



## Dreams Underfoot

*Charles de Lint*

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# Dreams Underfoot

*Charles de Lint*

## **Dreams Underfoot** Charles de Lint

*Welcome to Newford...*

Welcome to the music clubs, the waterfront, the alleyways where ancient myths and magic spill into the modern world. Come meet Jilly, painting wonders in the rough city streets; and Geordie, playing fiddle while he dreams of a ghost; and the Angel of Grasso Street gathering the fey and the wild and the poor and the lost. Gemmins live in abandoned cars and skulls traverse the tunnels below, while mermaids swim in the grey harbor waters and fill the cold night with their song.

Contents:

Uncle Dobbin's Parrot Fair  
The Stone Drum  
Timeskip  
Freewheeling  
That Explains Poland  
Romano Drom  
The Sacred Fire  
Winter Was Hard  
Pity the Monsters  
Ghosts of Wind and Shadow  
The Conjure Man  
Small Deaths  
The Moon is Drowning While I Sleep  
In the House of My Enemy  
But for the Grace Go I  
Bridges  
Our Lady of the Harbour  
Paperjack  
Tallulah

## **Dreams Underfoot Details**

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ISBN : 9780765306791

Author : Charles de Lint

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Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Fiction, Short Stories, Magical Realism, Science Fiction Fantasy

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### Ambertronic says

I was just a wee freshman in high school when I discovered Charles de Lint, and my addiction to his characters and fictional world of urban mythology all started with this book. It has been 14 years now and I'm still a huge fan.

The first edition paperback of this book actually has an oil painting by Terri Windling on the cover of a celtic looking woman with deer horns, a flute, and an oak leaf tattoo over her eye. I want to say John Jude Palencar has been doing the reprint cover art as these anthologies are re-released, I still love Terri's artwork better. But I digress.

This book came into my life at a time when I couldn't commit to reading novels; for some reason I just didn't have the patience for them. But this collection of stories is very palatable in length and variety...each story stands out as an individual and wanders from enchanting, to mild horror, to just plain weird. Most of the stories has some element of old mythologies from different cultures. De Lint focuses a lot on Kickaha native american ideas since Newford is a fictional town in Canada. He adds a lot of Celtic flavor as well, but I think a lot of this has to do with him being an adept Celtic musician who plays regularly in a band. Hey, write what you know, eh?

That's another thing about Newford: most of the characters are bohemian artists in one form or another, and they're all friends. They're all "fine boned" and "pixie faced" and rarely are there any actual ugly characters in his books; though I've noticed he has a penchant for writing in first person with predominantly female characters; what males he does write about have far less detail than his women. A little romantic/unrealistic but I'm willing to look over that. Anyway, his characters are all artists in some capacity or another: corner-busking fiddlers, fine artists that moonlight as waiters and waitresses, flute players, sculptors, musicians and writers. Everyone has some creative niche they struggle to live on. The characters tend to dress very punk/grunge from the '90s as well (which makes sense since his first three Newford anthologies are set in the early to late '90s). Lots of women with blue or pink dyed hair, facial piercings and tattoos, and most of them dress to reflect their income: like they walked out of a thrift store. De Lint also has a lot of homeless people in his stories. He really gives a face to those that fall between the cracks in society. Unfortunately he succeeds more in romanticizing living on the streets rather than representing the reality of people in such a position. Don't get me wrong, he makes an effort to show how sucky his hobo characters have it but it comes

across as cool rather than the truly dire situation that it is.

My all-time favorite of Charles de Lint. 14 years and counting....

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## **Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says**

This is an enjoyable collection of 19 linked short stories, of the sort of urban fantasy that mixes the ethereal and mundane. Just right for nighttime reading.

De Lint is a prolific Canadian author who has written many books set in the fictional city of Newford, of which this is the first; most of the stories were originally published in magazines in the late 80s and early 90s. They tend to feature bohemian types – artists, writers, musicians – and street people, encountering magic beneath the surface of everyday life. Many of the stories feel like modern fairy tales. For the most part I found them very satisfying reading, hitting all the right notes: sympathetic and believable characters, good writing and interesting plotlines that come to satisfying conclusions. Not every author can write a complete story from beginning to end in 20 pages, much less create reader investment in such a short time. De Lint can. It doesn't hurt that some of the characters recur, but although every story can stand alone, I did not find the re-introduction of characters too repetitive.

The majority of De Lint's protagonists are female, and although one begins to notice similarities (waif-like beauty, tragic or mysterious pasts), they are interesting characters who form friendships with each other and don't revolve around men – indeed, Jilly, the closest the book has to a protagonist, isn't attached to a man at all. De Lint does less well with minority characters, however; the one black character is a mute fortune-teller, and the story with a Latina narrator is full of forced and awkward uses of Spanish words and cultural references. My least favorite stories, however, were the two originally appearing in horror anthologies; that's simply not my cup of tea. And another story beats readers over the head a little too hard with the "child abuse is bad!" stick. Finally, there are occasional mistakes that one more pass by a copyeditor could have corrected.

Overall, this gets 3.5 stars that could easily be rounded either way. I enjoyed this book, with its mix of bohemian life and the supernatural, and would consider reading more De Lint in the future.

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## **Juliet says**

Charles de Lint was writing urban fantasy well before the genre's current wave of popularity. In fact, his work sits outside what people mean by urban fantasy these days - it eludes classification, falling somewhere between magic realism and folkloric fantasy. Terri Windling's introduction to this edition discusses the difficulty of trying to pin such a book down to a single genre.

I'm currently attempting to read through all Charles de Lint's Newford books in order of publication. *Dreams Underfoot* was published in 1993. It contains 19 related short stories, all set in or connected with the North American city in whose downtown district live de Lint's set of regular and irregular characters, Jilly Coppercorn the artist, Christy Riddell the bard, his brother Geordie, and a cast of musicians, painters, poets and street people. And the uncanny folk of Newford, who dwell alongside humankind - sometimes beautiful, sometimes menacing, always different.

Some of the stories are stronger than others, but all reflect a deep understanding of traditional narrative. De

Lint's writing reflects the fact that he is a musician with a bard's sense of rhythm and flow. The Newford settings remind me of the hippy culture of the late sixties and early seventies, when life seemed to move at a gentler pace.

The stories have been collected in this volume, but first appeared individually in various publications. This means a certain amount of repetition, and that can be a little annoying (for example, the introduction of certain key characters with a physical description each time they appear in a new story, including details of what they're wearing.)

Overall I enjoyed the book. For readers who enjoy folkloric fantasy and who are not familiar with the work of this prominent writer in the genre, I recommend this collection as a starter.

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### **Michael Havens says**

Charles de Lint seems to do what many New York Times Bestselling authors fail to do; he is able to tell simple (Note: I do not mean simplistic) stories, and keep the "meat and potatoes" in place. What do I mean? There is nothing more irritating to me than a story which is more a sketch than a story, where characters are given the thinnest of descriptive lines, where the plot is as thinly unveiled as the characters, are given to long dialogs that meander in order to get that extra pages in so that the book will be big enough to sell at a higher price (and by this I do not mean that a book has to be thin. It has to be what the story demands of it. There is as much artistry in 'The Brother's Karamazov' as there is with 'Of Mice and Men'. Both Dostoevsky and Steinbeck knew what was needed in their books, but never sacrificed quality).

What we have with de Lint's 'Dreams Underfoot' is not only a great introduction to the Urban Fantasy world of Newford, but also characters who run the gambit between the fantastic and the tragic. These are artists, mostly, and around their thirties or so. They are characters who are trying to make a living, pay bills, improve their arts (de Lint is also a folk musician), and who struggle with issues of the daily world. What's also revealing about these set of short stories is not only has de Lint managed to capture the essence of many myths of the past, by portraying a good portion of the stories in tragic terms, tragedy being something we forget embodies more than a few fantasies, myths, and fairy tales, but that these stories, in both their senses, have characters who are deeply affected and/or scarred by their experiences, experiences that will not always resolve itself, if ever, at the end of the last page of the story.

I have read other de Lint novels; 'Into the Green', 'The Little Country', 'Svaha', and 'Greenmantle'. What impresses me most about many of his stories is that they have real, and sometimes violent, grit. They are fantastic, without simplifying the world. The world outside can be a rough and sometimes unfair place, and at least on one level, perhaps metaphorically, 'Dreams Underfoot' underscores this many times. The other thing that strikes me is that while de Lint is not a Christian, and certainly not a Catholic (in other places he has been quoted as not only being an Animist, but that he has trouble with "organized religion"), there is something defiantly "liturgical" in the sense in which he presents the magic in his Urban Fantasy as a process between the mythic and the man or woman who either is not aware, or struggles with his/ her spirituality. In one of the stories, Jilly, an painter living in Newford and one who has experienced the fantastic, gives an explanation to a friend that the fantastic, the magical, has to be experienced by going through the process of the unfolding magic. This is as much an explanation for the Sacraments and the Liturgy as it is a condition of confronting the magic of Newford. And at least for de Lint, there is also the human element in the process, "Its existence [magic] becomes an affirmation of the power of the human spirit can have over its own destiny."(14). In the same way, liturgical and sacramental practices found in Christian spirituality requires the participation of the individual, is in fact a process by which one finds their destiny in the divine. So, in one very real sense, all of the stories found in 'Dreams Underfoot' are processes, and do affect the lives of the individuals who pass through them.

Other stories here have more of the horror embodied in them. In fact, some of de Lint's early Newford

novels, written under a pseudonym, are classified as horror. In this collection, 'Pity the Monsters' and 'Small Deaths', are examples, with 'Small Deaths' displaying a really great kind of Hitchcock type of psychological horror, with just a touch of the magical to shape the story into something quite powerful. There are also tragedies contained between these pages. 'Freewheeling' about a young, possibly schizophrenic, possibly magic touched young man, Zinc, whose "freeing" of bicycles are interpreted by the law as stealing is one such story. What makes this story interesting, is that the story is told with no pontificating, so one does not know really which way he really is, magic touched or mentally ill. And the ending is powerful enough to hit one square in the chest. Another story, 'In the House of My Enemy' is about child abuse and the consequences that usually end up at the foot of the abused. In this story, we learn a little more about Jilly's background, and her connection with the hurting she is always trying to help. Here again, de Lint does not give us a "satisfactory" ending, even for a strong, brave, and resourceful person like Jilly, and the person she is trying to help in the story is faced with an obstacle so huge it overwhelms her. It seems that for all the magic that happens in Newford, tragedy still occurs in the deepest part of the city, and like all great myths of the past and present, tragedy remains a key element in much of mythic storytelling. The only distraction with this collection is a few glaring typos I found. This is not the fault of the author, but of the editors and publishers of the book.

One last thought on these stories. While reading this book, I was struck by how much it reminded me of Rod Stirling. I've always considered Stirling a great storyteller who found the new invention of the television a way to express his art, in the same way that Frank Zappa, a student of composition, found rock and not orchestral music as a format for his art. Stirling was the master of irony, as the twists at the end of almost every Twilight Zone episode displayed brilliantly, and help to set up something not only stunning to the mind, but thought provoking at times as well. I bring this up because this is the same type of thing that is exhibited in most of the stories of 'Dreams Underfoot', which only creates that added dimension of the process and the after effects and consequences magic has in Newford as well as for the reader, because like the residents of Newford, we too, through the joyous practice of reading, have completed all the journeys ourselves, and hopefully not afraid to walk the streets of Newford at night or meet the occasional faerie.

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## Irene says

Copied from the author's website, I thought this would be a handy guide for myself (since I lost track of which ones I've read and who knows in what order). \* for the ones I have/read.

Q. Where do I start reading the Newford stories?

A. The books have all been written in such a way that you should be able to pick up any one and get a full and complete story. However, characters do reoccur, off center stage as it were, and their stories do follow a sequence. The best place to start is the collection Dreams Underfoot. From there they go pretty much in this order:

Dreams Underfoot\*

The Dreaming Place

A Whisper To A Scream (originally credited to "Samuel M. Key")

I'll Be Watching You (originally credited to "Samuel M. Key")

Memory And Dream

The Ivory And The Horn

Trader\*

Someplace To Be Flying

Moonlight And Vines

Forests Of The Heart  
The Onion Girl\*  
Seven Wild Sisters (also available in Tapping the Dream Tree)  
Tapping the Dream Tree  
Spirits in the Wires  
Medicine Road  
The Blue Girl  
Widdershins  
Make a Joyful Noise (chapbook)  
The Hour Before Dawn (collection)  
Old Man Crow (chapbook)  
Little (Grrl) Lost (novel)  
Promises to Keep (short novel)  
Dingo (short novel)  
Muse & Reverie (collection, forthcoming)

The Dreaming Place and The Blue Girl are YA novels. A Whisper To A Scream and I'll Be Watching You are, respectively, a horror novel and a thriller; they're darker fare than the other Newford books and aren't really that integral to the underlying, ongoing backstory that takes place off center stage in so many of the books and stories.

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### Lightrainbow says

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### Kaila says

Short stories, I have decided, are simply not my favorite medium. They don't offer up enough satisfaction or closure, and there's that obscurely frustrating first couple pages of a story when you don't know what is going on, and that happens over and over again. Thankfully all the stories in this case take place in one area, the city of Newford, with a cast of characters that show up repeatedly. Jilly is a great character and I can't wait to see her again, as well as Geordie the fiddle player.

De Lint has this "magic is just out of the corner of your eye if only you knew how to see it" philosophy, which I suppose makes it urban fantasy, but it felt more like folklore. There was no hard-boiled detective making snarky comments, just simple people with problems like the rest of us, turning to fantasy to take care of them. It struck a chord with me that most urban fantasy does not. A few of the stories became rather disturbing, and the best I could compare it to were the heart wrenching passages in *Infinite Jest*. Sadly abused young girls and women forced into prostitution telling their childhood stories; they were pretty horrifying. It definitely means *Dreams Underfoot* is meant for adults, not young adults.

I was so-so on the book until the third story, Time Skip, that had me sobbing into my burrito at Chipotle. Unfortunately I felt that it turned so-so again, and none of the other stories have really stuck with me like that one. I didn't have a desire to go reread any of them immediately. Time Skip has a resolution later on in the

book but I didn't like that story nearly so much. It robbed me of some of the original poignancy.

This was my first foray into the magical world of Charles de Lint, and although it will not be counted among my favorite books ever, I still enjoyed it.

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## **Simone says**

Review initially published on my blog, Writing by Numbers, here.

It's uncomfortable and a little odd to admit that this collection of short stories mostly made me think I wouldn't de Lint very much. Though the stories are fiction, I couldn't shake the feeling that he was a smarmy liberal white guy persuading me of his sensitivity, his hipness. That he considers himself an appealing blend of Peter-Pannish proponent of imagination, and storyteller with his finger on the pulse of gritty urbanity. Perceiver of what others miss. Not a bad person, just one I wouldn't get along with.

Several main characters are young, underprivileged women: a Chicana teenager who wedges Spanglish awkwardly into her narrative, a young artist who grew up orphaned and now cares for others. It's like de Lint built characters from tropes and his beliefs about what such people might think or feel, rather than starting from each character as a person. But it feels like he's co-opting voices that aren't his own.

The stories themselves are okay. Most stress how belief makes magic real. His city combines ordinary urban dangers with magical dangers; threads through regular human happinesses with magical wonders. Folks dally with the fae and are forever changed. *Dreams Underfoot* would be best acquired at the library during a quiet summer, read overnight, and exchanged the next day.

*The 214 in 2014 series chronicles every book I read in 2014. Each review contains exactly 214 words. For more, visit <http://www.ararebit.wordpress.com>.*

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## **Lis says**

Thoroughly unimpressed.

Maybe this wasn't a Lint book I should've started with. Or something. I guess it just didn't work out for me. Anthologies, unless really compelling, don't roll with me in the first place, and this just...didn't. At all. The stories were really discombobulated and disorganized and I mean you could've arranged them throughout the book in whatever order you wanted but why did you choose this order?!

...ugh. I dunno, guys.

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## **\*~Lan Lan~\* says**

5 STARS!

I reviewed each short story as a read so here are my status updates with corresponding stars/reviews:

I give *Uncle Dobbin's Parrot Fair* a **4.5 star** rating. It was a simple tale but I loved it!

*The Stone Drum* gets **5 stars!** Absolutely amazing tale and introduction for characters I have learned to love in his later works.

*Timeskip* gets a solid **5 stars**. the way it ended have me so many unexpected feels.

I'm going to give *Freewheeling* **4 stars**. it was sad but a very simple but beautiful short story.

*That Explains Poland* was a cute short story introducing a recurring character, LaDonna, who was surprisingly relatable. I give this **5 stars** :p

*Romano Drom* was a spellbinding introduction to the recurring character Lori (aka Lorio). I had a lot of fun with the Romanian/Gypsy folklore in this. **5 Stars!**

*The Sacred Fire* was so creepy it made my skin crawl. I did not expect this from de Lint!

"*Their faces don't fit quite right...*"

I gave this a solid **5 stars**.

*Winter was Hard* gets a solid **5 stars**. I didn't expect to tear up so much while reading it. And Jilly is quickly becoming one of my favourites :)

*Pity for Monsters* gets a solid **5 stars**. It was incredibly creepy.

*Ghosts of Wind and Shadow* gets **4.5 Stars**. It deals with the realities of youth on the streets and prostitution while adding the magical element we all wished existed.

*The Conjure Man* is a whimsical tale of how stories are important in how we connect and communicate with each other. **5 Stars!** :)

*Small Deaths* gets **4.5 stars!** I liked the definition of what a small death is and how it affects everyone. I had a hard time with the character Wolfe though.

*The Moon is Drowning While I Sleep* was very relatable story about lucid dreaming and what it could actually be. I gave this **5 Stars!**

*In the House of my Enemy* was a raw and realistic portrayal of child abuse. It hit hard where all the feels are. I am still teary eyed while writing this. **5 stars**.

*But for the Grace I Go* was a very short tale of a close call and finally taking the next step. **4.5 Stars**.

*Bridges* gets **5 Stars** for its relatable character, Moira, and the hauntingly beautiful bridge city <3

*Our Lady of the Harbour* was one of the longer stories in this collection. It was about a distant and cold man whose music was so magical it lured a beautiful creature out, only to result in an ending that left me with all the feels! **5 stars**

*Paperjack* was the conclusive short story to *Timeskip* and it gave me the closure I needed. **5 Stars**

*Tallulah* was a beautiful short story about Christie, Geordie's older brother, and his mysterious and unforgettable love. **5 stars** <3<3<3<3







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hisashiburi

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### **Arielle Walker says**

Absolutely stunning. I'm still somewhat mesmerised by this book, under its spell, having a hard time not picking it straight back up and reading it again (and only stopped from doing so because I lent it to someone else with the insistence that they read it immediately).

This book doesn't really fit neatly into "genre". It's not quite a novel, but then not quite short stories either. Short stories, I suppose, in the sense that each "chapter" can be read independently of any other, and in fact were originally published in many separate literature collections. At the same time they all fit together so it really does feel like reading a fluid story that isn't quite in order, doesn't have a plot and is all the better for it.

When I got this out at the library, the librarian raved about it, stating finally tat she would give anything to live in Newford. I now share these feelings. Charles de Lint has managed that extraordinary feat of making magic feel utterly plausible, real, normal and yet not in the slightest bit mundane. Though much of the subject matter is very dark (themes include murder, child abuse, street gangs and other violence) it instantly took me back to childhood and the tales of Hans Christian Anderson, with their bitter-sweet magic.

I honestly cannot recommend this book enough, I hope that these confused attempts at reviewing it actually convince you to read it!

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### **Kerry says**

I've been familiar with the name of author Charles de Lint for a number of years, but I've never really got around to reading his books. I read Moonheart many years ago and remember being very impressed with it (to the point I bought the audiobook from Audible last year and hope to get to listen to it this year), but I never read anything else.

de Lint writes urban fantasy. Somehow, in the years between the late 80s/early 90s when people like de Lint and Emma Bull and were writing it and now, the designation of urban fantasy has developed two fairly disparate meanings. "Old school" urban fantasy of the kind de Lint writes tend to involve the instrution of some form of "faerie" into a modern, often a least slightly decaying, urban setting. Art and music are often important to the characters and the tale. More current urban fantasy is more likely to involve an up-to-date urban setting that includes fantastical creatures such as werewolves and vampires, and novels often crossover with paranormals and paranormal romance to some degree. The lines between the two are blurred, but the tone of each tends to be quite different and I do think they can be counted as separate styles (all in my opinion of course).

While de Lint has written a wide variety of books (I hadn't realised just how many until I went exploring his website), a significant number are set in his imaginary city of Newford, where strange things live in the underground Old City, mystical beings walk the streets and magic is just around the corner, waiting for you to believe in it to see it. Several of the later Newford books have caught my eye in the past, but being kind of

anal about reading series in order and never knowing where to start, I stayed away from the books. I can't remember what it was that recently sent me to de Lint's site, but there in the FAQ I found his recommended reading order for the Newford books. That was what I needed to give me a push into reading them.

I was getting around to putting Dreams Underfoot on reserve from the library when I discovered it as an ebook on fictionwise. That bumped it to the top of my reading pile and it was the last book I started in 2008. This is a collection of short stories - most gathered from previous publications and two new to the collection - that introduce the reader to Newford and some of the major characters that people later books and stories.

I generally don't find short stories easy to read, but I read my way steadily through these tales, each time I finished one moving on to the next, not ready to leave Newford and it's strange and delightful inhabitants behind. These are not light tales, magic has a dark side, and discovering it exists tend to change a person's life forever (in fact, in one of my favourite stories, Ghosts of Wind and Shadow, we see the devastating effect this had on one character who refuses to accept the magic that touches her life). Happy endings are rare, and instead we get ones that feel true to the tales and tend to be bittersweet but satisfying. Indeed, in one story the "prince" totally fails to recognise the "princess" and fails her totally. She is doomed and he remains a loner of a man, unable to interact properly with other people. Not all the tales end this badly, but they aren't bows and bunnies either. All the same, they are wonderful to read.

I highly recommend this book and I'm looking forward to reading my way through the series now that I know what order I'm supposed to read them in. I also find myself looking forward all the more to listening to Moonheart (not a Newford story).

Just one word of caution. If you do read the ebook, I found it to have a number of typographical errors. Small words were often missing (strangely, most often "a") and sometimes I had to read a sentence twice to pick up that something was wrong and work out the intended meaning. I don't know if this problem occurs in the print book, but be aware of the ebook anyway.

Dreams Underfoot  
Charles de Lint  
Newford Novels, Book 1  
9/10

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