



The Cats of Tanglewood Forest

Charles de Lint , Charles Vess (Illustrator)

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Lillian Kindred spends her days exploring the Tanglewood Forest, a magical rolling wilderness, that she imagines to be full of fairies. The trouble is, Lillian has never seen a wisp of magic in her hills-until the day the cats of the forest save her life by transforming her into a kitten. Now Lillian must set out on a perilous adventure that will lead her through untamed lands of fabled creatures-from Old Mother Possum to the fearsome Bear People-to find a way to make things right.

The Cats of Tanglewood Forest Details

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From Reader Review The Cats of Tanglewood Forest for online ebook

Bonnie says

A copy of The Cats of Tanglewood Forest was provided to me by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers for review purposes.

"Everything is a lesson if you're willing to learn something from it."

Twelve year old Lillian is an adventurous little girl who traverses the Tanglewood forest searching for fairies that she's convinced exist. After she's tragically bitten by a snake and dies, she hovers above her body long enough to witness the ring of cats that has surrounded her. Next thing she knows, she's awake again and is now furry with paws. Seeking to find a way to rectify the situation, she seeks to change the past but in turn ends up living an even worse existence after her Aunt dies after being bitten by the snake instead.

"Maybe there's a reason why the snake bit you, the cats changed you, and you're no longer a girl. Maybe there's something you can learn from being a cat instead of a girl."

Tanglewood's main lesson centers around how small choices can lead to surprisingly large consequences that you may not realize until it's too late. Despite it's fantasy elements, it still manages to be a lesson that can be understood and appreciated. Charles de Lint has crafted a perfectly charming folktale story and in addition to the enchanting art of Charles Vess this is one that children and adults both are sure to enjoy.

Sarah says

Another great spider tale. ?

Jalilah says

Together with the gorgeous illustrations from Charles Vess, this ageless tale completely transports the reader into a mythical and magical universe. I just could have kept reading and looking at the pictures all day long in order to stay there and never leave!

The combination of the Folklore-Fairy Tale with the time Science Fiction (going back in time/time travel/alternate reality/however you describe it) really worked well!

Usually I find De Lint's adult novels are deeper and richer, however this one was very thought provoking and touched me in quite a deep way.

Chris says

3.5 stars. A young girl who lives in the Ozarks wanders deep into the woods and ends up on a very unexpected path. Charming illustrations follow her journey, as she learns about friendship, consequences, and standing up for herself.

Mairéad (is roaming the Undying Lands) says

[The only it was a dream was rather...idk, *meh* for me

Lacey Louwagie says

Around the Year Reading Challenge Item #27: A Book With a Beautiful Title

I expected to like this book a lot more than I actually did -- as a cat lover, I was disappointed that the cats did not play a bigger part, that we never learned much about their society or their "cat magic" and that the inciting incident of Lillian being transformed into a cat wasn't even that much of the story.

The quest that actually takes up most of the book felt a little convoluted to me, and the messaging trite. The final resolution also felt as if it came too easily. It's a pity, because the book has such a beautiful design and illustrations that I would have loved to hold onto it and share it with someone else -- but the story just doesn't seem to warrant that for me, so I think I will be passing it on.

Jean says

Lillian lives on a farm with her aunt, and she enjoys wandering the nearby forest, looking for fairies. One day she decides to follow a deer and ends up lost in the woods. While she lies under a tree to rest, a snake bites her. As the venom sinks in, Lillian knows she is dying. The world fades away, and cats of the forest surround her and decide to use their magic to save her by turning her into a kitten. What follows is a tale of Lillian trying to set her world right again through the help of magical creatures including a possum woman, a friendly fox, and some mean bear people. Along the way she learns the importance of considering consequences and remembering the past.

This book is filled with folktale-like characters and events, such as magic spells, potions, talking animals, and people who are part animal. The author uses language that suits the folktale medium as well. I don't know that this will necessarily appeal to young readers, but I suppose it could. I found the story dragged a bit, especially in the middle, and I didn't like how it occurred in a non-linear fashion. I also wanted the cats to be a more central part of the story since they are in the title. The story is really about Lillian, not the cats, so I found the title misleading. The book is interesting as a look at folktales and magic, but not enough to be really good.

Tony DiTerlizzi says

I was delighted by Charles de Lint's timeless tangled tale of magic and consequence, beautifully illuminated with the lush illustrations of Charles Vess. This is my new favorite feline folktale.

Cheryl says

Just didn't work for me. Too many tropes, too full of itself. Not enough cats, or enough fox (T.H. was the best part). Sometimes, in the pictures especially, the girl seemed to be about 8, other times more like 13. If it weren't for the plethora of pictures, I don't think I'd have bothered to finish it... not because I loved them (I didn't) but because they took up space and so the book is short.

I've heard that the original version is a picture-book. I might read that sometime, because I could hope that it more concisely gets to the point.

Julia says

Just as lovely and magical as I could have hoped, this book took me back to those childhood days when every page was an adventure to be savored. With the advent of eBooks, I have my fingers crossed that publishers may be inspired to give us a little something extra in a physical book. Sure, I love the convenience of carrying books around on my phone, but that doesn't mean I don't want lovely, hardbound, illustrated versions on my shelf as well. *THE CATS OF TANGLEWOOD FOREST* is the perfect example, from the first glimpse of the pictures inside, my fingers itched to make it mine. Pairing Charles de Lint's lovely voice with bright, dreamy pictures was the perfect marriage of magic and whimsy. I enjoyed my own copy, and am now off to buy more for every young child in my life.

Kat says

I recall absolutely adoring some of de Lint's books as a young and avid reader. Now that I am a middle-aged and avid reader, I find I'm harder to please. In any case, this book was solidly O.K. A little thin for me, a little dark, I think, for the avid young reader in my home, and for a book with "cats" in the title, awfully light on actual felines. Vess's illustrations are very pretty, but his cats are also just ok. I can imagine this book working better as an animated movie (possibly by Studio Ghibli; it has the right blend of darkness and whimsy); a film could tell visually a lot of what was not very well described in the book.

Margaret says

Once upon a time a little girl who lives with her Aunt and feeds all the wild cats goes traipsing about the forest, falls asleep beneath a beech tree, and gets bit by a snake. Because they love her, the cats decide to save her by turning her into a kitten.

A charming MG novel, with lovely illustrations by Charles Vess. It's a companion novel to Seven Wild Sisters, which I liked better, but this one was still a fun read.

karen says

"...it might seem like a terrible thing to be trapped in a kitten's body, but there are worse fates"

As you can see in the comments below the review, [name redacted] very politely asked me to read this book, so I did.

I've never read anything else by de Lint, and even though this is technically part of his sprawling Newford series, my understanding of how that series rolls is that it's not necessary to read them all, or read them all in order; like the brilliant Donald Harington's Stay More "series" they are only connected by location and tone.

Feel free to jump in and correct me, internet fact-checkers.

This is a cute little story about the rambunctious orphan Lillian Kindred - the red-headed tomboy who lives on the edge of the Tanglewood forest with her aunt. She spends her days running barefoot through the woods looking for fairies, putting out milk for the many feral cats who live in the forest, as well as some treats for the Apple Tree Man - the oldest apple tree in the orchard. She is a friend to all animals, and is half-feral herself.

She hadn't meant to fall asleep, but she was a bit like a cat herself, wandering in the woods, chasing after squirrels and rabbits as fast as her skinny legs could take her when the fancy struck, climbing trees like a possum, able to doze in the sun at a moment's notice. And sometimes with no notice at all.

Which is what grown-ups call "foreshadowing" because one day, while she is catnapping under a tree, tuckered out from chasing a deer, a poisonous snake bites her. The cats of the forest gather around, distressed, because Lillian has always been kind to them. They can't save her from dying, but there's one thing they can do. They can *"...change her into something that isn't dying."*

And even though the father of cats does not like it when they meddle with magic, there is no other option, so they turn her into a little calico cat.

Lillian wakes up alive and kittenish, able to talk to the animals directly for the first time, but worried about her aunt and looking to be changed back into a person.

Which leads her on a journey of adventures, where she meets and converses with a cow, Jack Crow, a handsome fox, the bear people, a possum witch; where she is transformed and transformed again and learns the dangers of getting what you wish for and the unforeseen consequences of messing with magic.

Lillian will also meet up with the father of cats himself.

t's a cute little story, but it's the artwork that makes me love it.

nd as you can see, each chapter opens with a different letter/animal entwinement, which is a nice touch.

here's a companion book to this one, in this illustrated format, but it doesn't seem to be cat-centric, so i'm not sure i will follow up with that one. i may read more books in this world, though, if anyone wants to give me some guidance.

LOOK! I HAVE KEPT A PROMISE!!!

i will read it as soon as i can i promise i promise!!!
i read it!
review TK!

Shannon says

If it were just the writing, this would be an easy four stars. It's a great story and just the sort that I love (plucky orphaned girl swept up into a fairy tale), but Charles de Lint's made up Indian tribe (the Kickaha) kind of makes my skin crawl with their patent falseness. I know he's doing it with the best intentions in the world but it's still not really okay. The fake "Indian legends" he puts in the story are basically the equivalent of going "ching chong" to imitate an Asian language.

And yet...the ART. Every page is a jewel. The illustrations and the text come together gorgeously; the book, as a physical object, is a treasure.

So...four stars for the story, minus one for the (unintentional) racism, that's three stars. Five stars for the art. Split the difference...four stars. It really is a beautiful book.

Branwen Sedai *of the White Ajah* says

"A person can't depend on anybody else for their happiness. The only way you can ever find any peace is to find it in yourself-in what you do and what you stand for."

Cats, fairies, possum witches, talking foxes, magical forests...what's not to love? ;) This book was a fun hodgepodge fairytale of a young girl coming into her own. When she falls asleep in the magical Tanglewood Forest near her farm and gets bit by a poisonous snake, you think the tale might be over before it has begun. But nothing is as it seems in stories such as these, and when a bunch of cats from the forest use their magic

to help her by turning her into a cat, young Lillian finds her adventure has actually just started!

This book was a fun, delightful read. Although it is aimed for a younger audience, I enjoyed it greatly! The writing style was lyrical and beautiful (It's written by Charles de Lint, and he's such a genius!) and the story was fun and had lots of twists and turns. And the color illustrations throughout the book were gorgeous as well. This was a great read that I'm sure I will enjoy again and again.
