

The TrailFolk of Xunar-kun: BookTwo in the Tellings of Xunar-Kun

Tina Field Howe

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (10/08)

Tina Field Howe's "The TrailFolk of Xunar-kun" is the second in the "Tellings of Xunar-kun" series and a worthy sequel to the wonderful "Alysa of the Fields." Just like the first book in the series, it is set on a planet Xunar-kun, some 3000 years after a catastrophic event, referred to as the Cat'clysm, which wiped out most of the planet's population.

Alysa, a young girl belonging to the Field Folk, met Szaren, who belongs to the Trailmen, in Book One. In Book Two, the two of them have been "paired" for a while, which is the Xunar-kun's folks equivalent of being married; and searching for the Parents of Orphans, a bunch of children rescued in Book One. Their quest brings them further and further from their dwellings, deep in the so-far-unexplored lands.

Fraught with peril and unforeseen complications, the quest for Parents is suddenly stopped, when the Seekers encounter Trakip-sèn and his people. They lead the Seekers to believe that they are the Parents everybody has been searching for, and enthusiastically head back to meet the Orphans. Once there, they show little interest in the children, and gradually the truth emerges. Who are they really and what brought them to the village?

I've thoroughly enjoyed the story of the quest and even more so the developments between the two clans, the Field Folk and the Trailmen. As the story progressed, we learned more about how the two clans started to get closer to each other, both by learning about each other's customs and history as well as by more of the clan members falling in love with the members of the other clan. Tina Field Howe teaches crucial lessons in tolerance and understanding, as well as importance of being brave and open to change. Her characters are very believable and overall very likeable, with the exception of a couple of nearly perfect villains. The story moves swiftly and draws one in from the first page.

As much as I liked the characters in the story, I liked the locale even more. The world of Xunar-kun is exceptionally well drawn and in a way one of the central "characters." It should remind the readers a lot of our world; but it also points out some things that could bring destruction to what we cherish and love, if the fundamentals of our beliefs were to be forgotten or ignored. I would like to point the readers' attention to the story of "Orryn's Lantern" and its significance. I do not want to give too much away here, but paying particular attention to that part of the story would be a great idea.

Tina Field Howe's "The TrailFolk of Xunar-kun" by Tina Field Howe was another delightful and worthwhile read from a very talented and unique author. Although geared to young adults, those of us who remain curious and willing to learn should enjoy it greatly as well. A perfect read for a cold winter afternoon, the kindness of this story should warm you up nicely.