



The Randolph Family Saga, Book One: The Ballad of Tam Lin

Patricia A. Leslie

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The Saga debuts with an inspired retelling of the centuries-old Scottish folk ballad *Tam Lin*. This insightful coming-of-age story, set in the Scottish Borders country, takes the youthful and very human protagonists on a fairytale journey of imaginative twists and turns through both humourous and risky plot complications. On May Eve of 1790, Janet, a very sheltered but wilful twenty-year-old Earl's daughter, wanders into Carterhaugh Wood. Handsome, seductive Tam Lin, who has been nineteen for the past seven years, appears and accosts her in a glade that burgeons with black roses. While navigating an ever-shifting maze of love, doubt, trust, fear, honour, passion and laughable human foibles, both lad and lass mature and learn much about themselves. But will the young man end by choosing the naïve girl who loves him, or another, who is the ideal embodiment of passionate womanhood?

The Randolph Family Saga, Book One: The Ballad of Tam Lin Details

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Author : Patricia A. Leslie

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Robin says

A nice twist on the traditional fairy tale, which takes one into a wonderful otherworld. Some of the images and lessons of this world are still with me. Lush, thought-provoking, and grounded in reality.

JoAnn Ainsworth says

I didn't know the ballad (and not much about the lands of the fairy queen and its myriad creatures), but after I caught on and the author's Voice took over the action, I really enjoyed reading the story.

Ana-Maria says

First, I received a copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads. Second, I loved it! The writing was gorgeous - quite Austen-esque - and the world building was fantastic! Mrs. Leslie certainly spent some time on the mythology of Summerland, and this novel was all the better for it! Of course, I am a feminist myself, so I suppose it was mostly just preaching to the choir, lol! I loved Janet's character throughout the novel, and I appreciated John's character growth and maturity. I also quite enjoyed this incarnation of the old Ballad of Tam Lin. Even though I knew where the story was ultimately going, just from having read the ballad before reading the novel, I greatly enjoyed the way the story was fleshed out here, and again, the building of this world! I'll definitely be thinking about this novel for a long time to come!

UPDATED: For a much longer review of this book, please visit my new blog at [nymphanddragon!](http://nymphanddragon.com)

Liz Anne Fey says

The beginning volume of an on-going series, Patricia sets a rich, lush stage for her Randolph Family saga by creating fantastical worlds full of engaging characters that move back and forth between the human realm and fairyland. The author's knowledge of folklore and history add extra depth to the worlds inhabited by both humans and the seelie folk. Complicated heart entanglements, drama, mystery and fantasy...it's all here. I'm in love with the Randolphs, and look forward to the rest of the series.

Jenn says

I have to admit I was skeptical when I bought this - I usually am about self-or-indie-published books. Granted, things are better lately than they were a couple years ago, but there's still a lot of dreck published that way! However, this book was really quite good. And nice and long :)

The switch between past tense - for the in-Scotland parts - and present tense - for the Summerland parts - was a bit annoying at first, but I know that's just one of my pet peeves. However, I got over it. This was a pretty charming retelling - I liked how the Queen of Fairy was an actual sympathetic character and not just The Bad Guy. Most of the characters were great - strangely, it was Tam Lin himself who was my least favorite. I was pretty much ok with the idea of him being dragged off by the Hell Thing. Alas, not to be - which is not giving anything away, as you all know the ballad, I'm sure.

Anyway, this is a worthy read. It's nowhere near as wonderful as Pamela Dean's version (which I am going to go reread for at least the 30th time now, as it's grey and chilly, and such weather makes me want to go to Blackstock), but is quite good.

Judy Baker says

Slipping into the faerie realm is a delightful way to spend time. I am a fan of the Outlander series and the layered stories of Sir Terry Pratchett and this story lives in the same literary sphere. The Ballad of Tam Lin kept me turning pages. It pulled me into the story of lovers, gods, goddesses, and magical creatures Patricia has a sweet way of describing her cast of characters, even those with less wholesome traits.

The book has women of strong and weak moral character, their lives defined by expectations and roles that are defined by the times, as well as the rebels and rule-breakers. There is a wildness in the book and a love of nature too.

I am looking forward to reading the entire series to find out what happens to the members of the Randolph family.

Kathryn Mattern says

When I started reading this book I felt swept into a lyrical world through the medium of articulate writing, which I enjoyed, but as I continue reading, I am impressed by the historical accents that relate the world of human society of the time (1790) with the magically conjured world of Summerland. An enjoyable read on many levels.

Kyst says

I was worried when I read the first page. It was an author's note explaining some aspects of the book. Bad start; all that information should either be self-evident, which most of it was, or explained in the narrative.

The story launches with a too-long conversation between a heavily-accented man and his somehow accent-free daughter. The girl has no apparent personality traits besides being easily swept off her feet. And ultimately, I didn't care to meet the man who had impregnated her - I need more than what we're given to be drawn in.

What's available on Kindle for free is enough to keep me from buying the book. It's so bland. I do like that it's Scottish - that's interesting - but I was bored mere pages in. Give me something more to sink my teeth

into.

It's nice that your husband's doing so much advertising for you, though. Good man.

Rick F. says

very very unique and interesting plot!! must read for sure!

Donna says

I enjoyed reading the ballad of Young Tam Lin. It was a wonderful love story, along with just enough mystery to keep the reader wondering what will happen next. The characters were believable and fun. I enjoy ancient history, so the background was awesome. I also enjoy fantasy, so the combination of the two was fun to read. My only criticism was the book was a little too long, but still enjoyable.

Liz says

I loved this book - creative, exciting. It was really fun reading with the old Scottish dialect (it thankfully comes with a glossary). Weel, tae be sure, a ne'er read a bidder one (apologies to the author for trying to mimic the language..). Once you start this book, you won't want to put it down. Great Christmas gift idea.

Alan Denham says

Where do I start? I have had this sitting on my Kindle for months (possibly tens of!) waiting for me to get round to it. Now that I have finished it, I have to decide if I liked it!

On the good side . . . for anyone not familiar with the Legend of Tam Lin (or corresponding legends of the Seelie Courts and Thomas the Rhymer, etc) it might be a good idea to look them up briefly before reading. These stories will generally already be familiar to British readers. This book is a good re-telling of the tale, well fleshed out, with good characterisation and plenty of detail - including some references to actual places (mostly in the Scottish Borders), which helps to add atmosphere, though the places themselves are not described in detail.

On the bad side . . . it runs to a little over 9000 Kindle locations, suggesting something over 150000 words. Editing down to 120000 or so would have been a improvement.

And a possible mistake? The story is given a fixed set of dates, in the late 1700s. Now the descriptions of the lifestyles of the main characters (the human one, that is), for that part of the world, seem reasonable. Reference is made to Puritanism and Presbyterianism and John Knox - and the dates check out. The weaponry used (mostly swords and daggers, one mention of a firearm) seem OK for that time and place. But then there is reference to our heroine 'reading a novel'. This made me stop and look at some history, but

slightly to my surprise, for her social background and level of education, it is entirely realistic. It just didn't feel right - and the reason for that was that the legend on which the book is based goes back at least a further 250 years, maybe more. So whilst this book is internally consistent, it might have been a mistake to put a date on it at all. This sort of legend can stand outside time, unless the author decides to re-tell it in modern terms.

In conclusion: This was a long, slow read, and needed some editing to improve the pace, and that has taken it from four stars down to three - but as a retelling of a traditional story, the author has done pretty well!

Sandra Saidak says

For me, the book started kind of slow. But I persevered and it was worth it. Patricia Leslie has done a remarkable job of retelling the old story of Tam Lin (or The Fairie Queen, as I first learned it).

Usually in this story, only one of the two main female characters can be the hero, while the other is reduced to some form of villain. In Ms. Leslie's version, however, both Daniu, the Faerie Queen, and Janet the plucky mortal girl are easy to fall in love with. The male lead, while often dense, is still a pretty good guy, and lots of fun to read. (Literary eye candy? Maybe, but why not?)

In addition to evolving into an outstanding love story, the book delves into the more serious topics of the nature and origin of evil, gender politics and religious corruption. But what really makes it work are the well drawn characters and the relationships between them.

Highly recommended!

Lara says

The Ballad of Young Tam Lin is a lyrical and highly descriptive story of the way the land of the faery interacted with the harsh world of 18th century Scotland. While there were a few lapses in language given the time and place, overall the book created a magical atmosphere of life in rural Scotland, rough as it could be.

Overall I give this 3 1/2 stars, as by the end I was not happy with how easy John had things while Janet does all the suffering and takes most of the risks. And I'm not sure why she is so very open to the world of the fae, given how she suffers in the story. Overall, the men don't look too good in this book, excepting young Mik who is a minor character. They tend to be either overly rigid, unimaginative, womanizing, cruel and petty, or greedy and murderous.

I received this book through the Good Reads First reads program.

Lisa says

The Ballad of Young Tam Lin is at its core a love story. I generally don't go for pure love stories because I

find on the whole that they are too predictable, too sappy, and the characters are too ridiculously ideal that I just become frustrated with them all. This book appealed to me at first, even as a romance, because it is set in the 1700s, in Scotland, and includes elves. As a fan of historical fiction and fantasy, this really sounded like it would hit the spot including both genres.

It did not disappoint. I did enjoy the setting of the story, as I thought I would, but the biggest thing this book had going for it was the characters. I felt that the characters were really well rounded, easy to relate to and had their faults, so that I could truly enjoy them. While I would not say that the story was wholly unpredictable, there were enough moments of suspense that I wanted to keep reading.

I should mention that this did not feel like a fast moving, can't put the book down kind of book for the most part. It was more like a summer day kind of book, where I was able to relax, and enjoy and just picture the world and drink it in and enjoy the story.

If you enjoy a good love story, and can appreciate a story with elves and magic, then I would expect you to enjoy this book.

Note- I did receive this book as a first reads win.
