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# Tree Girl

*By T. A. Barron*

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**Tree Girl** By T. A. Barron

Rowanna's stern caretaker has warned her again and again not to go near the trees that surround their seaside cottage. But Rowanna is drawn to the forest-especially the High Willow on its faraway hill. Are the trees really forest ghouls, as Mellwyn says? Or could they possibly hold the secret to Rowanna's past and the mother she can hardly remember? If only she could get near the High Willow, Rowanna feels certain she would understand. . . .

With its timeless forest setting and charming, whimsical characters, **Tree Girl** is a perfect introduction to fantasy for young middle-grade readers.

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## **Tree Girl** By T. A. Barron Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Like a mythic, more mystical *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *Tree Girl* tells the tale of a young girl's struggle to survive under challenging conditions--and to answer even harder questions about who she is and where she came from.

Tightlipped Master Mellwyn won't say precisely who Anna's parents were, or how he came to care for her, but he emphatically warns Anna not to look for answers in the dark groves that border their lonely beachside hovel. (The forest ghouls within will "claw ye to bleedin' shreds, they will. Or crush ye, bones and all, with their graspin' feet!") But when the master leaves to fish everyday, Anna's growing curiosity can't be quelled. Especially when the distant High Willow seems to call to her, promising to reveal the mystery behind her missing mother.

Fans of T.A. Barron's other magical fables (such as the excellent *Lost Years of Merlin* series) will quickly get caught up in Anna's story, as she flirts with new discoveries, makes new friends, and learns the forest's most important lesson--that whatever we look for, be it good or bad, we'll inevitably find. (Ages 9 to 12) --  
*Paul Hughes*

### From Publishers Weekly

Barron's (The *Lost Years of Merlin*) unevenly paced fantasy centers on nine-year-old Anna, who lives with a crotchety old man in a cottage near the forest. In answer to her repeated inquiries about her past, her guardian, Master Mellwyn, tells her only that he found her as an infant nestled in the roots of a willow tree. He forbids her to go into the woods, warning that evil "ghouls" live there. At the same time, she is repeatedly drawn to the sight of the High Willow, which towers over the other forest trees: "Something about this tree spoke to her eye, called to her." The chapter that chronicles the heroine's softening toward her master and her immediate about-face moves too swiftly for readers to find her abrupt changes of heart credible. The upshot is that Anna befriends a forbidden bear who suddenly transforms into a boy and announces that he is a "tree spirit." As the two bond, readers will likely piece together the lass's identity, rendering anticlimactic the moment when she discovers who her mother is. The story's confusing internal logic (Why does Anna bear a striking resemblance to the Master's late daughter, for instance?) and predictable denouement diminish its effect. Ages 8-12.

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### From School Library Journal

Gr 4-7-Barron is a wonderful storyteller, a maker of myths and fables who creates magical places where characters learn wisdom and power. Here, nine-year-old Rowanna is determined to discover her past and find her mother. She lives in a lonely cottage by the sea with a fisherman, old Mellwyn, who rescued her as a baby from beneath the High Willow tree in a forest that is haunted by tree ghouls. In time, Anna befriends a bear/boy who is a tree spirit. When the protection Mellwyn offers begins to feel like a restraint, the girl makes her way to the High Willow with her friend on High Hallow Eve. On that day, spirits emerge from the trees and dance through the night. Anna learns that there are no tree ghouls, and that she, too, is a tree spirit, the daughter of the High Willow. The message is clear: if we are fearful, we will see frightening things around us, while if we are positive in our outlook, we will be open to the world around us. As in the author's previous novels, magic and the supernatural are used to reveal the interconnectedness of all living things and

to convey a deep respect for nature. Stylistically rich and lyrical, this novel weaves themes of self-discovery, family, loyalty, and friendship into an imaginative tale.

*Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME*

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **James Jackson:**

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#### **Florence Ross:**

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