



The Wild Ways

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Charlie Gale heads east to join a Celtic band on the summer circuit, but faces Aunt Catherine instead. An offshore oil-drilling company hired Catherine to steal Selkies' sealskins. Charlie must teach being Wild to Jack - a Dragon Prince trying to be a real boy - and commit corporate espionage with a sobbing seal-wife and every fiddle player in Nova Scotia.

The Wild Ways Details

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From Reader Review The Wild Ways for online ebook

Katyana says

****4.5***

I love the Gale family, and honestly, the first book in this series is one of my favorites. And this book didn't disappoint.

I loved the family, the charms, the pies. I loved how relaxed and casual Charlie is, but yet she's always going to do the right thing. I loved Jack, struggling to fit into this family that he's afraid to admit he cares for, because he's afraid he's going to lose it.

Here's why I'm knocking a half star off.

1. I still feel like the system of magic needs to be explained.

I mentioned that in the re-read of the first book, and to be fair, it's less of a nagging thing here, because Charlie doesn't work magic the way the others do. I mean, here's my understanding: all of the Gales can work magic - they do charms, and the world kind of bends to them (think extreme good fortune raining down on them). I don't have a problem with any of that. Where it gets hinky is when they are working together. Like, Allie needs an anchor, to pull down deep, and a guy is the anchor. So that seems to be how men/women work - the guy anchors the girl who is like... a conduit for the big power. So I assume the guy can't tap the big power? Can only guys anchor? I think so, because we've only seen guys anchor. And then the woman directs the big power to ... here's where it gets dicey.

Sometimes Allie directed it to another Gale, to be ..."shaped" / refined ... where it is then pushed to a second Gale who used it. That's what happened in the bar scene in book 1, when they fought the dragons.

Sometimes, though, Allie used it herself, while still connecting to the big power. So ... ? And sometimes she just threw it raw (unshaped / unrefined) to people - David at the bar, and to the circle of Aunties at the end. So ... ?

I understand that David and Allie are supposed to be uniquely powerful, but it doesn't actually mean anything when I don't understand the way things works, so I can't see how they are an exception.

And speaking of exceptions, you then have Charlie... who can do HUGE stuff, with no anchor, no pipe to the big power, no refining, no whatever. How? How does this work? And if David and Allie could do some things outside the rules because they were uniquely powerful, what is Charlie? Yes, I know, *wild* ... but what does that mean?

I feel like the magic in this book is just mostly handwaving. It's okay, because I like the plot and characters regardless, but ... I like my magic to have a basic ruleset, so people aren't pulling powers out of their butt as needed.

Which brings me to...

2. (view spoiler)

But at the end of the day, those were quibbles, because I loved the story and the characters, and the world. The Gale family is really fantastic.

E. says

"The Wild Ways" by Tanya Huff continues the tale of Charlotte (Charlie) Gale, one of the rare Wild Powers in the Gale family. Charlie has adjusted from the events that occurred in "The Enchantment Emporium" and continues to do as she pleases, despite the input from the Aunties in the family who have their own plans for her. She agrees to participate in a Celtic music festival as events seem to coalesce to involve her in the struggles that a group of selkies are having with a major oil company that wants to drill in the North Atlantic, perilously close to a seal sanctuary. Added to the already precarious balance of power in the Gale family of witches, Jack, the fourteen year old Dragon Prince sorcerer, is approaching the age where 'something' will have to be done about him and there is a strong suspicion that he will share the fate of most of the Gale boys. The Gale family traditionally does not meddle in the affairs of the Fey but Charlie's discovery that one of the aunties is intimately involved in coercing the selkies to support the oil company's plans leads her to actively oppose her Wild Auntie. It's going to take some creative solutions to counteract all of the measures that have been taken but fortunately thinking outside of the box is Charlie's specialty.

Another wild ride with the Gale family, filled with snarky repartee, wonderfully current asides and plenty of sexual innuendo. The author's lyrical writing is deceptively understated but provides plenty of atmospheric background with an excellent economy of words. The marked contrast between the mores of the non-humans and humans is vividly described in such a reasonable manner that one almost forgets the carnage being wreaked upon individuals as the two worlds collide. The fascinating characters who are part of the Gale family continue to add spice to a story that gives a new twist to a traditional tale that pits environmentalists against corporate greed. Charlie continues to demonstrate that she is a force to be reckoned with, Wild power notwithstanding, if only she can learn to harness her resources. Another enjoyable addition to the saga of the Gale family.

© Night Owl Reviews

Carol. says

Is it fair to compare one work against an author's entire body of work? I think so, but not everyone agrees. A. Lee Martinez discussed the "not their best work" review at <http://www.aleemartinez.com/bestish/b...> Ultimately, had Huff not impressed me with the first in the Gale series, *The Enchantment Emporium*, I would not have been so disappointed in the sequel. This was not her best work--it wasn't even in the top three runners-up.

Charlie, the wild Gale sister, is playing in a band when she starts to get an intuitive tingle. The band is about to hit the road so her itchy feet dovetail nicely with the band's plans. The band stops back at home to refuel and Charlie returns to Allie, Graham, Jack and the new family circle in Calgary. Jack is fourteen and struggling to find his place in the family, knowing the Aunties would rather he was dead. There's a brief enjoyable family interlude where we get to visit some of the characters from the prior book. Meanwhile, Allie's wild grandma is off creating trouble that seems designed to pull Charlie out of Ontario and to the coast. Strangely, Charlie's old Celtic band calls looking for her, and her magic tingle tells her she ought to

accept. Completely coincidentally (and if you believe that...), the lead singer's fiance has lost something very important to her, a "family heirloom" that she desperately wants to retrieve. Aunt Catherine seems to be causing trouble, dabbling in oil politics.

Problems include a general lack of cohesiveness, partly due to narrative and partly due to plotting, and an environmental theme that is anything but subtle. There's an alternating narrative that includes the Head Villain and Henchman Number One which is ultimately needless. We know they are villains because the H.V. runs an oil company and likes fur, while the H.N.O. is motivated by pay. The split narrative seems to be creating humanity in the antagonists, but any subtlety is lost by the end. It becomes a very pointed environmental morality tale with clearly defined 'good' and 'evil.'

A few short chapters relate Jack's viewpoint, which does create a distinctive voice for him, but becomes perplexing because it isn't integrated well. His viewpoint serves to demonstrate his adolescent frustration and is vaguely interesting when (view spoiler) but. End of the day is saved by a big fat use of magic, which seems a giant plot cheat.

The Wild Ways is not Huff's best work. If I were to rate it on my enjoyment scale, I'd give a '3.' Against most urban fantasy, I'd go as high as '4.' Against *The Enchantment Emporium* it runs a '2.' While I generally like Huff's work, this was a far cry from her best.

Kes says

[Uncle Edward (Alysha's grandfather) being killed as part of family tradition also added to the sense that the Gales are different - though this po

Ben Babcock says

So it has been almost 5 years since I read *The Enchantment Emporium*. I don't think this is the longest gap between consecutive novels in a series that I've had, but it must be close. Predictably, I remember nearly nothing about that book, which is exactly why I write these reviews in the first place. Fortunately, Tanya Huff has written *The Wild Ways* such that even if you haven't read the first book, or if, like me, you read it and then forgot it after 5 years, then you can still make sense of this one. I really appreciate that, and it's but one of the many reasons I enjoyed this novel.

The Wild Ways follows Charlie (Charlotte) Gale. She is a "Wild Power" of the Gale family, which apparently means it is her destiny to wander and get involved in more scrapes and ... well ... be a wild card more so than the rest of her siblings and cousins, who are more likely to settle down and stick around other members of the family. In this case, for Charlie it means squaring off against another Gale Wild Power, Auntie Caroline. Caroline has stolen the pelts of several selkies off the coast of Cape Breton Island in an attempt to get them to capitulate to an oil company that wants to drill nearby. Charlie needs to retrieve the pelts and best her aunt, but there are of course deeper games afoot.

I love how these books are set in Canada. Huff's writing reminds me in many ways of Charles de Lint, not

just because of the Canadian setting. But there is something so *comfortable* about all the Canadian touches in this book, like the constant mentions of the CBC and other Canadian media. Sometimes, with the way American settings saturate our fiction, it's so easy to forget that there is often this distinct atmosphere to Canadian stories. Huff really captures that, and it's great.

Another highlight of *The Wild Ways*? The banter. The character interactions in general, I guess. There is certainly never a dull moment in the Gale family. The supporting cast is a little more milquetoast; most of them seem to be there only to serve as these stock, background characters, and they all seem to have about the intelligence you would expect from someone who smokes too much weed and plays in a Celtic-inspired folk band.... Similarly, not a huge fan of the portrayal of the antagonist, her minion, or the selkies in general. Anyway, I guess what I'm saying is that I really like the diversity of voices and opinions within the Gale family. They really do feel like a family: Charlie and Alysha square off over Jack once in a while; the aunties get involved, directly or obliquely ... everyone wants what is best for each other, or for the family, even if not everyone agrees what that might be at any given moment.

The plot manages to match the characters in how engrossing and entertaining it can be. There is a strong environmental message here, of course. At its core, though, this is a plot about Charlie coming into her own and finding the power/music inside of herself. In this sense, *The Wild Ways* is spectacular. Huff's writing is note-perfect, and I can almost feel the music coming through the book as she portrays Charlie channelling it to channel her power and save the day. At the climax, Charlie and Jack both get moments to shine. I really love how, after Caroline divulges to Charlie why she is doing what she did and why she thinks Charlie needs to go along with her plan, Charlie ignores Caroline and finds another way—and it *works*. This is an example of one my favourite story tropes, the anticlimax boss (TVTropes!)—where a Big Bad threat is made out to be ... well, Big and Bad, yet the hero dispatches it near the end of the story with little to no effort (because the real threat, already vanquished, was more insidious by far).

Huff has managed to create a modern, urban fantasy series that balances humour with high stakes in a way that is endearing but not cheesy. She never overloads on exposition, preferring instead to have the reader infer what, for example, a “Hunt” might entail from the little details she drops in dialogue and sparse description. As a result, the world is rich but not mundanely catalogued for the reader, and the story moves at a healthy pace.

In my review of *The Enchantment Emporium*, I touched a little on gender and sexuality in that novel, and I want to return to that here. In addition to the apparent pansexuality of the Gale (women?), there are some more queer characters in this book. The gender essentialism continues, both among the Gales (to some extent) and the selkies (although that is at least lampshaded). There is a *lot* of discussion and portrayal of sex/sexual situations here ... Huff works hard to subvert the male gaze and turn the tables into a “female gaze” by objectifying many of the men (and some of the women). I see what she’s doing and acknowledge how that can be a useful critique, but honestly, least favourite part of the book. Although I don’t consider myself sex-repulsed, the constant emphasis on attraction in *The Wild Ways* left my poor ace brain squirming. If you *are* sex-repulsed ... um ... yeah. Fair warning, I guess? This didn’t detract from my enjoyment of the story one bit, but *boy* is this book obsessed with sex. Oh my.

Let’s hope it isn’t another 5 years before I finally read book 3!

My reviews of the *Gale Women* books:

← *The Enchantment Emporium*

Warren Rochelle says

In Enchanted Emporium we first meet the Gales of southern Ontario, a matriarchal clan dominated by the Aunties who could, if they wanted, dominate the world with their magic. Allie Gale, one of a tribe of cousins, inherits a Calgary antique emporium/junk shop, whose clientele include many of the fey, among other strange beings. She and other cousins, her brother, a leprechaun, and Jack, a teenage Dragon prince, wind up saving Calgary. The story of this otherworldly family is continued in Wild Ways. Six months or so later after the events in Emporium, Jack, who is living with Allie and her partner, is boored. So is Charlie—Charlotte—one of the cousins—who also happens to be a member of a country music band and a Wild Power. For a Gale, this means she can't be bound to a place, and that she has enormous powers.

This unlikely pair, Charlie and Jack, wind up in Halifax, along with the band, and involved with a Celtic music festival, and involved with a family of Selkies fighting to stop an offshore drilling project of the epitome of corporate evil, Carlson Oil, run by Amelia Carson, who is not a nice person. Carlson Oil is being helped by Auntie Catherine, bringing Charlie and her Auntie into direct conflict. To say complications ensue is an understatement. Good is fighting evil, although these terms are grey, not black and white.

GLBT fans won't be disappointed: gutsy tough heroine, sometime lover of her cousin, and attracted to a ravishing (and, alas, straight) Selkie woman, a 15-year-old Dragon Prince, a band that includes two gay lovers, and various other magical creatures. Huff's sure and deft style, rich with humor, sustains this story set in a world where who you are matters, not who you love.

Lianne Burwell says

The Wild Ways is a sequel to The Enchantment Emporium, but focusing on a secondary character from the first book (Charlie -- a Gale girl -- who plays guitar in a country band), and moves the story from Calgary (where the character from the first book has settled into domestic bliss with her husband and half-Gale/half-dragon prince foster son, complete with teenager moodiness from the second) to the Maritimes.

A company run by an agressive female exec (trying to prove wrong the people who said that a woman couldn't run an oil company after her father died) wants to drill for oil in a territory that is home to a clan of selkies. In order to get those drilling rights, she's hired a Gale auntie to steal the selkies' seal skins. Charlie, on the other hand, ends up on the other side of matters, after being recruited by the Selkies to retrieve their stolen skins. Jack (the Gale dragon) joins her after a small accident.

One thing I find interesting about this series is that the Gale family are, on the whole, a pretty unlikeable bunch. The aunties are the people in control, and they have definite issues in letting other people be. They 'arrange' for free cab rides whenever they want. Gale men are rare, and are the focus (but not in control) of the family magic, and when one of them shows some 'weakness', the aunties call for a 'hunt'. They are unsympathetic in the extreme. In the first book, the main character's closest male friend is a gay man, and the aunties feel that he's a good man for her, and that she should just 'fix' him. And if she won't, they offer to do it for her.

Thankfully, some of the younger generation are a little less tradition-bound -- especially the ones who leave the home town -- so there is some hope that the Gales are starting to evolve in better directions.

And the Selkies are only slightly better. They are all women (the males never come on shore), and marry either fishermen or fiddlers. Historically, a man would see them dancing on the beach, steal their skin, and force them into marriage. Now, the form of the tradition is there, but the women enthrall the men until they can't say no to pretty much anything the selkie asks of him.

But if anything, the moral problems with both groups makes them more interesting. Perfect heroes are boring. All the characters in this book are painted in shades of grey, including the bad guys.

Beyond that, Ms Huff's writing is light and breezy, and pulls you along.

Lightreads says

More cheerfully queer poly incestuous Canadian capers, this time with bonus seal people.

So this book helped me identify a squick I didn't know I had. See, the prequel freaked me out. Which was weird, because I also quite enjoyed it. It wasn't the mind control that got me, and it wasn't the deer semi-beastiality (though, for the record,??????), and it wasn't the incest. Actually, it was all the family. Which is weird, because I *love* stories about intense, close-knit groups of people, and that's exactly what this series is about.

Except this book follows one of the family's oddball misfits who enjoys life on her own, so there was way less family by volume. And I realized that if I just pretended all the background family stuff was an extensive network of interlocking polyamorous and friend arrangements, I was cool. But the minute I started processing the way this book defines family, how they all knew everything about each other, and would always know everything about each other, and everybody was everybody else's business by definition, and all the important things about you were determined by the fact you belong to the family, and no one would ever leave, and no one would ever want to -- I'm kinda freaking myself out just talking about it.

Basically, I'm okay with intense claustrophobic relationships as long as there's no family involved. My issues. They are not subtle.

Um. It's a fun lightweight adventure about seals and music and going your own way?

Jeremy Preacher says

I positively squeed with joy when I heard that the sequel to The Enchantment Emporium featured Charlie, who was far and away my favorite character. And I was not disappointed - on the one hand, it's a Celtic-music-flavored adventure through eastern Canada complete with extremely hot and damnably unavailable women, evil corporations, some goblins, and a troll, and on the other hand it's a thoughtful look at what it means to be a "free spirit" when you have rather a lot of power and privilege behind you.

I admit to being surprisingly happy that there was no neatly-wrapped-up romance in this book - there was some fun random sex, and various examples of relationships among secondary characters, and a rare unrequited pure lust... thing, but no romance. Which is good. Charlie, at this point, is a character that doesn't make sense in a stable relationship - and putting her in one would undercut the whole arc of her development at this point.

Count me in, enthusiastically, for the next one!

Ryan says

First, there is a dragon - I love dragons - and not just a dragon, but one who is also a 14-year-old young man who was raised as a dragon and trying to adjust to sometimes being human. Which is probably the best description for most 14-year old males. People. At 14, most of us had to figure out how to fit in our skin. And it was probably good we couldn't turn into dragons, though I am pretty sure my parents thought I did it regularly.

The main character, I suppose, is Charlie (Charlotte) Gale, and she is also not quite what her family expects. She isn't settled, preferring to wander, and her magic - because hers is a magical family, and by family I mean Family (like the Corleones) - isn't traditional, but wild and unexpected. She has spent her life figuring out how to be part of this family that she loves and still be who she is. I'm not sure that journey is easier if you can play magical music, but certainly a whole lot cooler.

Second, this is a sequel and I didn't know it until much later in the book. And I never felt like it was a sequel - perhaps that is not the correct term. Clearly, something happened before the beginning of this book and that thing affects what is happening in this book, but I never felt left out because I'd not read the first book. There was no "catch up" chapter, just references to the past that are part of regular life. Every day is really a sequel to the previous one but we don't spend an hour providing a recap of yesterday or last month so those around us understand the context of today. Okay, sometimes we do...but mostly, we reference yesterday and accept the yesterdays of others.

A great story - I love the dialog between characters, the integration of magic into this world. And of course, there is a dragon.

Tim Hicks says

The book is really about Charlie and Jack coming to terms with their powers and capacities. That part is very well done.

The whole Gale world is about special people who have the ability to control other people, and that is creepy just as much as it is when political and religious people do it.

Continuing the free-sex approach of the clan, but low-key this time, enough that it isn't a political statement, it's just something that the characters do, no biggie. Good. And not really much mention of the icky eugenics program.

There are too many players who are too powerful. I've always liked the ones where some of the magic-wielders can only do a few things, and very few can do a lot. And when you set this level of magic in the real world, you start to make the reader think about the ethics of just keeping a low profile. If you can do this and this, why aren't you out there doing something about THAT?

I didn't get why Catherine Gale is so skewed. No problem with a character like that, but usually the author will present a reason for it.

Auntie Jane is Chekhov's gun, and when she finally actually DOES something - sort of - it's a damp squib, and even a bit creepy.

This volume seemed to be aimed at a younger audience much more than #1 did. And no, I am not young, so maybe that's why I noticed it. There are plenty of flip remarks and nudge-wink moments. They didn't do any harm, though, and some were good.

The music thing. Grrr. I've seen it in so many books now and the formula's always the same. Toss in lots of band names and song titles, making it clear that anyone who doesn't know ALL of these will never get to sit with the cool kids at lunch. Add some knowledge of instrument maintenance. Name some complicated chords. Talk about the closeness of the band, and the magic in the music when it goes well. Sneer at those who don't fit your preconception of who likes your music.

And hey, the guitar. Sure, play it with the band. But really, to carry a full-size guitar everywhere you go in case you have to make a hippogriff do a pirouette? Why not carry a pennywhistle instead? Huff makes it clear that most band members can play several instruments.

The stuff about the selkies and their skins is hogwash, but we can't blame Huff for that. It's part of the lore.

Now, about the ending. (view spoiler) Authors have to be very careful in handing out strong magic, and even more careful with time travel, and I don't see that caution here.

I won't read #3. But I will have a look at some other Huffs. I've read one of the Blood books and enjoyed it.

Estara says

HUGE SPOILERS THROUGHOUT:

This was a Gale family problems book with added bonus Canadian maritime (Cape Breton) region and Celtic folk circuit there (I mean, Tanya Huff is a folk musician on the side herself, and as German reader I'm delighted to be introduced to other scenery than the US for once) - there is even a reference to *Mabou* which I wouldn't have known before I read Kate Beaton's autobiographical comics (she's from a family there that is cousins to the Rankin family - probably the most famous folk musicians coming from that region) which occasionally reference the region.

She also had some Fort Murray comics, as she worked there for two years after finishing her history degree - that's the time I got to know her work on LJ, before she started the website for *Hark A Vagrant!* - I can recommend her comics to fans of quirky and history ^^. I bought the previous collection, but will likely

rebuy her big release with Dark Horse at some point).

Anyway... you won't get a love story in here, but lots of interior and exterior widening of the world view, this time set on the folk circuit (in that it reminds me of R. McAvoy's Twisting The Rope, another excellent contemporary fantasy suspense, follow up to the incomparable Tea with the Black Dragon).

Charlie's coming of age in her powers, manipulated into it by Auntie Catherine (view spoiler), is the bedrock of the story - but we also get a lot of Jack accustoming himself to living as a Gale dragon prince and deciding where his self-imposed borders are (as a matter of fact, he has to decide whether he enjoys living with the Gales enough to WANT to self-impose limits on his behaviour) all the while being a 14-year-old teenager in puberty, too.

The newly introduced friends of Charlie's on the folk circuit are fun, but not too important to the story but for the music that Charlie prefers to use for her magic (the selkies are fascinating, though). The antagonist - apart from Auntie Catherine - is way more charismatic in description. I actually could have done without a female, who had fought for what she had and wanted to enjoy it, as an enemy, but she was basically a mundane mirror of what Aunt Catherine would be if she didn't have other Gales keeping an eye on her.

So when Charlie shows A.C. that her predictions don't always cover every event and that she has solutions that don't involve hurting so many people when dealing with another cataclysm (which is very much an afterthought after all the family drama), she accepts the chastising (view spoiler)

I don't know if the insta-lust Charlie develops for a Selkie had to be so strong to make her want to help, because Auntie Catherine was already involved, so Charlie should have had to deal with her anyway. Then again it lead to some beautiful descriptions of Selkie beauty from Charlie's and Paul's, Eineen's eventual mate, point of view - I really liked him (an aside: not being lesbian myself, I thought Charlie's viewpoint was quite fascinating in the way she looked at Eineen).

(view spoiler)

Lots of current media catchphrases in here, some appropriate - some a bit too twee for me (I was reminded of the adage that you have to "kill your darlings" sometimes).

The ebook edition had quite a few grammatical errors (singular instead of plural, too many or too few prepositions) but no spelling mistakes - I hope they did better with the actual hardcover. It didn't build up so much that reading was too disrupted, though - and should I find it to be so on reread, I'll just change it inside Calibre.

Basically this was a fun ride, if not as deeply touching me as the first one, except when Charlie's and Jack's maturation was concerned.

Li says

I liked this book, but didn't connect as much with Charlie and her story as I did with Allie in the previous book, The Enchantment Emporium. The eventual ending was great, but the fantastical elements of the world

itself didn't really capture my imagination this time around. I would have loved to have seen more of the family as well (loved the very teenage cousin Jack!).

All in all though, I hope Tanya Huff continues with this series - I want more of the Gale family.

Jamie Collins says

3.5 stars. This is a nice sequel to *The Enchantment Emporium* - I don't think it would stand alone very well, and it's best read shortly after you finish the first book.

As much as I love Tanya Huff's work, and as much as I enjoy the Gale family, I was not optimistic about a storyline that included Selkies and a controversy over offshore drilling. I should have known that Huff would make it work for me.

I find the Gale family's brand of magic to be utterly charming (which is appropriate, I suppose). I enjoyed Jack the teenage dragon prince/sorcerer/Gale boy, who is trying to find his place in the world. The antagonist was a caricature of a vain, greedy corporate executive, but I liked the portrayal of her assistant.

Jensownzoo says

I *like* this series. I thought maybe I was biased toward the first book, *The Enchantment Emporium*, because I like stories in that kind of setting -- the quirky bookshop/curio shop -- but I liked this next installment just as well.

This book moves on to one of the other Gale women, Charlotte, who was introduced in the first book. In this novel, Charlotte explores what it means to be a "Wild Power" while touring the celtic music festival circuit with her new/old band. Plus someone is stirring up problems with the Maritime selkies, and that's not something that Charlotte can allow, for multiple reasons...

I like these books because the author doesn't feel the need to explain in detail the world-building/mythos. It is much more satisfying to me to pick up the details naturally instead as part of a large infodump. True, you may not understand everything during the first read-through (the main plot is clear, though), but that just means it is as enjoyable during re-reads as well.
