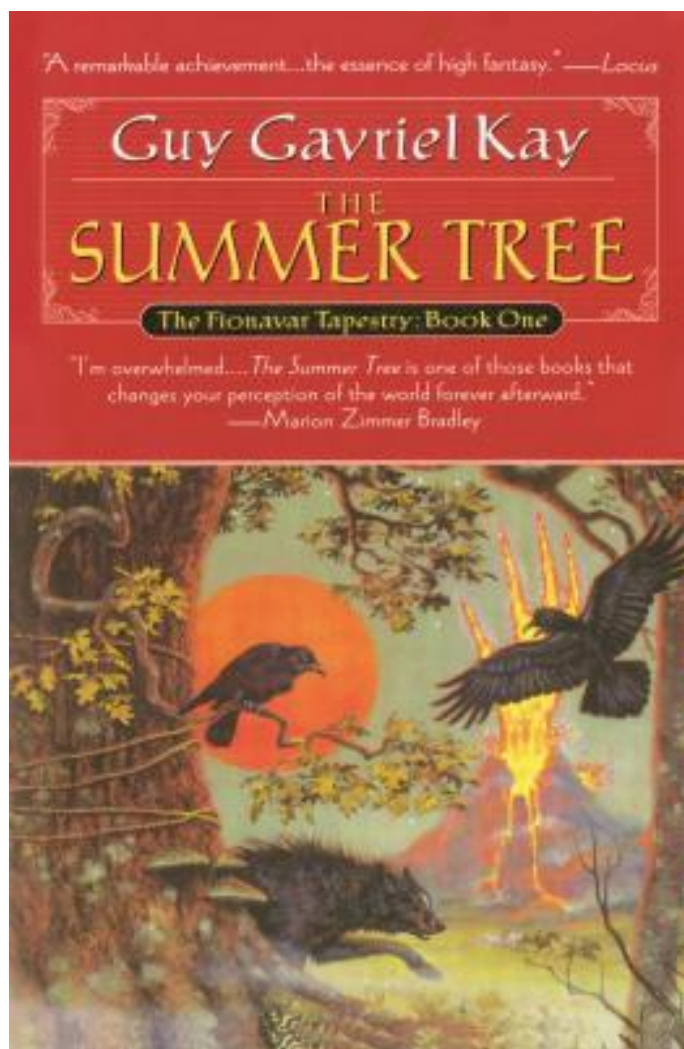


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**Guy Gavriel Kay**

**The Summer Tree (The Fionavar Tapestry #1)**



Title: The Summer Tree (The Fionavar Tapestry #1)

Author: Guy Gavriel Kay

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## Description

The first volume in Guy Gavriel Kay's stunning fantasy masterwork.

Five men and women find themselves flung into the magical land of Fionavar, First of all Worlds. They have been called there by the mage Loren Silvercloak, and quickly find themselves drawn into the complex tapestry of events. For Kim, Paul, Kevin, Jennifer and Dave all have their own part to play in the coming battle against the forces of evil led by the fallen god Rakoth Maugrim and his dark hordes.

Guy Gavriel Kay's classic epic fantasy plays out on a truly grand scale, and has already been delighting fans of imaginative fiction for twenty years.

## Insightful reviews

Mark: **The Review**

I generally don't write a review for a book unless I finish it. I don't think it's fair to the author or to others interested in the book.

I didn't finish this book.

However, I did spend a significant amount of time on this book, so I think I do have the right to say something.

Wow. This book beat me. I don't know if was the method in which I read the book or if I just didn't have the mindset to do so, but I just didn't like it.

Reading became a chore and something that I didn't look forward to. I found myself halfway through and seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

Then I thought, reading a book of this type shouldn't be a chore. I shouldn't be looking forward to ending the story, but savoring what's happening in the narrative currently.

So I quit. If you can get through it, congratulations. Reading should be a pleasure and not a labor for which Hercules would pat you on the back in admiration.

I don't think it's objectively a bad book. I'm sure it possesses a certain charm and that maybe the series turns into a compelling read in the later books. It was just lost or wasted on me, I guess.

This series probably has its fans, and I'm sure they would disagree with my assessment. I'm not saying that they are wrong. I'm saying that I just didn't get it or like it.

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Sparrow: Part I of this story is in many ways a grown-up [The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe](#). I read the Narnia stories when I was little, and to be honest, I think C.S. Lewis will always have a place in my heart. To me, he's a sort of philosophical grandpa, whom I ignore when he's spouting cultural faux pas, but who brings out something lovely and profound at least as often as he says something unfortunate. Anyway, this book is not about C.S. Lewis, but I think the affection I feel for Narnia made a difference in my read of this book. I also don't think I need Lewis to be 100% correct all the time, and that probably made a difference in me liking the way Kay made the [\(view spoiler\)](#) story his own.

I spend a lot of time complaining, I think, about when authors throw together a really bad recipe for a book – when they mutilate and mix ingredients that should never go together. I really liked the use of the ingredients here. There's Narnia; Henry IV / rakishness; some wild-west, bow-and-arrow stuff; a very decent hair-color change; law and folklore; a magical mystery animal; and a giant black swan that smells like garbage. Basically pretty good. I'm not a lover of fantasy (sorry!), so I have to get past the orcs and dwarves and elves to like a story like this (and I don't care if you call them different names, they're still orcs and elves). I'll probably talk more about that in my review of the second book in this series, but with this book it's pretty easy to look past to some genuinely good stories.

Unfortunately, at this point, probably most of what I have to say is a spoiler. [\(view spoiler\)](#)

Okay, maybe fewer spoilers than I thought. The other problem I have with this is the characterization of the gods. Maybe this is just a personal pet peeve, but a lot of times I don't like the characterization of deities in gender roles (the obvious exception to this is [The Iliad](#), which, of course, rules); I prefer the Julian of Norwich god who is both male and female because I'm less likely to see the female god relegated to the kitchen. There's some other gender stuff that goes on in these books that makes me a little put off. I don't think it's insidious, or anything, I just think it takes away from the entertainment. Like, the priestesses are dangerous and suspicious, but the magicians are noble and trustworthy. But, then when everything gets sexy, the girls aren't scary anymore. I'm not saying it stays like that the whole time, but, I don't know. It just has a little bit of a male-culture feel that isn't super entertaining to me. [\(view spoiler\)](#)

Anyway, I feel like I'm kind of ragging on this book, when I really did like it. I really like the Henry IV storyline, and I like the Seer stuff. I like that they're all a bunch of Canadian kids and that there's a law student who really needs to study for Evidence. I like how it assumes the vital importance to the WHOLE UNIVERSE of Celtic folklore. That's pretty cool. I think Jennifer's story isn't really fair, and even though I'm almost through the second book, I still don't really get it. [\(view spoiler\)](#) But, in general, I think the story used some really great legends really creatively. I liked it. I think I should have felt more emotionally attached to the characters, but I think that has more to do with how I feel in general right now than the book itself. Especially if you like fantasy, and especially if you're willing to commit to thousands of pages of fantasy reading (because there is a mammoth cliffhanger at the end of this book), it is worth picking up.  
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Nicki: I was 16 when I first read the Fionavar Tapestry. My boyfriend and I had just gone

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through what would be the first of many breakups. I'd argued with my family about the breakup. My three best friends were all leaving, and I would only see one of them again in the decade to come. While on holiday with them in the Netherlands I was thrown from my seat on a bus and injured my spine, which left me bedridden and unable to attend the goodbyes. I was, in short, as miserable as only a heartbroken 16-year-old girl can be.

And while I was stuck in bed, moping through the pain, I picked up the trilogy I'd bought in a sale months back and half-forgotten about. I read the whole trilogy in two days. I sobbed my heart out, and at the end of it all, the hurt felt washed clean. To this day, if I hear the music that I was listening to during two of the Tapestry's most poignant moments of sacrifice, I am right back there, both in my vision of Fionavar and in my memory of that 16-year-old girl. Because as **The Summer Tree** will show us, music can unlock so much.

When I decided to reread all of Kay's work, I was concerned that the Fionavar Tapestry, of all of them, might not live up to my memories. They are all powerful works, but this trilogy is the one that's in my bones.

I needn't have worried.

**The Summer Tree** starts off in Toronto, with five Canadian students who are all attending a lecture given by the mysterious Celtic expert Lorenzo Marcus, who is not given to making public appearances. Lorenzo Marcus is actually Loren Silvercloak, a mage of Fionavar, and he and his companion -- actually the Dwarf King Matt Sören, source of Loren's power -- quickly contrive a reason to end up alone with the five and explain to them their real purpose in appearing there tonight. In the kingdom of Brennín in Fionavar, the first of all the worlds which reflect it, the High King is about to celebrate the 50th year of his reign, and Loren is to bring back five guests from our world to join the festivities.

After being assured of the reality of Loren's power, the five agree to go. One, Dave, changes his mind at the last minute, and snatches his hand away during the ritual; when the transferral takes place, he is not in Brennín. The other four are quickly drawn into the kingdom's politics. Brennín is suffering a great drought, and the answer calls for a sacrifice its king is not willing to make; Loren's return is not warmly received by some of his compatriots, any more than the mages as a whole are warmly regarded by the fractious High Priestess of the Goddess Dana; their arrival in Fionavar sees the awakening in one of the group, Kim, of powers of her own; and beneath Rangát, warded by the peoples of five kingdoms, lies Rakoth Maugrim, silent but unslain.

The initial transition from Toronto to Fionavar is a bit rough. I've never been that fond of portal fantasies, and it almost seems like Kay isn't either, since he addresses it in a rather short and perfunctory manner that's rather at odds with the rich style he'll soon transition to. The characters seem almost bored with the need for explanation, so blithely do they accept whatever is presented to them. If I were suddenly presented with something as paradigm-changing as the existence of magic and other worlds, and was then bodily thrown into the latter using the former, I'd probably be gibbering in a corner. A certain amount of shorthand is necessary in order to make portal fantasies viable (which is one of the reasons I don't generally like them), otherwise the entire first book would consist of passing out, histrionics, and likely

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some form of psychotherapy, but even for the milieu this is abrupt.

Fortunately, it's also a very small part of the book. Once the story settles into Fionavar, and once you accept that, plausible or not, the protagonists have settled into Fionavar, Kay's enthusiasm for his world shines through on every level. I called his style rich, but in truth it's not just rich here, it's operatic. The small moments of significance in life which become larger in the pages of a story -- the opening words of a love affair, the parting conversation left unfinished -- are earth-shattering in Fionavar. The world turns on a song heard by chance at the wrong moment, and the love, tragedy, and sacrifice that follow are forces before which the gods themselves will bow.

In most hands it would be painfully overwrought. And to be fair, there are moments when the dialogue aims and misses, and the adult me winces in sympathy. (The 16-year-old me was probably swooning, though.) Early Kay though it may be, though, it's still Kay, and no one but no one can play the heartstrings in quite the same way. If you reach the sequence from which this first book derives its title, you will understand why music is such a key to my memories of reading it. Listen to something that moves you while you read it, something that has its roots in loss and sacrifice but also in love, and I suspect it'll be seared into your memory more than a decade from now as well.

The mythological background of the Fionavar Tapestry is immense -- I think the books can come across quite Tolkienian at times, and I have no doubt that Kay's work on **The Silmarillion** must've influenced that feel, but I think that the trilogy also comes across as a genuine epic in the same vein as **The Lord of the Rings** because it draws on so many of the same primary sources that inspired Tolkien. I had forgotten how much of that mythological groundwork is laid in **The Summer Tree** though. Touches of Norse flavour blend seamlessly with a good deal of the Welsh or Arthurian myth that will go on to be such a strong throughline in the series. Despite the fact that the Toronto scenes were weak for me, and my general feelings about portal fantasies, this is what made me warm to the framing device of traversal from our world to Fionavar. I always feel a bit let down when fantasies that don't have a strong connection to our world in the narrative use a lot of our myth and legend in their world-building, because it feels like the author was too lazy to flesh out their creation in a more original fashion. Framed this way, however, it becomes powerful, resonant -- of course the stories that echo in our minds when we stand in our world's places of power like Stonehenge and Glastonbury Tor would be that much stronger in the First of All Worlds.

Along with his lyrical language, one of the foremost of Kay's gifts, in my opinion, is his characterisation. This being his first novel, it's a bit weaker here. There are still characters that move me to my core and that have lived in my mind for the last decade and more without losing their shine, like Diarmuid dan Ailell and Paul Schafer, but the women don't have quite as much three-dimensionality as the female characters in his later works possess. I think Kim probably has the greatest depth and authenticity, though I may be conflating some of that with her development in the next two books. Jennifer is a very mild presence, but that's something that makes more sense as her story develops and that aspect of her is resolved. Jaelle is a truly grating note, the kind of strong woman you usually see from authors who have yet to understand the difference between strong and shrewish, and there's another female character

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who responds to a caddish lover by seemingly interpreting the adage 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned' as a personal challenge to demonstrate that Hell isn't even playing in the same league, baby. Next time I get my heart broken, I'm relocating to Fionavar, where apparently even disproportionately violent responses to an ex-boyfriend will be A-OK with everyone up to and including the wounded party.

None of which should put you off, because they are first book hiccups that Kay soon learns to smooth away. And while I'm calling him out for a negative thing involving women, I also want to mention a positive thing involving women. There is a rape scene in this book. Usually when I come across a rape scene written by... well, anyone in the fantasy field, but especially male authors, I sigh and wonder how to write the section of my review that addresses all the things wrong with it without just repeating what I've said a dozen times before. Because really, it gets tiresome. Kay did something that shocked me when I first read it and shocks me even more now that I'm an adult feminist and find myself having the same reaction. He got it right. It was focused on the person it was actually about, the woman experiencing it. At no point was she deprotagonised. It was devoid of titillating detail, focused instead on the emotional responses to a violation. And although I won't touch on spoilers, it's something that actually has a reason to be there, that actually has a role in the story *that matters*, and that role is not to heighten a romantic lead's manpain. Whenever the debate comes up on whether rape can serve a non-exploitative purpose in a story or whether it's something that authors should just leave alone, I think of this book.

I think of this book often. That's probably a succinct summary of why I'd recommend it so highly, really. Kay's written more technically polished things, filled with characters that have even greater depth and with achingly beautiful prose. But it's this book I think of, a year, five years, ten years after reading it. It's the music and the sacrifice. It's the most cathartic book I've ever read. Don't turn to it for an example of what Kay's writing is like, because to date, he's never written anything quite like the Fionavar Tapestry again, and I doubt anyone could who has the benefit of experience that comes from having authored so many books. But do yourself a favour, and don't skip it.

[Review from Bookette.net](#)

Jackie: this can be the 1st novel I learn by way of Kay, and i'm now not disappointed. he is received a brand new fan. Since this is often the 1st in a continuous trilogy, i do not suppose i will be able to overview it extensive because the tale is not over. I can let you know that I completely loved it. Characters and settings have been good outlined and i have made a few new neighbors in Fionavar. i am patiently waiting for supply of the remainder of the series; as soon as i have learn all 3 novels i will do justice to the sequence within the kind of a review.

Carol. : Nostalgia read, sparked through a bookclub wish to learn the series. What am i able to say? I first learn this now not lengthy after the sequence got here out (1984 for the 1st one). i used to be in my early teens, and there wasn't a lot fable that felt which includes females, tales instructed in a lush international of sweeping scope. you know the way determined my 13 year-old self was? words: Thomas Covenant. Kay used to be a clean summer time breeze, and the writing—oh, the writing! It remained glossy in my memory, musical and powerful adequate to

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drag on the heart. Like many nostalgia reads, I used to be a bit afraid to strategy it again, afraid it wouldn't delay to 25 years of memories. However, I discovered it remained satisfying, nearly as delicious, simply as emotional and evocative, and somehow, much more balanced than I remembered. Continued at: <http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2014/0...>

Kay: the 1st idea I had while I learn the outline was, "Gawd, now not back \*groaning moaning\*". I have learn tried to learn adequate Tolkien wannabes with elves, orcs, and swords, and had enough. Then, I learn super favorable studies on GR approximately this book. It piqued my curiosity. Wait, what? this is often how Tolkien will be written?? What the... Frankly, upon completing this book, I am susceptible to accept as true with the favorable critics. This can be a great deal like LotR, quite a bit that I will be able to see many fanatics both loving it or hating it. Kay performs and works his magic in Tolkien's idealistic framework. The great v. evil clash is the same, the population of Fionavar reflect that of center Earth's, or even the characters (particularly the women, notwithstanding I'm going to get to that) are strikingly just like the prime girl forged of LotR. Such a lot of parts overlap that I at first felt pissed off on the sameness, but, as I acquired extra into the book, I used to be shocked through how precise this whole tale was. First off, this used to be an EPIC STORY. Fionavar, because the to start with worlds, is the center for all our mythology and legends. All different worlds spin off Fionavar, this means that Fionavar is domestic to most of these myths. Even if we're viewing this international during the eyes of 5 possible traditional Canadian college students, Fionavar by no means ceases to lose that EPIC tale feel, partly as a result of EPIC heroes and villains, and in part as the scholars themselves reach slightly EPIC prestige themselves. At the beginning the characters felt a bit awkward. Might be it is a demi generational gap, however their suggestions and behaviors didn't believe ordinary or all that interesting. I continually bought burdened among Kevin and Paul, and felt that the remaining have been extra cardboard-y than alive, specifically once they arrived in Fionavar. I took factor that nobody puzzled how freaking extraordinary it was once to be taken to an entire diverse world. Yet once you have over that preliminary hump, well, Mind. Blown. The story of 5 collage childrens stumbling into Fionavar spread out beautifully. I at first cringed on the considered modern-day humans bringing their modern-day beliefs and airs right into a swords-and-sorcery age. Yet rather than trouncing on customs and cultures, the 5 took their very own exact paths, be it gentle or very dark. In strolling this road, the 5 have been quick swallowed into Fionavar, physique and soul, and have become greater than simply Kevin Laine or simply Jennifer Lowell. It truly turns out extra acceptable to assert that they grew to become avatars of the advanced beliefs that make up Fionavar. This global is alive, people. It has its personal customs, its personal mythos, and its personal presence. Very quickly, the ebook turned as a lot approximately Fionavar, because it used to be in regards to the five. Fionavar isn't any chuffed fairy land. It has beauty, grit, complexity, darkness, and corruption, all subtly woven into the narrative through Kay's beautiful prose. The guy can write, and he does so tastefully. In contrast to many glossy fable writers, not anything approximately his prose felt gratuitous, and the quality, instead of quantity, of his prose communicated the temper of the scene. I felt thoroughly enraptured by way of the realm of Fionavar, and very, only a few books have transported me brain and spirit into its world. The one significant factor that I do take factor with is his therapy of ladies within the book, rather Jennifer's story. The reports prepped me for anything awful, and I am completely satisfied I bought a few notice. Now, in view that I'm affected, I'll think that this (view spoiler)[rape (hide spoiler)] scene has a objective that may be completely brain blowing...or else, what the hell, GGK? Elizabeth famous in her assessment

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that GGK writes how he thinks ladies should still behave, and i'm vulnerable to agree. He teams his girls into wide categories: they're both honorable (Kim, Jennifer), if now not a piece psycho (the Priestess), or petty and slutty (the courtroom women, a few of the tavern women Diarmiud sleeps with). (Kay's rendition of excessive myth is a bit raunchier and sexier than what I bear in mind from LotR, woohoo). Women, might be unjustly, are depicted much less 3 dimensionally than others, and do endure greater than men. The finishing scene is one example. one other is: (view spoiler)[ the prince embarks on a "quest" together with his males to seduce a international princess, will get away with it, and within the dizzying elation that follows a project good entire the lads bond over alcohol and extra intercourse with tavern wenches. Later, whilst the vengeful princess attempts to assassinate the prince for her lack of honor, he finally ends up masking for her while she is located out. it is a bizarre dynamic that switched the victim-attacker position in prefer of the prince and successfully glazed over the truth that what the prince did to her was once a scumbag factor to do. (hide spoiler)]Overall, a superb 4 stars to this preliminary book. regardless of a few hiccups and my very own own issues, this ebook was once a gorgeous advent to what seems an exceptionally epic and private tale. i'm certainly a fan, and should be carrying on with to read.And if that does not persuade you enough, I already got the subsequent booklet and feature started analyzing it on the time of penning this review. four STARS AND hugely RECOMMENDED, specially for lovers of epic fable and excessive fantasy.

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