

Forest Born (The Books of Bayern #4)

Shannon Hale

Reviewed by: Ritika Chhabra, 13

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Rin grew up in the heart of the forests of Bayern, spending time with her tightly knit family and young cousins. As Ma's favorite child and Razo's little sister, Rin finds balance and peace in the steady trees and gentle nature of her home. But as a dangerous secret slowly forces her away from the realities, she's known her whole life, Rin has to find her way through a journey she never would have predicted.

This compelling read was steeped in the comforting culture of Rin's home and family. With a lush and immersive atmosphere, the story swept me away into a wistful world of adventure and mystery. Even after finishing the book, the dazzling, electric setting lingers in my mind, blending the borders of reality and fiction. Reminiscent of popular fairy tales, the book weaves a story of self-discovery, understanding and acceptance. The author carries you through the story of Rin's journey, linking you so deeply to the character's emotion, that every word reverberates with emotion and feeling. I especially loved how the old characters returned, remaining true to their original characters, but with more personal growth and well roundedness. The story is also well paced and organized, flowing smoothly and seamlessly between ideas.

The main part of the book that drew me in was Rin's character. Throughout the plot she struggles internally with her understanding of herself and the factors that define her. Although her conflict isn't showy, dramatic or provoked by outward circumstances, it holds a rough and raw appeal that connects deeply with the experiences coming-of-age readers. I appreciated the depth of her thinking and reflection, which brought about the resolution of the plot as opposed to external influences or coincidental factors. Lastly, the realistic and constructive relationships of the female, sister-like characters in the story was lovely and comforting to read about. I highly recommend this engaging and magical book! There is no mature content, but some of the themes may be difficult for younger readers to understand, so a suitable reading age would be 12+.

Recommended Titles:

Book of a Thousand Days by Shannon Hale

Fablehaven (Fablehaven #1) by Brandon Mull

East (East, #1) by Edith Pattou

Ella Enchanted (Ella Enchanted #1) by Gail Carson Levine

Princess of the Midnight Ball (The Princesses of Westfalin Trilogy #1) by Jessica Day George