

The Crowns of Croswald

D. E. Night

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Full of conjuring, creative creatures, and colorful characters, The Crowns of Croswald is a thoughtful, action-driven middle grade fantasy.

Attending the Halls of Ivy, the hallowed school for those with royal or magical blood, has always seemed like a faraway dream for almost-sixteen-year-old Ivy Lovely until an unexpected invitation changes her life forever in D. E. Night's enchanting middle grade adventure, *The Crowns of Croswald*.

Overnight, Ivy goes from scaldrony maid to sqwinch, her lackluster duties as a kitchen drudge and stovetop dragon keeper replaced with glamorous classrooms, extravagant dining halls, and a bevy of entitled princes and princesses learning to control and hone their magic. Excited as she is to be a prospective scrivenist, or sqwinch, something in the Halls isn't quite right, hinting at dark secrets and a forgotten past that continues to haunt her dreams.

Fairies, dwarves, and a Dark Queen, combined with Ivy's ashes-to-ballroom transformation, set the scene for a Cinderella-like fairy tale, but Ivy is no damsel in distress. She's timid and unsure with bouts of rebellion and growing in confidence and determination; tweens, teens, and young adults will relate to Ivy's struggle to find herself amid the excitement of a new school and her emerging talents. It doesn't hurt that third-year student Fyn "ok-maybe-he's-handsome" Greeley seems to have a crush on her, along with a shared penchant for bending the rules.

Some details will seem familiar to those who love the genre, the Halls of Ivy bearing an uncanny resemblance to Hogwarts at times, complete with figures moving within picture frames, shady professors, resident ghosts, a shopping hub for buying magical school supplies, and sneaking about after hours solving mysteries. But Ivy's trials and the skills of a scrivenist are fresh and unique, particularly the dichotomy between the royals, who gain their personal magic from the gems in their crowns, and the scrivenists who ultimately work in tandem with them, using quills and innate magic to complement the crown, not to mention the shared blood and history between the two that comes to light the more Ivy uncovers.

Scrivenists one and all revere and share a love of books, and clever titles and subjects abound, from *Perfectly Imperfect Potions* and *The Compass Collectis: A Collection for Collaboration and Comprehension* to cheeky local newspaper *Scriven This*. These tongue twisters, along with a number of zany classroom mishaps and an entertaining cast of supporting characters, add a lighthearted element and a bit of humor to the sinister curses and nefarious plans of the shadowy Dark Queen.

Full of conjuring, creative creatures, and colorful characters, *The Crowns of Croswald* is a thoughtful, action-driven middle grade fantasy that will leave audiences clamoring to find out what happens next in Ivy's magical world.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (June 6, 2017)

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