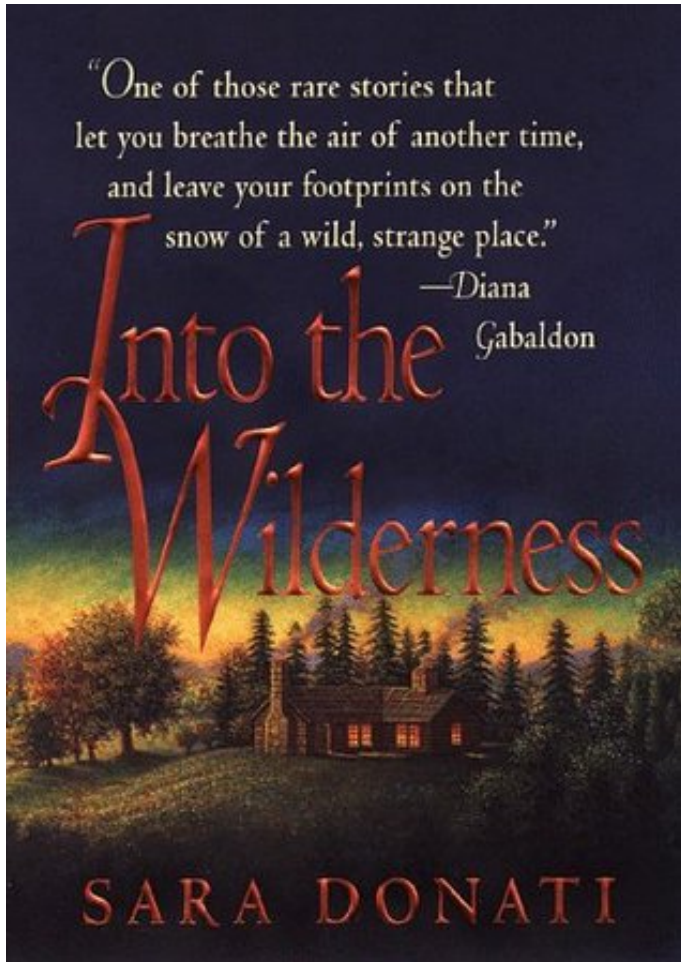

Sara Donati

Into the Wilderness (Wilderness #1)



Title: Into the Wilderness (Wilderness #1)

Author: Sara Donati

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Description

In this ambitious and vibrant sequel to *The Last of the Mohicans*, Elizabeth Middleton, a well-educated spinster of 29, journeys from her home in England to her father's lands in upstate New York in 1792. Her widowed father has promised Elizabeth that she can become the schoolteacher for the local children, but on her arrival at Paradise, her father's property, she learns that he has brought her to America under false pretenses. It is his intention to find her a husband, preferably the well-respected physician, Richard Todd.

Though Elizabeth has no intention to marry, she is immediately drawn, not to Richard, but to backwoodsman Nathaniel Bonner, son of Dan'l "Hawkeye" Bonner, hero of the James Fenimore Cooper classic. Nathaniel's connection to the Mohican (Mahican) people is a strong one; he considers Hawkeye's adoptive father, Chingachgook, his grandfather, and his own wife was a Mahican woman who died in childbirth several years earlier.

Elizabeth learns from her father that her inheritance is a part of his lands, a mountain known as Hidden Wolf, to be granted to her when she marries. She soon finds herself caught between Nathaniel and the Mahicans, who want to buy back the mountain from her father as part of their hunting grounds, and Richard, who wants the land for himself and sees Elizabeth as the route to it. Her father, fearful that the sale of Hidden Wolf to the Mahicans will bring more Indians back to Paradise, favors Richard.

Knowing Richard's main interest in her is her land, Elizabeth resists his attentions as she gets to know Nathaniel and his people. The backwoodsmen and their Indian friends accept her and respect her opinions, and she soon finds herself siding with their claim to Hidden Wolf. Meanwhile, the attraction between her and Nathaniel grows into a love that only adds to the conflict between the whites and the Indians.

Into the Wilderness is an intelligent and beautifully written historical novel that draws the reader into another world. Elizabeth and Nathaniel are well-rounded and intelligent characters, and the secondary characters are also strong, three-dimensional, and often entertainingly quirky. Although the book is long--nearly 700 words--tight pacing makes it an entertaining read. Fans of Diana Gabaldon will want to watch for a cameo appearance by one of the characters of Gabaldon's stunning *Outlander* series. --*Lisa Wanttaja*

Insightful reviews

Lucia: With my new found love for historical fiction (thanks to [Outlander](#)) and with my love for Last of Mohicans movie, it was just question of time when I would read this book. And I am glad that I chose it for my summer read. I got somehow lighter read than I expected but I enjoyed it nonetheless and I definitely plan to read next instalment!

Jill: I have read all of the books in this series. I have also read all of the outlander series. Now for me the outlander series began to fall flat especially in the last few books. However every

single book in this series has held my attention and earned my love and respect. By the time you read all these books you will feel like you are reading your own family history, these characters, Elizabeth, Nathaniel, Hannah, Lilly, Daniel, curiosity will move into your heart and will never leave. I have read and re read this series about five times, it never bores me, I always laugh, cry, smile along with the characters. I know I started off comparing this to Diana Gabaldon's books but I ask you not to. These books can and do stand of there own merit and are really thoroughly enjoyable books. Please read. They are beautifully descriptive and just a pure joy. My favourite books ever.

ALPHAreader: **OUTLANDER FANFICTION?**

It's impossible not to compare Donati's series to Diana Gabaldon's epic 'Outlander'. Both series are historical romance, on a grand serial scale, and the marketing of Donati's series is largely reliant on Diana Gabaldon. Not only does a Gabaldon quote appear on the front-cover of 'Into the Wilderness', but Donati thanks Gabaldon in her acknowledgements. And the most obvious comparison is the fact that Donati's books are a sort of fanfiction crossover to Diana Gabaldon's famous series. In 'Into the Wilderness' characters make brief mention of a Scot turned Indian called Ian, and his 'white witch' aunt Claire, and her big red-haired husband. This thin relation to 'Outlander' would have guaranteed Gabaldon readers would make the trek to Donati's series, which is the reason I picked up 'Into the Wilderness'.

I am a HUGE Diana Gabaldon fan. 'Outlander' is one of my all-time favourite novels, and like so many of her fans I find myself needing a reading supplement to tide me over between Gabaldon's four year long writing lapses.

'Into the Wilderness' is perfect for those 'Outlander' fans who really got into the series when Jamie and Claire went to live in the American wilderness. When the series took that trajectory Gabaldon introduced Native American's to the storyline, and if you're like me you especially loved the character arc of Young Ian who went on to become an Indian warrior. But more than that, the storyline becomes about the frontier life – small, new communities dealing with prejudice, hardships and their own brand of claustrophobia out in the American wilds.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

Donati's series is a continuation of 'Last of the Mohicans', the 1826 story by James Fenimore Cooper. Her series features Nathaniel Bonner, who is Hawkeye (Daniel Day Lewis for those only familiar with the movie adaptation) and Cora's son. Nathaniel Bonner is the story's hero... and he's a fair bit swoon-worthy.

Nathaniel's hands tightened on her upper arms until she gave in and looked up, and then he held on to her gaze and refused to let her look away.

"Listen, now. Richard wants the mountain and he'll take you to get it."

Elizabeth tried to drop her head but he put a finger under her chin to lift it and looked her directly in the eye. "I want you," he said.

A warm rush of breath left Elizabeth. She could smell him, the oil on his skin. Leather and sweat and blood.

“I wake up wanting you and go to sleep wanting you,” Nathaniel murmured, pulling her shoulders up to him so that her head fell back and the arch of her neck rose to meet him. “Elizabeth. I want you as much as I want to breathe, but I need the mountain.”

Nathaniel’s heroine is Elizabeth Middleton – a 29 year old spinster who never thought she would find love in the wilderness, let alone with an adopted Mohawk. Elizabeth was a wonderful protagonist; she is hot-headed, stubborn and entranced by the Mohawk way of life.

NATHANIEL BONNER / JAMIE FRASER
ELIZABETH MIDDLETON / CLAIRE RANDALL FRASER

Nathaniel Bonner is no Jamie Fraser (that would be a tall order) but he is an exciting hero for our heroine. His being Mohawk makes him thrillingly exotic, and the little bit of savage in him makes their romance titillating and scorching.

Elizabeth is likewise no Claire Fraser – but a lot of Claire’s appeal lies in her delivering 19th century humour to the 17th century. Then there’s the fact that Claire is a doctor, and Elizabeth a schoolteacher - so in general Claire has more thrilling storylines from her occupation. Diana Gabaldon writes more explicit, steamy sex scenes than Donati. But Donati’s sex scenes are sweet and plentiful, and easily communicate Nathaniel and Elizabeth’s love for one another.

ROMANTIC ENTANGLEMENTS

I think Nathaniel and Elizabeth’s hasty romance is one of the big pro’s of ‘Into the Wilderness’. If you are one of those readers who attempted ‘Outlander’ but weren’t patient enough to trudge through the slow start, then ‘Into the Wilderness’ is probably more your pace. The romance kicks off from the get-go, with Nathaniel and Elizabeth meeting within the first 10 pages and an obvious attraction kindling. From there the central focus of the book is on the Romeo and Juliet romance between Nathaniel and Elizabeth – a white woman and an adopted Indian.

‘Outlander’ dealt with Claire’s time-travelling mishap and determination to get back to 1940’s England, as well as Scottish clan politics, and the lead up to Culloden. But ‘Into the Wilderness’ has a much more basic focus. It is a romance, first and foremost. This is about Nathaniel and Elizabeth – everything else is backdrop and obstacles to their happiness.

DIANA GABALDON / SARA DONATI

Donati’s series has a few major differences with ‘Outlander’; the main one being an absence of fantasy, because there is no ‘time travel’ plot. It’s tough to fairly compare ‘Outlander’ and ‘Into the Wilderness’. I think Diana Gabaldon has more writing finesse; her series is more grand-scale epic and she revels in a slow-as-molasses storytelling that lets layers unfold, cliff-hangers erupt and characters arcs naturally progress. Gabaldon also has a very distinct and wonderful voice – even the dullest passages (like Claire’s medicinal descriptions) are riveting when written in her succulent, lyrical prose.

Donati also has a beautiful writing style – not as consistently breathtaking as Gabaldon's, but quite a few lines and paragraphs of Donati's really struck me. Some of her scenes read like snapshots of a moment, so vivid and colourful that they bear re-reading;

They stood leaning toward each other across the awkward expanse of their snowshoes, joined like a wishbone by the soft suckling of mouths.

Reading 'Into the Wilderness' I started to think that Diana Gabaldon and Sara Donati have very different strengths and weaknesses – and it often occurred to me that one's faults was the other's forte.

DIALOGUE

I think Diana Gabaldon is much more adept at writing dialogue than Sara Donati. Gabaldon's characters speak into your ear, so believable are their speeches – especially when she is putting weasel words and round-about talk into their mouths. Jamie Fraser is the perfect example of her cleverness with dialect – the way Jamie's words change depending on his audience, or his cloak and dagger speeches.

In 'Into the Wilderness' I often thought that characters weren't very convincing in their diatribes. It was a case of people talking too directly and succinctly, getting their complicated messages across with little misunderstanding. Like when Nathaniel Bonner talks to Elizabeth about his deceased wife, Sarah. Much was made of the fact that Nathaniel felt uncomfortable talking about Sarah, but when the time came I found his words flowed so easily and revealed his hidden depth of feeling. It was at those times when I think Chekhov's idiom of 'leave them cold' could have worked better, if Donati had left some motivations unsaid.

HOME LIFE

I think Sara Donati is better at writing home life scenes. A lot of the story takes place on 'Lake in the Clouds' and 'Hidden Wolf' mountain – there was a very good chance that Donati writing many domestic scenes of wedded bliss could have been repetitive and dull. But she writes so thoroughly and fascinatingly about Mohawk life and Elizabeth's observations of it that I was happy to meander along with the more sedate scenes of domestication.

In contrast; in Diana Gabaldon's books I am never totally easy with domestic scenes – whether they be on the mountain or Lallybroch. I think it's because Gabaldon is so adept at writing action and heart-palpitating plot that anything slower is sometimes frustrating to trudge through. Then there is the fact that I know any slow scenes of domesticated bliss will be short-lived for Jamie and Claire, and when they are idle at Lallybroch I am constantly on-edge for the next disaster.

RUTHLESS WRITER

Diana Gabaldon is, overall, more ruthless when it comes to storyline. I found in 'Into the

Wilderness' that the overall plot was a little hazy. The first-half of the book sets Dr. Richard Todd up as Nathaniel and Elizabeth's adversary. But Todd isn't much of a 'villain', if he's one at all. He's all shades of grey and actually fairly easy to empathize with. Whereas in 'Outlander' Black Jack Randall is a truly masochistic villain – he is a very clear bad guy to Jamie Fraser's good guy. And the British Dragoons against Scottish clans act as another black/white tale.

At the end of 'Into the Wilderness' I really couldn't decide if there was any particular storyline – or if it was just a matter of character's reacting to situations instead of acting. Even when the second-half of the book turns more inward and sets up the racist townfolk as the new threat to the Bonner clan, I never really found that to be a substantial plot. Mostly because the stakes were never very high – I never once doubted that all would finish in a happy ending for Nathaniel and Elizabeth. In contrast Diana Gabaldon had a very helter-skelter plot, clear good guys and bad guys and high stakes to get caught up in.

Diana Gabaldon is especially ruthless when it comes to story because she isn't afraid to put character's in terrible situations, let the good guys lose once in a while and let the bad guys triumph occasionally. But Donati seems more inclined to take the easy way. I don't want to give anything away, but events turn to Nathaniel and Elizabeth's favour quite easily and neatly.

CONCLUSION

I have fallen in love with Donati's world, and Nathaniel and Elizabeth's saga. I especially loved the book because I can see that Donati has quite a story arc in store – currently there are 6 books in the series, all of them 800+ pages long. For an Outlander lover like me, the prospect of discovering a new saga to sink my teeth into is enough to give me goosebumps. Especially when I consider how long it takes Ms. Gabaldon to pump out a new 'Outlander' instalment (4-5 years!) – I now have Donati to tide me over in the meantime, and fill my epic historical romance craving. Hoorah! I am especially thrilled at the prospect of reading more little mentions and side-notes about Gabaldon's characters who cross-over into Donati's world.

If you're an Outlander/Diana Gabaldon fan, you should definitely give Sara Donati a read. Diana Gabaldon is still my favourite, and nothing can rival 'Outlander' (Nathaniel Bonner is no Jamie Fraser, though a good contender) but 'Into the Wilderness' is in the same Outlandish vein and just as wonderfully grand-scale to get swept away by.

Quinn: Into the desert used to be particularly a shock for me. Firstly, I wasn't awaiting an 876 web page brick. Then, given acknowledged dimensions, I used to be looking ahead to an epic saga. It can be epic in scale, yet was once strangely slender in scope and plot. The booklet spans year within the lifetime of the folk of a small payment referred to as Paradise, and makes a speciality of the struggle for possession of Hidden Wolf, the mountain the place a small workforce of local Americans dwell and hunt. The fundamental characters are Nathaniel, son of Hawkeye from the motion picture The Final of the Mohicans, and Elizabeth, a 29 yr previous spinster (and happy with it) who has left England to reside with the daddy at the fringe of the recent York Wilderness. The helping solid of villagers, trappers and local Americans are vividly and richly drawn - actual 'characters' - and an important element in lifting this story. The tale

flowed strangely good and the size was once mostly forgotten. I loved this sufficient to place the others within the sequence on Mt TBR.

Belinda: For any Diana Gabaldon fans, rejoice, my friends, rejoice! I recognize you have got waited decades for extra Claire and Jamie, with *years* among sequels. you could bridge that terrible hole with my new find, Sara Donati. OK, I admit, I have in simple terms learn the 1st book. however it had that headstrong girl character, the dangerous-but-charming love interest, the refrain of earthy and engaging history characters. All are located opposed to a far off time in background the place lifestyles used to be difficult (really hard, dammit, no scorching water!). I zipped via this publication in 4 days, ignoring laundry, dishes and my wife (I did feed the kids) as the tale used to be so darn engrossing. I really had a pang while I ended this publication -- or an urge to get right down to the bookshop or library to get the following book. Nevertheless, there are sequels! And a short view of the reports turns out they don't seem to be bad. So, while you are awaiting the following installment of Sassenach and the Bonny Lad from Scotland, pass get this book. it eventually tide you over. after which some.

Kimberly: Into the barren region left me very underwhelmed. It had the entire parts of a narrative that I'd ordinarily like: romance, nature/wilderness, drama, etc. But, the writing was once simply off. this is an instance of a clunky passage (two characters are making out): "He learned that she used to be attempting to check with him, and he got here again to himself a little. His name. She was once summoning him to her. He drew it from her mouth, swallowed it whole. Gave her again her personal name, fed it to her together with his tongue." It brings imagery to brain of a mom fowl regurgitating nutrition for her babies, LOL. The writing actually assorted in step with page--one paragraph will be nice and the following paragraph could take you mentally out of the book. there has been no wasting oneself with this one. one of many major difficulties I had with the writing used to be the POV. you would be examining Elizabeth's POV for pages after which all at once it'd be Nathaniel's, no holiday or warning. It used to be awkward to assert the least. Again in regards to the writing, the characters simply were not plausible and a few of the occasions they have been awarded with have been downright silly. For instance, Nathaniel has to teach Elizabeth how one can drink from a stream. As a girl who's approximately thirty, one might imagine she may determine find out how to carry her hair again for the task. But, no longer Elizabeth. The rugged Nathaniel has to teach her. *eye roll* talking of Nathaniel and Elizabeth, I by no means felt their chemistry. they simply were not plausible as a pair for me and that I discovered his moniker for her of "Boots" as compelled and annoying. Finally, I must touch upon the inclusion of references to Outlander characters. Going into the publication I presumed that it may be fun, specifically as I knew Diana Gabaldon had had a few impact on Donati's writing (as Donati herself recognizes in her Notes). Instead, the references felt gimmicky and, as soon as again, forced. at the surface, Donati's writing turns out as if it can be similar to Gabaldon's, but, in actuality, it did not even come shut for me. JMHO. As all my acquaintances on GR know, I am a major DG fan. For all my gripes, the e-book wasn't negative and there has been adequate drama to make me curious as to the ending. Still, it used to be in simple terms 'ok' for me (2 stars). I feel I went into this publication looking ahead to too much.

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