, no one even knows he is actually missing. It is up to Maddy, her cousins, and George the dog to save him, because no one else can. They must enter the faerie realm to do so and face incredible dangers on their quest.

Golden manages to not actually modernize the faeries and their world, which is quite refreshing. Instead what you have in this middle-grade novel is a modern girl thrust into the strange and timeless world of the faeries. She takes the most menacing and amazing parts of folklore and brings them fully to life, creating a dazzling array of faeries and beasts as the children travel. The dangers are brutally displayed and there are times when death is so close, readers will be amazed that the characters survive.

Maddy is not a particularly likeable character at first in the novel, nor are her cousins. Maddy is the main protagonist and undergoes a believable transformation into heroine as the novel goes on. The same can be said for one of her cousins who comes out of her shell and into her own. The other cousin, the bully, has too easy a transformation and it happens a bit to early in the book as well. But that is a quibble in an impressive faerie tale.

Faeries, Ireland and an amazing quest all come together to create a book that is frightening, riveting and a rip-roaring read. Appropriate for ages 10-12.

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### **Stormi (BMReviewsohmy) says**

First Thoughts: An interesting fantasy story for Middle Grade readers.

The Feral Child is about a young girl Maddy who has had a bit of a hard time. Her parents died and now she has been forced to move from England to Ireland. Ireland is her homeland but it's not her home and she doesn't feel like she belongs. Though she doesn't go out of her way to try and make it feel like home, but she is a grieving child.

She loves to hang out at a castle ruin where there is a mound that is suppose to be a faerie mound. She doesn't believe in those stories and doesn't understand why her Granda doesn't want her hanging around it. Then one day while she was there a boy tries to kidnap her but he didn't look like a normal boy and she gets away but he shows up later at her home during the night. He wants her to come and play but she refuses and then she sees him take the neighbors little three year old.

When her Granda wouldn't help her try and get him back and tells her there is nothing she can do, she gets mad. Her Granda can see faeries and so can Maddy and faeries don't like it when you can see them. So he is afraid for his young granddaughter and she doesn't understand the price that might be paid for spying a faerie.

Maddy decides to go and get Stephen back herself and goes to the mound and while on her way her cousin Roisin and Danny meet up with her. Whether they wanted to or not they are now on a trip to the faeries because they were there when she goes in. It's not a great place to be and you never know who you might be able to trust. When the Queen finds out they are there she makes a bargain with them, but it could turn out be

very dangerous.

For a middle grade story I thought it was interesting and a little dark at times as these were pretty evil faeries. My favorite little faerie creature was the dyrad (Fionn) and she had a little crush on Danny so that was cute. Some times I thought the story line was a bit out there for young readers as it seemed like those kids made it through some really iffy situations that an adult might not make it through but I know it's fiction for a reason.

The parts I didn't care much for was the main character Maddy was just a little bit to much of a brat at the beginning and I couldn't stand her at first at all. I understand that she was going through a hard time but still she was horrible, but as they go and get Stephen she starts acting better. Also her cousin Danny who was so mean to her all of a sudden it was like he did a 180 with his attitude once they are chasing faeries. It was just a little strange.

Overall, I thought it was interesting and that young readers might enjoy it. If you have a young reader who is not into scary situations then it might not be for them. (being chased by wolves and evil faeries, etc)

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