



Candlelight

D. L. Tolin

Twisted Spindle Press

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A child's fate is tied to a mystical legacy in the series-opening fantasy novel Candlelight.

D. L. Tolin's sprawling, series-opening fantasy novel *Candlelight* concerns centuries-long rivalries, lost love, and power struggles in the fairy realm.

In 1986 in Beaumont, Texas, ongoing child disappearances baffle and frustrate a local detective, Jacob. Meanwhile, Lina hides ancient, painful secrets about her son Matthew's parentage, even as fourteen-year-old Matthew contends with school bullies and dreams of a strange portal in the forest behind his home. And when Matthew opens the portal in his dream, beings with surreptitious motives pass into the mortal realm.

The book's stakes are fast established as fairy folks cross over from Tír na nÓg, seeking Matthew due to his father, whom he's never met. The fairies, who are callous with human life, are fleshed out using macabre lore that stretches back millennia. Each group among them adheres to a particular code of conduct, from bargaining literal memories for goods to exchanging ironclad oaths for twisted games. There are centuries of intricate social fabrics, legendary creatures with innate abilities, and beings just as complex and nuanced as those in the mortal realm.

Tír na nÓg is also fleshed out in verdant terms. It is rendered beautiful despite its dangers, with elements of the setting existing in striking juxtaposition to the horrors enacted there. The related prose is decadent, attending to moments of joy and lush landscapes with the same detail that it applies to its unflinching scenes of torture and death.

The narrative perspective rotates among Matthew, Lina, and Jacob. Matthew works to reunite with his mother, exhibiting bravery even as he proves sometimes inept in his interactions with the fairies; steadfast, clever Lina is desperate to resolve issues related to Matthew's father; and Jacob, as he adjusts to the reality of supernatural forces around him, finds more questions than answers as he investigates. On occasion, Matthew's childhood friend turned bully, Stacey, also narrates, and people's individual stories coalesce well, as each person contends with the question of how far they are willing to go for those they love. Further, each person proffers crucial details related to the ongoing mysteries, building to clear tension points and revealing tantalizing bits of information about the fairies' actions and motivations.

Trepidation accumulates as the novel continues, though the book ends with its cast's adventures just beginning. Matthew, in particular, is left with awareness of the necessary risks and transformations to come, generating interest in the continuing series.

Candlelight is a propulsive fantasy novel in which people's senses of identity and reality adapt in the face of magical beings among them.

NATALIE WOLLENZIEN (April 13, 2026)

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