



The Riddle of the Wren

Charles de Lint

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Minda Sealy is afraid of her own nightmares. Then, one night, while asleep, she meets Jan, the Lord of the Moors, who has been imprisoned by Ildran the Dream-master-the same being who traps Minda. In exchange for her promise to free him, Jan gives Minda three tokens. She sets out, leaving the safety of her old life to begin a journey from world to world, both to save Jan and to solve "the riddle of the Wren"-which is the riddle of her very self. "The Riddle of the Wren" was Charles de Lint's first novel, and has been unavailable for years. Fans and newcomers alike will relish it.

The Riddle of the Wren Details

Date : Published September 16th 2002 by Firebird (first published 1984)

ISBN : 9780142302231

Author : Charles de Lint

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From Reader Review The Riddle of the Wren for online ebook

Melanti says

This one is better than Harp of the Grey Rose by far, but it is still nowhere close to being on par with his current books. It is a little bit dated - my opinion would probably be better if I'd read it back in the 80's while this sort of plot was still in fashion.

The good - There were echoes of his current themes - strong female main characters from sad backgrounds, gods that gain their power from their worshipers, the dreaming realm, etc.

The bad - The main character being physically abused in this case doesn't quite make sense. Her reactions in several places are more like one who was emotionally abused, but not physically. I just don't get what the physical aspect of abuse really contributes to the story in this case.

The story has almost a frenetic pace to it. They jump from place to place rapidly- hardly knowing where they're going to go next. Likewise, characters jump in and out of the plot just as rapidly. Some are important and reappear later, others just disappear. I didn't get lost, but I think fewer characters that stayed long enough to get emotionally involved with would be an improvement.

Last, the first few chapters in Fernwillow suffer from not being anchored in a set time period. The characters seem to have modern day concerns - reading, boys, girlfriends - and modern day slang, but there's absolutely no technology other than an abundance of cheap reading material and spending money. Not even being able to estimate a time period bothered me.

The book is worth reading, even if only to see how far Charles de Lint has come. A very long ways indeed. But please, if you're new to his writing, check out his short story collections first.

Milliebot says

This was another excellent folklore/fantasy take by de Lint. Minda's ordinary life is changed when she becomes haunted by disturbing nightmares. She meets who she considers a magical being in one of her dreams, who assists her in defeating her nightmares, in exchange for her agreement to free him from the stone he's trapped in. Minda sets off on a journey among many worlds and learns of the great power that lies within her.

What I loved about Minda were her flaws. She felt realistic because she is awed by the new beings she meets and the worlds she crosses into, and doubtful about her part in the grand scheme of things. As her own powers manifest, she struggles to control them, rather than just being the best at everything, as can happen in many books.

If you're a fan of Irish folklore, or de Lint's work, check this out!

Megan says

I wasn't as impressed with this book as I was with the others I've read by this author. It was his first, apparently, and I felt like it showed. The writing was pretty good but didn't stand out, and while some aspects of the concept and setting were interesting, the story and characters didn't feel particularly original. I'm not sure how much of it is stylistic, and how much of it is the author's improvement over time, but this one didn't quite do it for me.

I know it's not fair to write a review based mostly on comparing a book to other books by the same author, but it's hard for me not to in this case. I've read several of De Lint's other books and loved them, and the difference in genre - high fantasy as opposed to urban fantasy - just served to highlight the contrast. The latter seems to suit his style more, and I'm not surprised that it's what he's better known for.

It's not a bad book, but I don't feel that it was especially memorable, either.

Audrey Cullen says

I loved the unique folklore setting of this book, but at times it grew a bit slow and I found my self having to reread sections. It was quite slow- paced, so it took me longer than it should've taken for me to finish. I do respect Charles de Lint's detailed setting descriptions.

Lauren Giova says

I rather enjoyed this book. I felt for the character in all her struggles even if i couldn't identify with her. Minda was innocent enough but she wasn't weak. I can't stand weak or indecisive characters. I understand that in some points in the story there are going to be times when these two characteristics will show themselves but they have to be sparing and believable. De Lint was definitely able to keep the balance. The glossary in the back of the book was a plus when i didn't understand some of the fey terminology. I have to say i would have been confused and frustrated if i wasn't able to see what these words meant. It would have kept me from enjoying the story. There was also a clean line between good and evil which is comforting. I could pick a side easily. I don't mind the occasional philosophical approach saying that everything is (to an extreme) both good and evil. There is enough of that in the world and when i read sometimes i just want to hate the villain and love the hero[ine]. I was able to do that with this story. I definitely recommend this book.

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The Riddle of the Wren had a good plot and idea, but the writing was hard to understand. It jumped from different characters perspectives and you wouldn't realize that until you were half way down a page. I felt

that Minda, the main character, acted more realistically to finding out that other worlds existed and that she was someone special, compared to other fantasy books I've read. A lot of the made up words and weird names made it difficult to read and I was flipping back to the glossary frequently to understand the meaning. The most confusing part was when Minda fought Ildran in the end and killed him, similarly the soul fighting or whatever it was I'm still not sure, was hard to follow and it would just end saying: He was dead. Overall I liked the basic idea and plot of the story and I especially liked how the young heroin met her fait and prevailed. Though like always I wish that i knew more of what happens after.

Stephen says

The Riddle of the Wren is not the first Charles de Lint book I have read. However, it is the first time I've read a book set in his own created worlds (previous reads were set in Farmer's Dungeon series). Many people had given the book very good reviews.

So, I tracked it down...and WOW! This book was exactly what I had hoped for. The story had a flow about it that I found very easy to get immersed in.

The first thing I noticed was just how likable the main character, Minda, really is. As a reader, I came to feel a genuine concern for her and her plight.

There are many supporting characters introduced throughout, but de Lint does not let this bog the plot down. On the contrary, each additional character brings another jolt of new life to the story.

Overall, the whole of the story was magnificent. This, I believe, was de Lint's first published book, but it doesn't show. I was thouroughly impressed and have now purchased more from him, including Moonheart and the Harp of the Grey Rose.

If you have not experienced Charles de Lint and you enjoy epic fantasy with a touch of folklore, please give the Riddle of the wren a try!

Stefanie says

This was actually the first book I had ever read by Charles de Lint. It was over 15 years ago when I came across this book at the bookstore and absolutely had to find out what happened inside such a stunning cover. Needless to say I fell in love with the story and the amazing imagination of the author. It is one of those stories that one seems to come across every now and then when they are in need of an adventure. This one totally delivered and is one that I get reacquainted with just about every year; I've read it so many times that my copy is falling apart. It never gets boring. In fact it has always been a secret hope of mine that one day Charles de Lint might write a sequel to this book.

Since that fortuitous day in the bookstore I have purchased and read everything by Charles de Lint and have never come across a story that did not touch my heart, transport me to an amazing land, or make me stop wanting to know more.

Patty says

“She lay there, waiting for sleep to come, but the excitement of what she had just done kept her awake. It was only the first step of – how long a journey? Did it matter? It was enough to be free of Hadon and of the inn, to be responsible only to herself... and the promise she made to the moorman.” p. 40

I have been reading de Lint’s wonderful fantasy for years. I looked over my reading list here and I seem to average one de Lint book per year. He is definitely an author worth revisiting.

This novel appears to be his first published book. For good or bad, it shows. Although Minda’s story is well-imagined and well-written, it seems dependent on old myths and tales. I don’t have a problem with this, but de Lint’s stories have become much more. His world has grown in many ways, all of them making it better and richer.

I did get caught up in the tale and there were several characters with whom I could have spent more time. There was enough tension to make me read quickly to make sure that all turned out best for the little wren (Minda) and her friends.

de Lint writes about friendship, love and honor. All of those themes appear in this book and as a regular reader, I like seeing the beginnings of his wonderful tales. However, if you have never read de Lint, I recommend that you start with some of his stories set in Newford. I especially liked **The Ivory and the Horn**.

Massimiliano says

A fairly decent read overall, compared to my other foray into DeLint's bibliography, "Moonheart" (which I loathed). An interesting tentative to write a high fantasy with a tantalizing worldbuilding but still a character-oriented story.

Not perfect, the worlds feel a bit too sketchy and 2-dimensional.

Dawn says

I loved this book when I was younger, enough so that I recently ordered a copy to read aloud with my daughters, ages 16, 15 & 12. I'm crossing my fingers that they enjoy the story as much as I did when I first came upon it.
