The Ironwood Tree (The Spiderwick Chronicles, Book 4) by Tony DiTerlizzi

Tremendous Fantasy

After a brief breather in book three (Lucindas Secret), the Spiderwick Chronicles heat up with doppelgangers, then dwarves, then a dastardly double-cross, as this five-part series approaches its dramatic end. The Grace kids (9-year-old twins Simon and Jared, and 13-year-old Mallory) might think that things have finally quieted down for them, but the nefarious faerie world has many more surprises in store. In the second chapter, titled, IN WHICH the Grace twins are triplets, a mysterious and menacing shape-shifter shows up at Mallorys fencing match--and before Simon and Jared can suss out whats up, their sister disappears, presumably kidnapped. Eager to recover Mallory, the two descend into a strange subterranean world beneath a nearby quarry, only to find themselves prisoners and then privy to a wicked (and almost unbelievable) plan. The twins do end up tracking down Mallory, but only in very peculiar circumstances—not the least of which that shes wearing a dress. Author Holly Black once again skillfully manages to weave in plenty of creepy details (including a bloody final chapter) without whitewashing or leaving young readers feeling too creeped out—and she gets able assistance from Tony DeTerlizzis ever-evocative pen-and-ink drawings (especially in the looming menace of the Mulgarath). Fans of the series will have a hard time waiting for the final installment, titled fittingly, ominously, The Wrath of Mulgarath. (Ages 6 to 10) --Paul Hughes

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For a couple of weeks, things have been almost normal for the three Grace children (Jared, Simon and Mallory) - there have been no faerie sightings. But that changes quickly at Mallorys fencing competition and soon Jared is in serious trouble and he has a hard time explaining his actions. But there's even more trouble for Jared and Simon when Mallory disappears. Their search for her will take them to places they never imagined and they begin to wonder if they can fight the monsters by themselves.
The Ironwood Tree is the wonderful fourth book in the children's fantasy series The Spiderwick Chronicles. Authors Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black step up both the action and fantasy elements in this, the fourth of five books. They add more fantastical creatures including dwarves and metal dogs as well as some mysterious beings (who was that girl rummaging through Mallory's bag and who was the boy that got Jared in trouble?) All three children are in real danger in this book - danger that will have children eagerly turning the pages to find out what happens next. Mixed in with the fantasy elements is a dose of reality - Jared is still having anger management issues and the thing that gets him in trouble in the book, while not his fault, happens all too often in the real world.

The Ironwood Tree is a well-done fantasy book for children of all ages.

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