



Winter Moon

Mercedes Lackey , Tanith Lee , C.E. Murphy

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Mercedes Lackey:

In an isolated land where the lure of the "Moontide" leads to shipwrecks, a woman is torn between obeying her father or her king. When she chooses to follow a Fool, she discovers magic she'd never expected... at a price that might be too high....

Tanith Lee

Struggling under the curse of a dead comrade, Clirando, a warrior priestess unready to face the powers trapped within her, must face "The Heart of the Moon" to reveal what has been hidden....

C.E. Murphy

In "Banshee Cries," ritual murders under a full moon lead Jo Walker to confront a Harbinger of Death. Maybe this "gift" she has is one she shouldn't ignore— because the next life she has to save might be her own!

Winter Moon Details

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Chichipio says

Only read *Banshee Cries* by C.E. Murphy. I think this is the perfect length for her stories. Same amount of plot and character development, less than half the whining and other annoying things. Definitely better than the second and third full length books of the series.

Djaz says

Loved the first two stories but couldn't get into the third. Connecting with the third story in this collection is hard without having read the novel it draws characters from. Despite that, the female characters are strong women who have amazing adventures, and I'm glad authors craft women I admire.

Samantha says

I bought this book to read the story by C.E. Murphy, which is part of her Walker Papers series. I enjoyed that story quite a bit. Of the other two stories, I only read one of them, the one by Mercedes Lackey, which was okay. I didn't even try to read the one by Tanith Lee because I know that her writing doesn't agree with me.

Mireille says

I only read the C.E. Murphy story. I was not interested in the other 2 stories; I just needed my fix until I could get my hands on the next "Walker" papers!

Myridian says

This book consists of three novellas by three different authors, Mercedes Lackey, Tanith Lee, and C E Murphy. None of the three really spoke to me in the way I was hoping for.

Lackey had been one of my favorite authors as an adolescent and I was looking forward to a little bit of guilty pleasure, escapist reading. Unfortunately the characters didn't feel well drawn out enough for me and too much happened for it to be a satisfyingly described novella. It is true that by the end of the story I wanted to spend more time with the characters, but I feel that that was more because I was left not having been given enough rather than because I simply wanted more.

Lee's story was my favorite of the three, but I felt this was one of the less strong stories of hers that I have read. The premise was interesting and the dream-like quality of Lee's writing was heightened by the subject of being drawn into an actual dream world. Again it was the characters that I had a problem with. Lee's character descriptions are often terse, but here I never felt a strong connection to her creations. This very

much acted to the detriment of the story as I couldn't really bring myself to care overly much what happened to them.

Murphy's story was my least favorite. Again I felt the lack of enough space to fully develop the character in a way I could connect with. What's more, in this story Murphy was brining back a character I gather she has written about extensively elsewhere. Overall, Murphy did a passable job of brining in a virgin reader to the world, but still I felt a little like I was at a party where everyone keeps brining up in-jokes.

Perhaps the overall message of this book for me was that I dislike novellas, but as I am certainly a fan of the short story genre, it's hard for me to believe that there isn't a way of setting up a novella that leaves me more satisfied than any of this series of three did.

colleen says

read 12.30.05

I liked the Walker Papers story best but the other two were also good.

Mike says

I recently found this book on the shelves of my local used bookstore. Of course I bought it; I'm a huge Mercedes Lackey fan, and I was pretty sure, standing there in the store, that I'd read some of Tanith Lee's stuff, too. And then I read it. It wasn't bad. But...how to put this...?

I'm glad I got it at half price.

With collections like this, I prefer to rate the individual stories and then average their scores, so this review is for the stories themselves rather than the book.

“Moontide,” by Mercedes Lackey — 3 stars.

This is...not really much like her other work. I know she has a lot of critics, but I've always liked her books. Not necessarily for the plots, which have, on occasion, been a bit lazy, or for the characters, which can get a little Mary Sue-ish; I mostly love her books for her worlds. Lackey worlds – and I'm not just talking about Valdemar – come with rich societies and detailed geography and complex histories. She builds great magic systems and interesting cultures. I don't want to make it sound like I think her writing is terrible aside from her settings, because she's written many books that I like in every respect. But, even when that's not the case, hanging out in her worlds is worth putting up with the occasional lazy plot device or too-good-to-be-true character.

The problem with short stories – especially ones not set in an established universe – is that there's no room for all the extras that made me enjoy, for instance, The Collegium Chronicles, even though side characters Bear and Lena were unbelievable and ridiculous. Don't misunderstand me: I'm not calling Moontide bad, not at all. It just wasn't as...magical as I might've hoped. It might still have rated four stars, though, except for the romance, which was both entirely unnecessary and ridiculously, unbelievably quick.

I honestly wasn't crazy about the characters, either. Moira is a little too perfect for me. Despite being very young, she's able to play the roles of expert spy, expert swordswoman, expert embroiderer, expert noblewoman...you get the idea. A little more in the way of flaws might have made her a bit more believable. And of course we have the opposite, as well: Moira's dad, who dials the unfeeling authoritarian lord role up to eleven, and the bad guy, who's naturally a diabolical sociopath or something.

Maybe, had this been a full-length novel rather than a novella, Lackey would've had room to give her characters a bit more nuance and slow down the romance. But even still, I didn't dislike this story. It could've been better, but it entertained me regardless. And I'll tell you what, I'm a bit disappointed there **isn't** a full-length novel (or series!) set in this universe; the glimpses of the society I got in the short time I was there were very interesting.

“The Heart of the Moon,” by Tanith Lee — 3 stars

This story was...unusual. It had a literary, almost poetic flavor to it; it felt a bit like I should've chanted it instead of reading it. I'd tend to bet the writing will turn a lot of people off, but honestly? I think it was necessary, because the style and cadence helped disguise a thin plot and an even thinner setting.

Sort of like using a lot of spice in your stew to hide the fact that the meat is of dubious quality.

I'm not going to say as much about this book, mostly because I don't know a way to write about my issues with the story without massive spoilers. I will say this, though: it's a weird story. It's sort of like fantasy fiction on magic mushrooms. But as weird as it was, I never seriously entertained the idea of abandoning it. For what it was, it, too, entertained me, which is why I ultimately decided not to give it two stars. But, whereas with Lackey's tale had laid enough of the framework to make me intrigued by the universe and wish for a longer book, this one left me with no desire to continue on; this universe was like the badly painted backdrop of a high school play. It was necessary to prop up the story, but it'll never be more than a paper-thin prop.

“Banshee Cries,” by C. E. Murphy — 4 stars

How funny that the one story in the book I suspected I'd like least turned out to be my favorite!

Unlike the other two tales, this one is solidly urban fantasy. Not only do I tend to strongly prefer high fantasy, the protagonist was such a cliché I could've described her perfectly before even starting reading. (Strong, mouthy, single, highly sexed, snarky, disdains traditionally “feminine” stuff in favor of dude stuff...do I need to go on?)

But, I've never minded reading derivative stories as long as they're well-done, and this one really was; I'd say it's on par with several popular series I've sampled (Kate Daniels, Alex Noziak, Raine Benares...).

In fact, I'd say the worst thing about the book is that it's a followup to an existing series, and as you might suspect, the feeling of having missed the beginning of the story was pretty strong. The story was good, but it would've been better had I already read *Urban Shaman*. Had it been a standalone, I'd have knocked a star or two off for not having enough exposition – there wasn't nearly enough explanation of Jo's powers and history and relationships with the other characters – but I have to assume most of that was covered in the series's first volume.

I think some people are under the impression this is a romance. (They can be forgiven, I think; this is such a

bog standard urban fantasy in every other way, why wouldn't there also be the bad-boy love interest?) I can't say whether there's a romance later on in the series, but this story doesn't even have so much as a single lingering glance. (If you're wondering, that was not a complaint.)

Like I said, I really wouldn't have thought this story would be my cup of tea, and out of all of them, my expectations of Banshee Cries were lowest. It was good enough that immediately after finishing, I downloaded Urban Shaman so that I could start the story from the beginning.

So for the whole book, we come in at 3.33 stars, rounded down to three. Looking at the book as a whole, I think I'd probably have to call it "vaguely entertaining." I certainly don't regret buying or reading it – though I think I might've been peeved had I paid the full cover price – but I also think it's going back to the used book store the next time I head down there. Not bad, but not compelling enough that I expect to reread it. My advice: see if your library has it before buying it.

Shandra says

This book is really three novellas, or maybe one short story and two novellas? (I'm not sure if the Mercedes Lackey story is long enough to be a true novella.) I picked it up because of the CE Murphy story, as I'd noticed a gap in my knowledge of the Walker Papers series, which I recently finished. This fills in a bit of that, which was nice, even if I'd already inferred it from the books. I do think it would be hard for people to just jump into this novella without having read the first Walker Papers book, and the reviews I looked at bear this out. For me, the novella had the same things I loved about the series - the characters, including Walker herself. For people unfamiliar, the humor and awesome character might draw them in, but they should definitely pick up Urban Shaman if they like it!

I also really liked the Mercedes Lackey story. I haven't stayed current with her books lately, and it was like coming home again to read a piece by her - I do love her worlds so much. Was her protagonist a little too good? Probably so, but still a lot of fun.

I was intrigued by the Tanith Lee novella - it was a little darker than the other two in tone, more serious feeling. Still, the world setting sucked me in, and even though I didn't necessarily intend on reading that third novella, I did.

Altogether, a very enjoyable set, and given that my name means "moon" in Sanskrit, I also loved the overarching theme, too! ;)

The Flooze says

Being a fan of Murphy's Walker Papers series, I've suffered from grave confusion throughout the last two books, thinking: What battle with a banshee? When did Billy almost die? WHAT is the deal with Joanne's mom? What in the middle realms is this lady talking about?

Some digging uncovered the novella "Banshee Cries" which Murphy labels Walker Papers 1.5. (Don't you hate it when authors make shorts *required* reading?)

This was a worthwhile addition to the series, exploring the reasons behind her mother's abandonment and also the timing of her death. It highlights the Gaelic side of Joanne's shamanism.

The novella is fast-paced with the right amount of humor, just like the other Walker Papers.

There's always one area where I feel this series is lacking though: the development of the villain. I know these creatures are things of myth and magic, but I wish they felt more real and tangible, less spectral. They are, after all, affecting real terror on the world..

Bridgette Redman says

What better unifying symbol for a collection of fantasy romance novellas than the moon—that silver disk so often associated with women and female spirituality? Likewise, what better symbol if the publishing house just happens to be Luna Books, the fantasy imprint of Harlequin. In what seems an almost too-perfect fit, one of its November 2005 releases is *Winter's Moon*, a collection of three novellas.

I'll confess that it wasn't the title that caught my eye on this volume. It was the authors, in particular the first two: Mercedes Lackey, Tanith Lee, and C.E. Murphy. Luna pulled out its powerhorses for this collections and the stories live up to their authors' reputations.

All of the stories create an excellent sense of place and give us characters that are easy to care about. They all have their strengths and vulnerabilities in nearly equal amounts. In fact, it is their vulnerabilities that feed and power their strengths.

Moontide

The first story is by Mercedes Lackey, a tale about a woman who understands and accepts her place in a patriarchal society. Does this mean that she is a weak, submissive woman? No. She is a strong, submissive woman and what she submits to his not a man, but to her people and to the debt she owes them.

Maira is the eldest daughter and heir of Highclere Sea-Keep. She's been a fosterling of the Countess Vrenable and has become one of her Grey Ladies, women with numerous, often hidden, talents. She is recalled to her home by her cold-hearted father Lord Ferson who has hatched some plot that she must divine and foil.

Maira is someone who shows her cleverness by hiding behind demure submissiveness and making the most of another person's false assumptions about her. She is also an eloquent defender of the concept of noblesse oblige and is willing to be wed where it would benefit her people the most.

While the plot is interesting, it is really the character of Maira which holds the most appeal. She is passionate, wise, and capable. She is a person that you want to learn more about and follow her future adventures.

As it is a Luna book, there is a love story. While it is not part of the main theme, it is very much a feel-good addition. It boosts the story's catharsis and leaves the reader with a smile at the end.

The Heart of the Moon

Tanith Lee's story begins in a warrior society where most of the warriors and clerics are female. Clirando discovers that her best friend and her lover are having an affair. She immediately demands justice and challenges them to a duel in which she thoroughly shames them and is responsible for their exile. While this is justice, she is so beset by guilt that she is eventually set upon a quest where she must either conquer it or be conquered.

The Heart of the Moon is a very magical tale, even while Clirandro herself practices no magic at all. Instead, it is the magic of the human heart and what we must do to find forgiveness—not for others, but for ourselves. During her journey, she meets Zemetrious, another injured soul. The two of them journey in search of healing, even while they both think they are searching for something else.

It is a very psychological story. There were times when you could almost hear the voice of a therapist wrapped in the sparkle of magic and the words of sages. The paths that these two protagonists are set upon are paths that many of us must traverse in our lifetime, even if we don't travel to the moon to find answers.

Banshee Cries

C.E. Murphy's novella is an intermission between her June 2005 release of *Urban Shaman* and the second book in the series due out in 2006. One could almost call it version 1.5. She takes the same characters and gives us more background about them by giving them another adventure.

Though perhaps adventure is too hearty and upbeat a word to apply to the investigation of a grisly serial murder. The would-be mechanic beat cop is called upon to use her newly found spiritual abilities to find the inhuman evil that has murdered women in a park.

The story is a tale of mothers and daughters and coming to terms with the past. Joanne, the mechanic, beat cop, and urban shaman, is suddenly having intense conversations with her mother who died nearly six months before. Their relationship—one that had lasted only a few months before her mother died—was a cold one and it now undergoes a strange and unusual transformation.

The magic in the book ranges from Native American to Irish while having an almost hard-boiled detective feel to it. Of the three novellas, this was the one which had the least love story. The love story was the love between a mother and daughter, not a romantic love shared by lovers.

The bright and witty writing had me frequently laughing aloud. This novella could almost be a marketing piece for her novels. It certainly inspired me to read *Urban Shaman*--which is now sitting at my bedside as the next book on my list to read.

The *Winter Moon* was entertaining from start to finish. It was almost impossible to set down and it traveled with me everywhere I went during the weekend that I read it. If you're looking for enjoyable reading with engaging characters, then indulge yourself in these three novellas.

Althea Ann says

*** "Moontide" - Mercedes Lackey

If you're a fan of Lackey's work in general, you're bound to like this. A young woman, Moira, is summoned home from her fosterage by her estranged father, Lord of a cold sea-keep. Little does he know she's been trained in spycraft and assassination at the King's court. But Moira guesses that her father has some plot up his sleeve, and his plans might be worse than just marrying her off to a cruel pirate.

The plot progresses without any real surprises, and the general feel (as expected from Lackey) is very YA - but nevertheless, I found the story to be charming and genuinely romantic.

*** "Heart of the Moon" - Tanith Lee

I love Tanith Lee, but unfortunately, this didn't live up to my expectations. It had a bit of a dashed-off feeling to it. There was some potential in the idea of a pilgrimage to a mysterious island to work out feelings of guilt - but I didn't feel that the main character actually probed her motivations and jealousy deeply enough, and her happy ending was too quick and easy (and her lover is just too, too perfect.) I liked the magic of the island, but it remained oddly unexplained, while other elements were wrapped up too patly. Still, I'd say this is the best selection out of the three in this volume.

** "Banshee Cries" - C.E. Murphy

Apparently, this is part of an extensive series by the author. I won't be seeking other entries out - this kind of neo-urban fantasy just isn't for me. There's a cop investigator, who is a bundle of rolled-together cliches about Native American and Celtic heritage - of course, with supernatural/psychic powers inherited from both sides of her family. Conveniently - perhaps TOO conveniently, considering her background, there's a supernatural being committing ritual murders for her to investigate. Nothing too original here.

Mandy Beyers says

Like the first and last stories - the middle one was only so-so for me.

Kate says

This collection of three books was a mixed bag. The first story was fine. A little predictable and cutesy, but fine. The second story was wonderful. Tanith Lee has a fabulous way of creating dreamscapes in her writing. The third story was so bad I didn't bother to finish the book. All in all I'd suggest reading the middle story and ditching the other two.

Bonnie Jennings says

Not many anthologies where I like all the stories - this one I loved all three.

Kristin says

Reviewing collections is always hard, and this is no different. The three stories are all quite different so, here goes:

Moontide by Mercedes Lackey: So, I read a whole ton of Lackey growing up. It was my jam. Telepathic magic horses that Chose you? Totally what my high school self wanted to read about. I've kept reading Lackey kind of out of habit and out of nostalgia, but with an increased notice of the faults. This is no different. There is some good description, but the pacing is weird and the main villain being a pirate prince from the east who has a harem of wives is...problematic...to be diplomatic. That aside it wasn't terrible as a short story.

Heart of the Moon by Tanith Lee: This was quite good. Very introspective, the pacing didn't feel weird for a short story, and the amount of world building that was packed in without feeling like an overload was impressive.

Banshee Cries by CE Murphy: I couldn't finish this one. It was part of a series which I haven't read, so I didn't have any background and the Celtic/Cherokee main character seemed like a hot mess of cultural appropriation. I'm glad it was the last story so I could just give up.
