



# Spiritwalk

*Charles de Lint*

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## **Spiritwalk** Charles de Lint

Tamson House, in modern, urban Ottawa, is a rambling, eccentric curiosity of a house - and a place of hidden Power. Built at a point where the leylines meet, upon land that was once a sacred site, it is the gateway to a spirit-world where Celtic and Native American magicks mingle and leak into our own.

In the overgrown garden of Tamson House, a Coyote Man waits, green children walk, and music rises to greet the moon. From the garden, a vast and primal wood is just one spirit-step away...and in that wood is something that threatens the very existence of Tamson House, and all who dwell within.

## **Spiritwalk Details**

Date : Published June 15th 1993 by Tor Books (first published January 1st 1992)

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Author : Charles de Lint

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Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Spiritwalk for online ebook

### Brandon says

I found myself caught up in the possibility of the world having just a little more to it than we realized. The characters were worth getting to know, but did not have much to them. There seemed to be little urgency to the events of the book. Toward the end I noticed I was just finishing to finish. It was also hard to tell at times if this was a collection of stories or a single storyline. A great example of world building, but not much more.

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### Allen Garvin says

A sequel to *Moonheart*... well, actually, it's a collection of short stories involving Tamson house and the characters, mainly Blue the biker, from *Moonheart*. Westlin Wind is the best of the stories, and worth reading; Ghostwood is easily the weakest. Overall, the effect of the book is weak.

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### Andy says

I feel like I might have liked this book a bit more if I had read *Moonheart* first, although DeLint does a good job of not making me feel totally lost despite this being a sequel. He also does a pretty good job of making some characters that end up being likeable (Judy and Ohn were the two which stuck out to me). Some of the others... well, sometimes he spent a bit too much talking about how great they are and yet I don't feel like I actually got to know them.

And that was primarily the stumbling stone for this book: telling, not showing again. The first two parts (the two standalone stories) were tight and controlled and I felt myself caring about the characters. By the third part, the longest one, there ends up being a lot of discussion on the characters' thoughts and reactions to their situation but there doesn't feel like there's any tension. Things get resolved pretty simply after a lot of agonizing over Emma's gift, Sara's issues with Esmeralda (which I never really got a good understanding why; Sara just comes off as petty), one-sided love, etc. I want to care about these people, but give me some situations to have them demonstrate their awesomeness instead of telling me they're awesome.

Still, the first two stories are good and I enjoy the synthesis of the Native American myths and the Celtic myths. I just was disappointed with how the longest section ended up dragging a lot; I much preferred the first two stories since there were less characters, you got to know them more, etc. I'll be reading more from DeLint, but I hope the next one grabs me more than this one did at the end.

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### Janet says

I haven't read fantasy for awhile. It was fun to think of Ottawa as a portal to other worlds.

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### Kevan Manwaring says

De Lint takes us down territory familiar to those who've read *Moonheart* – which was far more of a successful novel, while this seems collection of short stories and a novella (*Ghost Wood* – the main story of the book). However good these are independently, with their effective blend of the magical and mundane, I am not convinced this piecemeal strategy pays off. The book does not feel greater than the sum of its parts. This could be because the 4 tales were originally printed independently by De Lint's own small press; Axolotl Press. They deserve bringing to a wider audience.

The idea of *Tamson House* is a good one, and the weaving of Celtic, First Nation and fantasy brings a fresh spin to the genre. De Lint's strength is in his characterisation, especially the women – for which he is rightly admired – but the main male protagonist of *Blue*, the ex gang member/biker, is a good mixture of the tough and the tender – the contradictions which De Lint uses to create multi-faceted characters. Sometimes this 'pick and mix' approach seems to create contrived Frankensteins – the pagan priestess who happens to 'know how to use a gun', the playwright gardener, the poet who can 'handle himself in a fight'. This approach means the broad cast is in danger of falling into two camps: the 'sensitive violent' type; or the 'introvert powerful' ones. Some of the cast seems interchangeable at times, like heroines in an Arthurian tale: the Sara, Esmeralda, Emma trinity particularly. Though there are subtle differences, with a big cast sometimes the reader wearies at trying to remember what each one looks like.

Yet the dialogue is jaunty, the interactions and observations convincing. There's a solid humanity here, which stops the story going away with the fairies completely. De Lint excels at depicting the magic on our doorstep, or under our noses. *Tamson House* is an effective gateway and refuge for all kinds of misfits and weirdness – placing it in the middle of a city, hiding in plain sight is a refreshing twist on the haunted house theme.

The wood within its walls contains much wonder. There's real magic to be found, as De Lint taps into genuine traditions. The depiction of First Nations medicine is well-researched and respectful. The borders between this aboriginal tradition and the imported one is a rich territory, which De Lint conjures up deftly, but without probing too deeply into the politicised fault-lines of such issues. There's room for everyone and every belief in De Lint's egalitarian universe – not quite one size fits all, but 'all magic is the same', all belief systems ultimately represent the same (other) realities. This is convenient for the plot, when the characters have to seek help from Native American shaman, Celtic archetypes, Trickster figures or Mounties. Help comes in many forms, as do the monsters – refreshingly, the villain(s) of the piece, is an elderly couple with an eye on the 'des res' immortality of *Tamson House*. Where this approach falls short is in the glib New Age image of the Welsh bard Taliesin wanting to be initiated into a Bear tribe – one asks, why? Such a master of his own tradition would hardly be a spiritual tourist, like a festival-goer workshop-junkie.

The story seems to repeat the same trope of 'damsel in distress' as Emma is rescued not once but twice, first in *Ascian in Rose* (as 'Button'), then in *the Westlin Wind* (as her reconstituted self). It normally involves shotguns and bikers. Nevertheless, these shorter stories are more satisfying and tighter in structure, than the rambling *Ghostwood* – the main set-piece. However he may try, De Lint does not quite capture the same deep magic and raw reality of Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* sequence, which he seems to wish to emulate.

Whether this is coincidence or plagiarism, it's hard to tell – but the notion of the 'first forest' and its archetypes is depicted with unforgettable power in Holdstock's '*Lavondyss*' and the idea of a wood or house which is bigger on the inside and connects to the Otherworld Holdstock has made his own, but is also explored brilliantly in John Crowley's *Little, Big*. Nevertheless, De Lint's books are easy to read, enjoyable page turners, with flashes of enchantment and the whiff of the wildwood (however urbane). For many, the author provides an accessible doorway into these greater realities – and so, as an introduction to the *Mysteries*, De Lint cannot be faulted.

Kevan Manwaring, 16 Sep 06

## **Katy Lohman says**

Charles de Lint never fails to enchant. This book, a continuation of Moonheart, explores Tamson House and the people who choose to live there, and the fey and the manitou who come to help. What's happening to house ghost Jamie, his niece Sara, biker Blue and others? Well, there's a man who wants the power of the house for himself.

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## **Larry Wentzel says**

I'm currently going through Spiritwalk and am less pleased with it than The Blue Girl. The action centers around Tamson House, a house introduced in another book Moonheart. It's a block house (literally, a house that occupies an entire city block) that's larger on the inside than it is on the outside (Tardis like), sitting on the convergence of many ley lines and a portal into other realms. Wild and wacky things happen here, and characters who thought they understood the world find things tipped askew and they have to reassess and adapt, while saving the day.

I'm having problems with the book. First off, it's not really a novel. It's three short stories that involve mostly the same cast of characters, in the same location, around the same time, but there are three distinctly separate plots. I feel like De Lint cheated, or took the easy way out. He could have woven all three plots together and made a very interesting story, but wussed out and wrote three longish short stories, packaged together. He describes the Tamson House in full detail in each plot, as if the reader lost all memory of the house from the last "chapter". Ugh.

Second, I find his adult characters to be too knowing. They seem very certain of themselves and their spheres of knowledge, puzzling over how to apply their incredible wealth of knowledge to the present situation. So many masters of various mysteries in one place, so self-assured about how to handle something that is somehow out of their control. It seems the only way to stir them into action is through emotional destabilization. The characters go off on each other or brood and it makes me want to know their heads together.

Third, De Lint fails one of the basic requirements for a writer: show the reader something, rather than telling them about it. When he describes Tamson House, he talks about how it's laid out, but doesn't take the reader through the house so you can see it for yourself. He gives you descriptions of various rooms and their locations, but you have to piece together where they are in relation to each other.

That said, I do like it when he finally gets to the action. Once you get past the groundwork he needs to lay out for the event to occur, it's enjoyable as it takes place. He shows how each character has a different worldview, and how their perceptions of a situation differ, sometimes clashing. And yet they all contribute to the solution. Resolution is obtained by group effort, not through one character's Twinked out, Acme Guaranteed World Saving action. I appreciate that.

Unfortunately, the denouement is no better than the warm-up.

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## **June says**

This story continues the story of Tamson House; the otherworldly house in Ottawa. I like the characters and

de Lint's manner of story telling.

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### **Mckinley says**

Goes with Moonheart. A bunch of series set in the same time/place - house.

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### **Susan says**

new tie-in short story "Tamson House, Ottawa"

short story + 3 novellas

"Merlin Dreams in the Mondream Wood", *Ascian in Rose*, *Westlin Wind* and *Ghostwood*

RE-READ 3/10/1999

RE-READ STARTED 5/26/2015 ("Merlin Dreams in the Mondream Wood")

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### **Caitlin H says**

After looking through some reviews, it seems that Spiritwalk is meant to be two short stories & a novella. This wasn't indicated in the edition i read, & i wish it would have, because i read it as a novel, which only lead to it feeling extremely disjointed.

The confusion especially increases when the cast of characters is basically the same from one story to another. The first two deal with Emma's "gift" & the beings that are trying to steal it from her. The last narrative is about another threat to Tamson House itself, & how it plays out. Reading it all together as a novel, it felt like one of those "movies" riffed on MST3K where it's only two episodes of a TV show mashed together ("Fugitive Alien," "Riding With Death," "Master Ninja"; you get the point).

(I'm going to hide the bulk of this because even though i don't think it's too spoilery, i want to make sure.)  
(view spoiler)

Overall, if someone wanted to start reading de Lint, i would suggest another one of his books. I started with Moonheart, which, while the same world as Spiritwalk, is, i think, stronger. It benefits from being one whole cohesive story that allows the characters to come into their own, & the reader to familiarize themselves with them. In Spiritwalk, this felt noticeably absent. The book is readable, & a quick read at that, but i don't think it's a good book to start reading de Lint with.

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### **Mortalform says**

Every new read of a Charles de Lint book reveals more of myself to me. The language of myths and archetypes in profound and extends many hands ready for an invitation to resonate with your life.

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### **Catherine Fitzsimmons says**

I started reading this on my Kobo on a lovely spring afternoon that I couldn't squander inside. It wasn't necessarily next in my queue, but I knew it was close anyway, and being a big fan of de Lint's work, I've been eager to get to it. This is an early novel of his that follows up his previous book, Moonheart, about the recent history of a curious building in Ottawa, Ontario.

I had high expectations for this book based on his other work that I've read. Perhaps for that reason, I was a little disappointed. For one thing, the structure of the story was very different from his later work, as the first half of the book was comprised of what seemed individual, stand-alone shorts, not lead-up to the dramatic climax as it turned out to be. It diminished the desire to keep reading when I came to the end of a section and everything seemed to be resolved.

What really failed to grab me, though, was the characters. I could see the beginnings of the rich and very human characters he created in later books, but I found none of the ones in this book very likable. The book in general improved as it got to the long final part that the others led up to, but there was a bit of continuing to read out of habit, rather than out of a genuine interest in what happened next. Maybe I might have enjoyed it more if it wasn't written by Charles de Lint, but either way, I wasn't crazy about it and would recommend some of his other work rather than this one.

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### **Andrew says**

Spiritwalk continues the story of Tamson House from Charles de Lint's Moonheart. The House is once again under threat, and the residents again find themselves fighting to save it and themselves.

Spiritwalk is presented as a series of short stories and novellas tied together. It works, although to me it felt slightly fragmented; I found Moonheart much more cohesive and enjoyable. Likewise, the characterizations in Moonheart were stronger.

de Lint embraces European and Native American mythic traditions, blending them here with a believable present day setting. For me, this is the definition of urban fantasy.

A good book, though not quite as good as its prequel Moonheart.

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At the time of this review, *Spiritwalk* is available free from Tor in PDF, HTML, Mobi, and ePub formats.

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## Ben Babcock says

*Spiritwalk* bills itself as “the sequel to *Moonheart*”, and while this is technically true, the events of *Moonheart* are only barely linked to this book. Reading it will spoil certain outcomes from *Moonheart*, but you could probably read it without having read the first novel. I wouldn’t recommend this course of action, however, simply because it seems that Charles de Lint doesn’t spend as much time in *Spiritwalk* developing the atmosphere of the worlds in which this story takes place. Whereas *Moonheart* was a vast and sprawling tale of faerie, intrigue, and wild magic, *Spiritwalk* is a narrower but more disjointed story about the tensions between magic and the mundane.

This was not an easy book for me to like. Urban fantasy like this generally takes longer to endear itself to me, but de Lint really hit it out of the park with *Moonheart*, which had that perfect balance between character and plot. In comparison, *Spiritwalk* tends to vacillate wildly between the two, usually to the detriment of the former. My case in point would be Esmeralda. She is mentioned early on in the book as an absent friend who once spent time at Tamson House, and eventually she materializes to become a major character. I didn’t like her though—her self-confidence and self-possession came off as annoying and heavy-handed. She always sounded like her explanation of events was always right. And though de Lint hints at a much deeper backstory to Esmeralda, he doesn’t actually share much of it.

In general, it seems like *Spiritwalk* spends very little time fleshing out its main characters. Poor Jamie, now the guardian spirit of Tamson House, learns the hard way that he can’t leave the House behind and wander the Otherworlds. I enjoyed this story arc, for it is familiar and predictable, but de Lint executes it very well. Jamie naturally misses his interactions with the wider world, so he tries to “get out” more. Yet this leaves the house vulnerable to a bad guy who wants to leech its magical power. For all that this is very interesting, however, de Lint spends very little time focusing on what Jamie has learned—I think we spend about two chapters total seeing things from Jamie’s point of view before returning to less interesting characters.

I should mention that this house-getting-taken-over plot is ostensibly the core plot of the book. In many ways, *Spiritwalk* feels like a series of connected novellas; the book is split into four major parts, with the final, *Ghostwood*, containing shorter named chapters as well. Though they are connected through common characters and a clear progression from one to the next, each could also be read standalone. Now, there’s nothing wrong with taking several novellas and publishing them as a single volume—but then, please, advertise them as such. Alternatively, if the goal is to present the works as a single work, then adapt them into a single novel. *Spiritwalk* takes the middle path, hence my difficulty with it.

There is nothing *technically* amiss here: de Lint once again shows his skill as a writer and a storyteller. Sometimes I found the way he uses magic somewhat frustrating ... growing up on epic fantasy has trained me to expect intricate, systematic magic, and the wilder magic that de Lint portrays here doesn’t sit as well with my orderly soul. (This portrayal of magic, I find, makes it very easy for plots to veer in unexpected directions while the author claims that “the magic did it”—and while I don’t accuse de Lint of that here, I can’t say I enjoyed the opacity of the magic’s presence either.)

So, *Spiritwalk* is a competent work. But that’s just it ... it feels very mediocre. I liked it well enough, but I wasn’t excited by it. It didn’t wow me like *Moonheart* or bring me closer to the characters who appear in both. It was kind of like, years after a successful movie comes out, the studio releases a cheaper-budget TV

movie sequel to capitalize on the anniversary. The same elements are there, but the screen feels smaller, the scope less ambitious, and the actors weary of their roles.

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