

The War of the Woods: The Crowns of Croswald

D. E. Night

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The potent fantasy novel The War of the Woods traces a future queen's adventures, revealing secrets about who she is and what she can do.

D. E. Night's magic-filled fantasy novel *The War of the Woods* questions whether friendship or fear is stronger.

Ivy, a former scullery maid, has been revealed to be royalty. Though she's positioned to be the future queen, that role is now held and abused by the Dark Queen. And Ivy's friendship with Fyn has grown toward romantic interest. In their old school, the Halls of Ivy, they are separated from their friends; they mourn the death of Rimbrick, whose part of the Kindred Stone, a powerful magical talisman that he protected and saved for Ivy, they now possess.

In this fourth series title, catching up to the action takes time. But after a slow start to establish background, the power of the Dark Queen encroaches on the school. Fyn and Ivy take to the dwarf tunnels, after which the book moves with speed. The action escalates and attacks ensue. The duo is guided by Rimbrick's map, a verse, and an admonition to find Dwarflin. In Dwarflin, they are to make contact with mysterious Abister, a being whom neither Ivy nor Fyn understand.

The details built into the book's world include creatures like giant squids, bogdogs, and golden dragons. Each has its own style, varying from Gothic darkness to shining power. Dragon scales can be used to call on some creatures for help, and there are boxes that transport magical mail and supplies. Meanwhile, royals are assigned scrivenists who use magical quills to write down histories and cast spells. Each detail adds to a sense of the vastness of Croswald.

Ivy faces challenges both physical and emotional on her quest. Her fears for herself, her friends, and over her own ability to perform the duties asked of her are moving. She also faces uncertainty about her relationship with Fyn, increasing her sense of duress. Fyn is a strong sense of support; his banter with Ivy is endearing, as is the fact that he is willing to follow her lead. The Dark Queen's power—and her complete willingness to abuse it—makes her a daunting foe, but as her past reveals itself, she comes to seem a complex villain—both frightening and knowable—prior to the book's final showdown.

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CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (March 10, 2022)

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