

The Library Coven {fka JK, It's Magic} Episode 35: *The Queen of Nothing* by Holly Black

transition [00:00:14] [whimsical harpsichord music plays].

kelly [00:00:15] Hello! And welcome to "JK, it's Magic," a bi-weekly podcast in which two bookish besties discuss (mostly) YA fantasy through the lens of intersectional feminist criticism. Why? Because critique is our fan girl love language and because talking about books is pretty magical.

jessie [00:00:32] I'm Jessie.

kelly [00:00:33] And I'm Kelly.

jessie [00:00:35] And today we are finally wrapping up the Folk of the Air series by Holly Black. We're reading *The Queen of Nothing*. We finally find out what happens to Jude and Cardan, and we see everything that unfolds after Jude was banished to the mortal world.

transition [00:00:49] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:00:53] All right. So for our small talk and call to action at the top of the episode, [pauses] I wanna to talk about something that's been bothering me for a while. So, J.K., Rowling is a fucking TERF and I'm tired of her having the monopoly on the letters, "j" and "k" anywhere near fantasy. And this has happened to such a degree that some people wrongly assume that the name of our podcast comes from her. [Dismissively] As if!! Has this happened to you when you've told people about our show?

jessie [00:01:21] Yes, I think a few people have said "Oh, is it related to Harry Potter?" And I have to say "no, no, it's not" [chuckles]

kelly [00:01:27] No. It's like literally our initials. Hence the podcast artwork. We tried to make it obvious. But anyway, so thinking of podcast names is hard. [laughs] LOL Anyway, if you want some transforming, anti-racist, anticolonial intersectional feminist "JK" posts on your timelines, give us a follow on Twitter or Instagram. Jessie runs both of those platforms. After I failed at running instagram [laughs] by not posting!

jessie [00:01:54] you didn't fail!! [laughs]

kelly [00:01:58] I'm on there sometimes, you know, I drop in.

jessie [00:02:00] Yeah,.

kelly [00:02:01] But anyway, give us a follow. Fuck TERFs. And if you can't donate to the Okra Project, a collective that provides home cooked meals and resources to black, trans and gender nonconforming people experiencing food insecurity. So that's something material that you can support right now.

transition [00:02:17] [bright, stacatto string music plays]

jessie [00:02:23] Initial reactions.

kelly [00:02:26] Let's hear it!

jessie [00:02:27] I wasn't really sure where we were, what was going to happen in this book, and I was a bit nervous, but I really enjoyed it. I read this book as soon as it came out. So we're podcasting... Recording this episode in July [2020], which means I read this book all the way back in November [2019]. And then I read listen to the audio book as we prepared for this episode. I really enjoyed how the story got all wrapped up. And I would really like to be Grima Mog when I grow up. If at all possible, please.

kelly [00:02:53] You are so totally on your way to being Grima Mog [jessie laughs] no doubt you are. You're just like, well on your way.

jessie [00:03:01] Thank you.

kelly [00:03:03] Living your best life!

jessie [00:03:04] I try.

kelly [00:03:06] Just— are you a redcap? I think maybe we figured it out.

jessie [00:03:10] Maybe. I mean, I don't really want to be associated with Madoc, but I'll take it, you know?

kelly [00:03:17] It's more just like her... I don't know... Attitude that she projects anyway. I love this series and I'm glad I re-listened cuz even though it has only been a few months, those were pandemic and end of PhD program months for me... So it might as well have been like, I mean, time is made up anyway.... So a year, who knows. But anyway, I was glad to be back in this world. And Holly Black writes such immersive fantasy and nuanced characters. I agree with you, I enjoyed how everything was kind of tied up pretty neatly in a bow that was relatively satisfactory. You know, as a reader, well, very, I would say. I liked the book. I don't know how, but I completely forgot that Cardan turns into a snake. [

jessie [00:03:58] I think I forgot it as well! And then when it happened, [kelly laughs] I was like, "Oh, yeah. he turned into a fucking snake, like what the fuck?!" [laughs].

kelly [00:04:03] I forgot how I— like, how did I forget about that?

jessie [00:04:08] I don't know.

transition [00:04:09] [bright, stacatto string music plays]

kelly [00:04:15] Time to talk about worldbuilding in "through the wardrobe." We spend about the first quarter, third maybe of the story in the mortal world, which was a bit of a change. The other two books were took place mostly in faery, since that's where Jude grew up. And at this point, there's not a lot of world building as in like creating new scene, new settings or anything like that. It's more just continuing to weave the characters and setting of faerie together to conclude the story. But I thought it was like well maintained. Yeah.

jessie [00:04:49] Did you enjoy the time that was spent in the mortal world?

kelly [00:04:53] I liked when she when Jude was fighting Grima Mog [laughing] because I like Grima Mog.

jessie [00:04:57] I thought it was an odd choice to spend so much time in the mortal in a world. I know it makes sense because Jude is an exile. But, for me, I was just like, oh, "I just wanna go back to faerie because, like, the mortal world is so boring."

kelly [00:05:12] Yeah, it was like I'm waiting for the real plot action to get going, you know?

jessie [00:05:16] Yeah. And it doesn't really feel like anything really starts to happen. Like there's a big fight with Grima Mogg, which was really exciting. But other than that, I'm like, the story doesn't really start till we get back to Elfhaim. So, like, when am I going to get there?

kelly [00:05:30] [laughs] Agreed.

jessie [00:05:31] I just wanted to see Cardan again.

kelly [00:05:34] Love him.

transition [00:05:35] [spellcasting sound]

jessie [00:05:38] Jude is so forgiving. I kind of forgot about this until I was real listening to the book. But I still hate Taryn even after reading this book. And I am so shocked at Jude's capacity for forgiveness because she does not seem like the type of person to forgive easily or to, like, get over something like that. Maybe there's some kind of weird connection between the two of them because they're twins. But I was just like, can Taryn please fuck off? Like she is the worst. [kelly laughs]

kelly [00:06:10] I kind of forgave Taryn after she stabbed Locke in the throat with a letter opener so that he would like, quote, "finally shut up" or something like that. I don't know. I liked that part. I thought that was cool.

jessie [00:06:23] I mean, it's cool that she tried to kill him. I mean, she did kill him, not tried. She succeeded. But

kelly [00:06:28] She did successfully.

jessie [00:06:29] But she also almost got her sister killed. So I'm just like, "come on, dude. Like, you can't forgive that so fast!"

kelly [00:06:37] I don't know where I stand on it. I think that maybe it's the sister connection. Yeah. Jude was I think part of it is because she's so desperate to get back to— for any excuse to get back to Elfhaim.

jessie [00:06:47] Yeah, that's true.

kelly [00:06:49] Another bite at the ever apple. You know, they say that at one point.

jessie [00:06:52] Yeah. Neither of us have sisters. So I guess maybe there's like something there that I don't understand.

kelly [00:06:58] And neither of us have twins.

jessie [00:07:00] No. Not that I know of. [laughs].

transition [00:07:01] [bright, stacatto, string music plays]

jessie [00:07:08] Let's discuss all things magic. This book is full of prophecies, cursed crowns. As we said before, Cardan turns into a giant snake. There's just so many things going on. I feel like they should have known something was up with that prophecy before like that seemed pretty obvious to me. The cursed crown– was not expecting that. Cardan turning into a snake for most of the book– was not expecting that. And a little disappointed that we didn't get to spend more time with Cardan in this book.

kelly [00:07:40] [laughing] the Fucking snake. Oh, my God. I can't believe I forgot it. I really enjoyed how many different kinds of magic were in the book like you're describing. I dunno I just like, repeated what you said, but less specifically. [jessie laughs] You said it. You said it.

jessie [00:07:58] Also that magic arrow. That's like like in the body of the Queen of the Sea or whatever. Like that was kind of cool. I really liked that part, actually. That was cool magic.

kelly [00:08:09] That was cool!

jessie [00:08:10] Like, way to go for your enemies. I liked that. [pauses] I guess you're right. I probably am a redcap because I'm like "everything Madoc does makes so much sense." And, like, I get it.

kelly [00:08:20] It's just battle strategy.

jessie [00:08:23] Maybe I would be like, particularly good at, like, you know, military things.

kelly [00:08:31] Probably.

jessie [00:08:31] I wouldn't do it! [laughs].

kelly [00:08:34] Nooo.

transition [00:08:34] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:08:37] I guess another thing that we can talk about with magic is that the land chooses Jude as high queen and that seems kind of more like her coronation. I don't know. That seemed like a more important event than her coronation would have been, you know?

jessie [00:08:50] Well, and it's also the moment that she gets set to reveal to Taryn, who has no idea at the time that she had married Cardan and she was technically the queen of Elfheim. So it was also a cool scene to see, like her telling Taryn about this. I really like the scenes that follow it where she goes. But, you know, she goes back and everyone is like having about her and stuff and they are not happy about having human as- as queen.

kelly [00:09:16] No, they aren't to have the quote unquote "natural order of things" be upset, especially Cardan's mom.

jessie [00:09:22] I was actually, like, really happy that his mom was so unhappy. Like she's like refusing to get out of bed and like, bend the knee. And I'm like, "yeah, fuck you!" [laughs]

kelly [00:09:33] I did it, like, get some serious Daenerys vibes—.

jessie [00:09:36] —mmhmm [in agreement].

kelly [00:09:37] —you know, from Jude. She just knows how to play it. Play the game. And yeah, I think Daenerys is such a great character. So I like that.

jessie [00:09:45] Yeah. And Jude didn't get ruined in the end so.

kelly [00:09:50] No she didn't. Yeah. There was no incest in the end so that's good.

jessie [00:09:53] OK. I meant the part where they like made her out to be like an emotionally unstable queen because she's like can't handle herself like as well.

kelly [00:10:01] Wow. I took that a totally different direction.

jessie [00:10:03] Yeah. [both laughing] Yeah.

kelly [00:10:07] What does that say about me. I have some, I don't know, puritanical stuff internalized or whatever. I don't even know.

jessie [00:10:14] Whatever you choose. I just thought that they took Daenerys in a very different direction than the story hinted at.

kelly [00:10:22] Oh yeah, definitely. That was some patriarchal bullshit for sure.

jessie [00:10:25] Yeah.

kelly [00:10:26] They basically like "yeah, she's too hysterical" and then she goes and burns down an entire whatever.

jessie [00:10:31] Yeah. No, thank you.

kelly [00:10:34] That's a pretty good segue to the to the villain section.

transition [00:10:37] [bright, stacatto string music plays]

kelly [00:10:43] Now we're going to talk about conflict villains and good versus evil in our segment, "Get me Kylo Ren!" Madoc? Question, questionmark. I kind of forget why we're mad at him, but I know he's the worst. But Jude has forgiven him for that in the past. The first time she met him, he literally stabbed her parents in front of her and killed them. And then kidnaped them and took them to a magic world. They have a lot of history, so it's it's not like— it's not very clear here.

jessie [00:11:14] Yeah, I had trouble with the thinking about, like the villainy of this book, because I know technically it's Madoc.

kelly [00:11:22] There were no notes in here. [jessie laughs]

jessie [00:11:24] [kelly laughs] I know. I'm so sorry. I guess I just like, Madoc is obviously like the big bad in this story. But at the same time, like, there's so many things going on with, like the cursed crown. So I guess kind of the faerie that cursed the crown, whose name is escaping me at the moment, like he kind of a limb syndrome's and. Yeah, like he is kind of a villain, I guess, because he created the crown that turned Cardan into a snake. But at the same time, that's the only reason that, like Cardan fulfills that prophecy. So.

kelly [00:11:58] Yeah, I mean. And then Cardan gets to kill him in the end.

jessie [00:12:01] Yes. I mean, I still hate Madoc. But, yeah, I don't know,.

kelly [00:12:08] This segues kind of into my next comment, like the line isn't very clear or like available at all really to see, because correct me if I'm wrong, but it— Jude is either toning back the lethality of her tactics or I'm just desensitized at this point in the series and I expect it from her character.

jessie [00:12:28] Yeah. I don't know. That's a hard one because I would say, like, I was really surprised at the very end when Jude lets Madoc live. And I feel like at the very end of the novel, when she is like handing out punishment for the traders. I was surprised at some of her decisions. I do think that shows that she's maybe. She's not like taking the most violent tactics necessary. Possible in order to, you know, do whatever she needs to do. And maybe part of that is her becoming queen and feeling like she needs to set a good example for, like, the people of Elfheim or something, maybe show them that humans can be good. But, I- I felt a little conflicted about that.

kelly [00:13:14] I think you're completely right and that it's kind of a combination of the two. Right? Because there's not that big a difference between the tactics Jude is willing to do and Madoc is willing to do. But at the same time, like her approach to justice at the end and accountability at the end is different them, I think what we would expect from someone else like Madoc.

jessie [00:13:36] Well, I think she sees that in herself. She is concerned about becoming Madoc by the end of the story. And so she kind of go down a different path. I mean, she's willing to kill Cardan to, like, protect the people of Elfheim. And I think that being queen of Elfheim and protecting the people becomes so much more important to her than getting her revenge.

kelly [00:13:58] Yeah. And it's more than just like being power hungry, I guess. Then at that point, it's it's like a different... It's like a "power with" rather than a "power over," you know?

jessie [00:14:11] Right. Exactly.

transition [00:14:12] [bright, stacatto string music plays]

jessie [00:14:17] Onward, magical listeners! Just as one does not simply walk into Mordor, one does not simply read fantasy without talking about representations of race, class and gender. This is our segment about power and bodies and how they relate.

kelly [00:14:30] We're starting with race.

jessie [00:14:32] Yes. OK. So I have to talk about Heather. I'm not sure I realized before that she was a person of color. I look back at the past episode script and see that we didn't mention it. So I don't think I did. But Holly Black writes her character using AAVE in the beginning of the book. Heather says things like "trippin" and "kickin it" on page 31 and 32. And I'm not really happy about this. Like at all. If you're a white author, please do not have black characters using AAVE as a way to tell the audience that the character is Black. I looked at the pages following these and Heather is definitely described as having brown skin. So she is at least meant to be POC. It comes off as both forced— does anyone really say those things anymore?— as well as racist. And there's a line alluding to the fact that Heather faces all kinds of racism, although it does... it isn't named as racism within the text... on a day to day basis. But the book doesn't go into any of those things. Maybe it will get a book from Vivi's perspective in the future. And Holly Black is trying to set that up. But I'm afraid to see what her writing of a Black character as part of a whole book would even look like. So I was really frustrated when thinking about race and Heather in particular in the series.

kelly [00:15:45] I'm really glad that you brought this up, because it does come across as like a tokenizing almost. Because the only character, like the really human human character, as in like, doesn't fit into this power differential very well. Like, doesn't know anything about faery, like. Knowledge is power. You know? Jude, Vivi, all of these people have knowledge of fairy and or like different kinds of power, you know, that Heather doesn't have. So, like Heather, also experiences like a different kind of discrimination. You know, when she's in faery too. Yeah, it's not like a substantive development of a character of color.

jessie [00:16:34] Yeah, well, and it's it seems like particularly bad when you think about the fact that Vivi was controlling Heather the first time that she took her to Elfheim, like making sure she didn't see what was really going on. So, like keeping her in the dark about things like, I don't know, it's really frustrating and. I know that Holly Black has a Black son, so I sometimes think that people, when they are like in proximity to Blackness in that way, think that it's OK for them to do these kinds of things. But to me, it was really, like patronizing. I don't know. I just I felt really weird about it. As soon as I saw, like, Heather saying trippin and kickin it. I was just like, first of all, it's 2020. I don't think people are saying that. Second of all, like when you think about things like code switching and stuff, like I don't— I'm not even sure Heather would say those things to a to a white person. So I don't know.

kelly [00:17:31] That's a really good point!!

jessie [00:17:33] Yeah.

kelly [00:17:33] that's a really good point!

jessie [00:17:34] Especially one she doesn't know very well. She doesn't really know Jude that well, like, well enough to, like, feel comfortable around her. I would think so. I don't know. I just. I did not appreciate it. Yeah. That's all my thoughts on that. [laughs].

transition [00:17:49] [spellcasting sound].

jessie [00:17:49] Do you want to talk about class?

kelly [00:17:53] Sure. Something I thought that was kind of refreshing is that there is actual talk about the need to make money to pay rent.

jessie [00:17:59] [in agreement] mmhmm!

kelly [00:18:00] Rent is such a fucking scam! I don't know if we've talked about this on the podcast before.

jessie [00:18:07] No, I don't think so.

kelly [00:18:09] We can include some...um [trails off] [resources] I'm not sure who's editing this one. Probably me.

jessie [00:18:13] It is you [both laugh] There is actually a really good episode of Patriot Act [with Hasan Minhaj] talking about rent forgiveness. And like all of the things that go along with that, like how difficult it is based on like how we get taxes for like schools and roads and all that sort of thing, which I found really interesting, because I think it's a side of the story that we don't often hear about when we talk about things like rent forgiveness, about how maybe making money off of property taxes isn't the best way to fund our school anything.

kelly [00:18:43] Yes, exactly.

jessie [00:18:45] I thought it was a really good episode. There's also a John Oliver episode that I think didn't do as good of a job of going over, like the nuances behind rent, forgiveness and what that means and like what the money actually goes to. But both of those, I think, are good resources. For more information. If you just like want a quick, dirty explanation of rent forgiveness and which I think is really prescient, like right now.

kelly [00:19:10] Totally, because it's not like rent has been canceled. The clock on evictions has been like restarted and or they're already happening, we can all look up some things closer to when this is released and make sure I'm putting up-to-date information in the show notes.

jessie [00:19:26] Yeah, cuz I think there's actually a Web site you can go to to find out. Like I know and a lot of states there have been policies to make sure people didn't get evicted if they couldn't pay their rent. But it doesn't actually include all rental properties, which I thought was really interesting because we like hear about these issues and think it applies to everyone, but it doesn't. I think it only is included on people, on places that have federally backed mortgages, which might not include your landlord, you know? But yeah. Rent is a scam, and it's like the literal worst.

kelly [00:19:57] Fucking scam.

jessie [00:19:58] Yeah,.

kelly [00:19:59] I listened to a good podcast called Rebels Steps that goes through is like actionable, you know, items, like tactics. And the hosts do it themselves and or interview people who are involved in this sort of organizing. And they did a really good episode about a rent strike.

jessie [00:20:15] OK, cool!

kelly [00:20:16] So that's, you know, important to educate ourselves on that.

jessie [00:20:20] Yeah.

kelly [00:20:21] And then I realized that. So back to like the fantasy book that we were talking about before. [both laugh] Um... Like then I realized that Jude is like doing that, taking part in this rent sham as like like out of pride or something, because Vivi's like, "we could literally take over a barn and I can bewitch us some pieces of dirt to look like money" or whatever. And then we can just like take advantage of this because like literally everything is like the system is all made up of peoples and power. Like, oh my God. Like why?!

jessie [00:20:58] Yeah.

kelly [00:20:59] JUde! you have at your disposal the means, like not to have to participate like that.

jessie [00:21:05] Yeah, like if I could pretend to pay my rent and not actually pay it, like I would 100 percent do that.

kelly [00:21:11] Yeah, totally. I mean I understand why her character does it. Chip on your shoulder etc. etc. craves the violence, wants to be like in a fight or whatever.

jessie [00:21:22] Well, and I think also she has like this really weird thing about the fairies tricking humans because, like, the fairies are the ones who have the power. So I think she feels like it's like very dishonest to do that. And I'm just like, you can be dishonest sometimes. Like sometimes life requires it. So, like, just in this one instance. So you and your family can live comfortably. Like, maybe just lie.

kelly [00:21:45] Yeah, desperate circumstances create acts of desperation.

jessie [00:21:49] Right. Yeah, I didn't get that either. But yeah, interesting.

transition [00:21:53] [spellcasting sound]

jessie [00:21:56] All right, let's talk about gender. So I think this is a bit for gender and a bit for bodies, but Taryn has all the options honestly laid out for her for what she can do about her pregnancy and does allow the space to choose from any of them with no judgment whatsoever. And I really think that's the way that it should be. I don't like Taryn. I don't really care about her baby, but I think it's really wonderful that she's she's like, given all these options, given them honestly and like, no judgment from her sisters about whatever she chooses to do. And I thought that was really cool and I'm really glad it was included.

kelly [00:22:30] Hundred percent agree.

transition [00:22:31] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:22:34] I had to put in here again. I love Grima Mogg five ever. Yeah, she's really great.

jessie [00:22:40] Also because, like, she's like an old lady, like, I hope I'm like that when I'm an old lady, like super fierce and strong.

kelly [00:22:46] I just love a spinster character. I think they're underrated. Like, I have so many powerful older women that I know. They don't really get much representation or or... Yeah, recognition.

jessie [00:23:01] Probably part of that is because I think as you get older, you start to care less about what other people think and what society tells you. So like if you're a spinster, you literally like gives zero fox and you're just like living your best life. And there are no consequences in society, does not want us to know that we could just live our lives however, we want. No consequences. They need those consequences in place. They need us to buy more makeup and like all these clothes and need things, which is fine if that's what you're interested in. But like, society shouldn't have to make us want those things. So that's why I love a good spinster.

kelly [00:23:35] Oh, yes. You just explained it so well. The person who I have in mind, my very dear friend Regina, is a fellow spoonie and. Wonderful, amazing human being. But yeah, she's 75 and she is embodying all of this.

jessie [00:23:53] I can't wait.

transition [00:23:53] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:23:57] Something else that came to mind for gender was a bit of toxic masculinity. I say a bit more like a lot– on display with Locke, he's just like the worst kind of fuckboi and tells Taryn she's like, "run out of story," quote unquote. Or something like that. And I'm just like is so demeaning and belittling. And I'm not sad that she stabbed him in the throat.

jessie [00:24:22] No, he totally deserved it. I bet he was super hot, though. Like, otherwise. Like, I don't even know how he got away with some of this stuff. You know what I mean? Like,.

kelly [00:24:30] That's probably why.

jessie [00:24:31] Yeah. I'm picturing him as like um [laughs]... Have you seen The Wolf of Wall Street?

kelly [00:24:37] No.

jessie [00:24:38] Fantastic movie. Would recommend. It's like three hours long. So just prepare yourself. But he reminds me, like, when I pictured Locke, I pick her like one of those, like Wall Street stockbroker bros, you know? With like the slicked back hair [kelly bursts into laughter] Like, that's how I imagined Locke. [lguhs]

kelly [00:24:54] But like a fairy version.

jessie [00:24:55] Yeah. Like a frat bro wall street fairy. That's what Locke looks like in my mind. [kelly laughs] And he's just like the worst person imaginable. Like he would definitely be selling people subprime loans. [laughs]

kelly [00:25:09] Totally. [pauses] During COVID.

jessie [00:25:11] Yeah, during COVID. [laughs] Yeah. I'm glad he's dead. Fuck that guy.

kelly [00:25:17] And I'm glad that we see Taryn's character like developing past, desiring only that or desiring nothing more than to be desired by that kind of person.

jessie [00:25:28] Yeah, it's like a real moment of growth for her to, like, realize that, like, just because you look nice on the outside does not mean anything about who you are as a person.

kelly [00:25:39] And that like the courtly, quote unquote, ways that she was brought up in. You know, at one point, Jude, like makes a comparison between herself and Taryn. And like, Taryn chose the way of like basically like partying, the path of desire, which is no less fraught or something like that than the path of the, like weapons or night, shadows who... who knows. Something poetic.

jessie [00:26:01] It's a different kind of battle to have to be like trying to work to be in those upper echelons of society, I guess, than to trying to, you know, secure the crown. [laughs]

kelly [00:26:12] Just a different terrain. Just a different battlefield.

jessie [00:26:15] Yeah, I guess for Taryn, it's a lot more psychological. You know? I picture her as a mean girl, which is probably why I don't like her. [chuckles]

transition [00:26:26] [spellcasting sound].

kelly [00:26:26] Let's talk about ability and uh body minds.

jessie [00:26:29] OK. What the hell is going on with Queen Surin?! the queen of the Court of Teeth? Her parents have literally bridled her like a horse to the point where there are scars on her face. And I had forgotten about this somehow before I read listen to it. But I, like my mind, was just like, "what the fuck?" Like, this is ridiculous. Like there's child abuse going on. Like, there's just so many things. I was just like, I cannot believe this. Like, this is this is wild.

kelly [00:26:59] I'm really glad that you put that you brought this up because these were some of the hardest scenes. Like this dynamic was the one that I thought was like the most violent and grotesque. Like, they are leashing their kid. It's like taking the baby leashes that you would wear at an amusement park or whatever to the—.

jessie [00:27:19] —to the extreme!

kelly [00:27:21] And then they also something about like a bracelet. Also at another time, something being sewn to her.

jessie [00:27:26] Oh, I don't remember that.

kelly [00:27:28] The Crown was sewn to her head.

jessie [00:27:30] Oh, I don't even remember that part. But like, so disturbing.

kelly [00:27:34] Yeah, I thought so. I like that. Super well done on Black's part.

jessie [00:27:38] Yes. I guess there's a lot going on there because they're also like trying to get that weird necklace or whatever to like bind Jude to them, Surin's parents or whatever. Like she's like lock of your hair or whatever, and I'm just like, "oh my God, they got some, like, control problems going on in the court of teeth."

kelly [00:27:56] And I think what— I think Surin is a changeling, right?

jessie [00:28:00] Oh, I don't know. Not sure.

kelly [00:28:04] What I think was going on. I don't I don't have to explain it like. But. What I think happened is, the some of the courts wanted to get around their loyalty oaths, and so they started turning their children into changelings, like abandoning them in the mortal world or some shit for a while and then bringing them back and enslaving them and somehow like passing the crown over to them and then skipping somehow that, like, circumvents the oath.

jessie [00:28:30] Oh, I see. I did not get that.

kelly [00:28:33] I remember in the exposition that was explained just a little bit, but it wasn't. I don't know too much about the fairy lore, so yeah, what if I just did like a quick Google search? Maybe?

jessie [00:28:44] Yeah. Changelings did come up a lot in this story, which makes me wonder if we're gonna get stories from one of their points of view in the future. I'm pretty sure that there are characters from in this book, like side characters, like very background characters who are in other books by Holly Black. So it wouldn't surprise me, I guess, if she took one of these characters and wrote a story about them.

kelly [00:29:10] Like a swapped child.

jessie [00:29:11] Yeah.

kelly [00:29:12] A fairy had been left in place of a human child that was stolen by the fairies.

jessie [00:29:15] Like in Labrinth.

kelly [00:29:17] This is literally Wikipedia, wo we are going— I'm gonna do some research on Ravenclawing this post recorded in the post-prod. Maybe I won't say Ravenclaw anymore. I'll research it in the post prod. It's supposedly a common theme that reflects concerns over, like ableist concerns over people with disabilities.

jessie [00:29:36] Oh, that's very interesting.

kelly [00:29:37] That like infants that are born, you know,—

jessie [00:29:40] Yeah,.

kelly [00:29:41] –different.

jessie [00:29:41] That's really interesting. I also really like that Oak it was like very concerned for her. I know he's like very young. He's like eight years old, which is like barely a blip on the age of, you know, the fairies. But he's very concerned about Queen Surin and he wants to help her in any way possible, which I do think shows that he's like growing up to probably be a decent [pauses] I wanted to say human being, but like fairy person person, a decent person.

kelly [00:30:06] Being? How about just "being"?

jessie [00:30:07] Yeah. Yeah. A decent being. I really appreciated seeing that because I sometimes I think I've, me personally forget like how innocent children can be. Because I'm not around them very often. But this was like that was really adorable.

kelly [00:30:21] So good.

jessie [00:30:22] So good.

transition [00:30:22] [jaunty, stacatto string music plays]

kelly [00:30:27] Finally, it's time for "Shipwrecked," a segment about a sexuality, sexuality, sex, romance and relationships, and sometimes we take liberties and do some shipping of our own. So I know we talked about this in previous episodes of the, you know, other books in the series, but there's polyamory is more normalized in this world. Fairy doesn't have the same puritanical sexual politics that the mortal world does. So Taryn has firsthand knowledge of this with the court revels. We hear about it a lot in the like. Oriana was a consort at the same time that Cardan's mom was a consort. And so, like, there's it's just more normalized in Faerie.

jessie [00:31:09] Yeah, for sure. Which I think we see and like a lot of books with fairies in them. I feel like. Which is kind of interesting. I'm like, why do we need to put, you know, beings in a magical world to make this normal? I don't know.

kelly [00:31:23] That's a good point, yeah. Maybe because it seems like so impossible. But there's people who do it all the time.

jessie [00:31:28] Yeah. [pauses] We also have Jude and Cardan are back together at the end and they are really together this time. It's funny because I was talking to someone who listened to the first episode and the second episode for Cruel Prince and what's the second book called Wicked, Wicked King. And they were like, "Jessie, you really change like your feelings about Jude and can't really change from book one to book two." But I just, like, love them so much by the end of this. And I'm like, happy they're together.

kelly [00:31:55] YAYYYYYY!

jessie [00:31:56] I'm really disappointed that I didn't get the like Barnes and Noble had like a special edition with the letters that Jude was writing or sorry that Cardan was writing to Jude in the back of the book. And I'm really disappointed I didn't get that because, like, I

want to know what he wrote to her and somebody did send me what the letter said. So I do know at this point, but I'm also a little frustrated that, like, there is a special edition that you have to get from one special, like big name bookstore in order to see those letters. Like, that's kind of shitty.

kelly [00:32:26] Yeah. From a massive chain? It's like really shitty.

jessie [00:32:29] Yeah.

kelly [00:32:30] Like, I know why people do that. Like the promotional material. Like no shade to the authors or whatever.

jessie [00:32:35] Yeah.

kelly [00:32:36] But that does suck.

jessie [00:32:38] I wish they would sell it from like indie authors is to like indie bookstores.

kelly [00:32:42] We'll just have to go on AO3 [Archive of Our Own dot Org] and find some fanfic.

jessie [00:32:44] Yeah. Fanfic.

kelly [00:32:46] Jude and Cardan are definitely OTP for me. Their chemistry is just so good there. I don't know. They're just like so the attraction is so palpable and well-written. I think they both like work well together and at the same time are like a catastrophe. And they all they all have a lot of baggage. So the relationship takes on this like, visceral dimension. You know? it's like actually feels like a subs— substantive relationship.

jessie [00:33:13] Yeah.

kelly [00:33:14] You know?

jessie [00:33:14] Yeah.

kelly [00:33:15] And if Faery has therapy, I think they should check it out.

jessie [00:33:19] I think everyone and Faerie might need therapy. [laughs] [spellcasting sound].

kelly [00:33:26] Speaking of needing therapy, [pauses] Vivi and Heather. So let's start off by saying that I appreciate the queer representation. And we should acknowledge that the relationship dynamics are pretty messed up. Jessie, you talked about this earlier with Heather being, like, enchanted by Vivi without her consent. And this like we've had a lot of conversations on the podcast about consent and magic and maybe that would be worth thinking through more thoroughly. But I appreciated that. I don't know the power differential between Vivi, who is very and Heather, who is like a noob human, not like a Jude-human like that that's explored and that the process of repair is shown throughout and that there it's like a.[pauses] It's not just like, they had a conversation and then it was over. It's like multiple things going on. I think it's also important to talk about resolving conflict and addressing abuse and queer relationships, too, and that that doesn't get talked about very often.

jessie [00:34:27] Yeah. And I think Holly Black did it like, while, I'm not very happy with the writing of Heather as a characterization. I do think Holly Black did a really good job of like shoring up the relationship between Vivi and Heather by saying, like, Vivi is gonna make Heather forget everything she knows and like have to win her back. But be honest, this time, there's no way for Heather to hold Vivi accountable to that except to trust her. Like before she even, like, moves into that step of forgetting. And I thought that was an interesting way to deal with that. And while I'm hesitant to say I want a book from Vivi and Heather's perspective, I am interested to see what happens with the two of them.

kelly [00:35:07] Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

transition [00:35:07] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:35:10] I just want to mention that I loved the bomb and the roach's like a little death bed— like not really, but love profession like. Oh, crying emoji. So cute. Loved it.

jessie [00:35:22] It's funny because I was like, this feels so contrived to me. I did not. I was like, I don't care about the two of them enough to have this scene. So I guess we just felt very differently about it.

kelly [00:35:33] We did. We did. You know, I love an HEA [happily ever after], right.

jessie [00:35:36] I want an HEA, but I'm also just like we don't get to know those characters well enough that I felt like it was deserved yet. So I was just like, they just need their whole own story. Like, there's a lot of backstory there and maybe there's more of them in different books of Holly Black's, I don't know. But I was just like. ugh, like, it just was very sappy to me and I was just like, no, thank you.

kelly [00:35:57] I just know that they were like both tortured together.

jessie [00:35:59] Yeah. Yeah.

kelly [00:36:01] And whatever. So they deserve happiness, too okay?

jessie [00:36:05] Sure. Sure.

kelly [00:36:05] But yeah. Fair. Fair point.

transition [00:36:07] [spellcasting sound]

jessie [00:36:10] OK. So this book had a fade away, as did other books. And I just want to say that, like, while I understand this book is written for young adults and I am an adult reading these books, when fade always happen, we do not know what's happening. Like I thought, Jude and Cardan had already had sex. And in this book they made it seem like it was the first time they were having sex. So I think that there needs to be like if you don't want to have depictions of sex in your book, I think that's a 100 percent fine. Like, I totally understand that reaches a wider range of readers. And like, you know, parents feel more comfortable depending on the age reading the book. Although the book is super violent, so you might not want to give it to young kids anyway.

kelly [00:36:48] And there's a lot of like I don't know. There's a lot of while, there aren't like erotic scenes, like you would find in ACOTAR [by Sarah J Maas] and or more whatever. What is it like ACOMAF. There is a lot of like explicit talk about like desire and like the power that goes into like desire and sexual dynamics and stuff like that. So I don't know.

jessie [00:37:13] Yeah. I just want it to be clear whether or not characters have had sex, because I thought we got that in like book two or book one. I don't remember which one, but I thought when we found out about Cardan's tail, I thought Jude and Cardan had sex then. So I was very confused this time when it seemed like Jude is talking about, like the pain of her first time or whatever. And I just was like, wait, what? Like, I was very confused.

kelly [00:37:40] Yeah. I do think the lead up to that was well handled regarding consent, specifically because you remember that like Jude. At one point they're like making out or whatever. And Jude doesn't say anything but char- but card Chardon [both laugh] Cardan senses like her change in demeanor and attitude and like into-it-ness I guess, and stops immediately!

jessie [00:38:08] Yeah.

kelly [00:38:08] It's like such an excellent example. None of this like fuckin bullshit about didn't like protest enough or any anything like that. I really think that it's important to have those sorts of examples of AMABs {people assigned male at birth and socialized as male}, you know, not like sexually assaulting people.

jessie [00:38:26] Yeah, one is good too, because like we see from this that like there needs to be clear and enthusiastic consent, like not just like not saying anything is not, "Yes."

transition [00:38:37] [jaunty string music plays]

jessie [00:38:45] Now we're going to talk about writing style, narration, characterization, plot structure, and basically whatever else comes to mind in a segment called Kill Your Darlings.

jessie [00:38:54] We had very little interaction between Jude and Cardan and the book where they are actually on good terms, and that was super frustrating to me. And the first book, they're at odds in the second book, Jude is Controlling Cardan. And in this book, we hardly see any interaction at all. I was kind of disappointed. I want to see more what they are like when they both realize that they love each other and like each other. I want to see how they interact with each other. It may be time to look for some Jude/ Cardan fan fiction.

kelly [00:39:20] Yes!!

jessie [00:39:21] Please send it my way. If you have any suggestions. I really feel like we missed out on, like, key components of their relationship.

kelly [00:39:30] Yeah, we don't get to see so many of the moments that you that you'd look forward to, you know, and your OTP finally gets together!

jessie [00:39:37] Well and it's just so long of like, well, they won't they like, you know, basically three whole books for like one Fade Away Sex scene. Like I'm just like I really wanted way more than that, you know?

kelly [00:39:49] Mm hmm. Or maybe like a really great epilogue or something.

jessie [00:39:54] Yeah. Like even the epilogue was good. Like I like seeing Cardan in the mortal world. Like that's super interesting to me. And I just imagine him as like the hottest of hot, like punk rock, emo, guys.

kelly [00:40:06] Yes!! I knew you were gonna say that. I knew you're going to say that. I totally did the same thing. With the make up, the eyeliner.

jessie [00:40:12] Yeah. And like tight pants and.

kelly [00:40:14] We have a type, y'all.

jessie [00:40:16] Yeah. yeah. Anyways, I just really wanted to see more of them together.

kelly [00:40:21] Yeah. [laughs].

jessie [00:40:21] My longing for a emo punk rock guys aside, [both laugh] I just wanted more.

kelly [00:40:30] Seconded.

transition [00:40:31] [spellcasting sound].

kelly [00:40:33] One thing that I consistently appreciate about Holly Black's writing, and I mean, I think this series is the only one of hers that I've read, actually. I like how she takes a second here and there to include, like, body slash material slash i r l concerns that go mostly ignored. And Y.A., like there is talk about menstruation, body odor, needing to, like, wash your armpits or whatever and like eat, drink, bathe, pee, etc.. It's a and I saw that you posted something on Twitter today about like responding to a poll if you and your beloved were in a fantasy world and like, what was it about? It was about poop.

jessie [00:41:15] Yeah. Like, what would you talk about? Poop. And I'm like, oh my God, I have irritable bowel disease like a form of irritable bowel disease. Like I could not live my life with someone who was gonna be afraid of me talking about poop. Like there's a lot of poop talk in my house, like it's just the reality of my existence. [laughs]

kelly [00:41:33] Yep. Yep Same here.

jessie [00:41:34] And other people were like, I would like to see it talked about more because, like, it normalizes it. But one of the options on that little poll, and it was Talia Hibbert who wrote Get a Life. Chloe Brown, one of the options were like, "intestines do not exist" And I'm like, I also wish that were true. [laughs].

kelly [00:41:53] Agreed. Wishful thinking. It's fiction. So,.

jessie [00:41:56] Yeah, no intestines needed.

transition [00:41:57] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:42:01] I'm like a nerd, so I love the classic Celtic or whatever fairy lore and poems that are woven throughout the series. They introduce the different parts, I think.

jessie [00:42:11] Yeah. Like the books, quote unquote. Books. Yeah.

kelly [00:42:15] Yeah, I like that. It shows attention to detail. And I think at, you know, I love paratext! Like this is not new.

jessie [00:42:22] I also really like that the book include look at those parts. It has like these little like sketches almost, which are like super adorable. And I just want to color in the pages of my book. I probably will not, but maybe I should because, like, it's mine and who cares?

kelly [00:42:34] Especially like colored pencil wouldn't bleed through or anything.

jessie [00:42:37] Yeah, I have a ton of those. So yeah, maybe I'll do it. It's just so cute.

transition [00:42:42] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:42:45] We discussed this before, but it bears repeating, describe everyone's skin color. For fuck's sake, the roach got described. They have green skin.

jessie [00:42:55] I think, like Jude and. I think we talked about this in a different episode where the ones that we were like most wondering about, because they have like like their last name is Duerte.

kelly [00:43:08] Duerte. Mmhmm.

jessie [00:43:08] And so I'm like, I don't know what they are. [laughs]

kelly [00:43:14] [laughs] Not that it's like not that we even care.

jessie [00:43:16] Yeah, well, not that I care, but I'm like, how how does representation fit into this book? like,.

kelly [00:43:22] Right.

jessie [00:43:22] If you're not describing am I supposed to assume that they're white. And like why is that the default? So I would just like also the mortal skin color to be described and not just Heathers because she's brown, you know? And maybe like they do talk about Jude and Taryn and I missed it. That's One hundred percent possible. Because I .

kelly [00:43:40] Yeah, me too.

jessie [00:43:41] –to say Holly Black is white, that they are way. And so that is my default. Systems of oppression. Y'all like it sucks.

transition [00:43:49] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:43:53] And finally, this is a sweet note to kind of wrap up the episode on, you're smiling because I'm sentimental. I'm not so sentimental. But anyway, I'll actually just say it.

jessie [00:44:04] You are so sentimental. [laughs].

kelly [00:44:07] Okay! Holly Black, dedicated queen of nothing to Leigh Bardugo. And I just want to say friendship is the best. And I love you on air.

jessie [00:44:15] I love you too. Friendship is the best.

kelly [00:44:18] Yes, it's recorded!

jessie [00:44:20] But I do have to say— caveat—Not to our friendship, but to, like, Leigh Bardugo and Holly Black's. I was like when I saw that, I was like I had a major eye roll moment because I'm like, why are you dedicating to your book to like this super prominent and other famous white author like, come on, it's like I don't. It's fine because they're probably friends in real life. And like they met that way and like all those things. But I was just like as two of the most prominent authors and YA fantasy like you might as well have dedicated this book to Sarah J. Mass. Like, for all that this means to me as a reader. I don't know. For me, I was just like, why are you dedicating this to, like, another author? Like, that seemed weird to me.

kelly [00:45:05] I think they're friends. They're really good friends. And they, like, read each other's shit and have been for years.

jessie [00:45:11] Yeah. And I think that's totally fine. But for me, I was just like, oh, like you couldn't dedicated to, like, your fan readers or like I don't know. It's fine. And it's Holly Black's choice. I just had a huge eye roll moment when I saw this. I was just like, really? Really. And maybe it's because we don't see this that often. Like, I usually see this and like the thank you's at the back, like the acknowledgments where they'll think lay out.

kelly [00:45:33] Why do friends have to fucking wait for the acknowledgments at the end?! That is bullshit,.

jessie [00:45:38] Because that's where acknowledgments go. [both laugh]

kelly [00:45:41] Well, but like, I don't know. If it is totally normalized to, like, dedicate things to either your children or your spouse.

jessie [00:45:52] Yeah, I see friends sometimes.

kelly [00:45:55] Parents, I guess.

jessie [00:45:56] If I ever write a book, I'm thanking Lainy and nobody else. I'm so sorry. [laughs].

kelly [00:46:01] heard it, heard it here first.

jessie [00:46:03] When I write my first book and all subsequent books will be dedicated Lainey for hanging out with me as I write my books. [laughs]

kelly [00:46:09] For deigning to spend her precious existence in my proximity

jessie [00:46:14] Exactly. No, I definitely think it's fine. Holly Black should definitely dedicate her books to whoever she wants to as a reader of both of these authors. I just was like, Really? And that's fine too.

transition [00:46:25] [jaunty, string music plays]

kelly [00:46:32] Recommend, if you like. I'm curious what you think of my recommendations librarian book, witch. I'd say if you're in, if you like Feysand and if you've read ACOTAR Jude and Cardan have chemistry, that kind of reminded me of the OTP from that series.

jessie [00:46:50] Agreed.

kelly [00:46:52] And then I would also say historical fiction with plotlines of romance and court intrigue. So I'm thinking like Philip Gregory type books.

jessie [00:47:00] I've never read any of those books, so I can't speak to that. But I think those are probably good recommendations. I definitely agree with the ACOTAR one. But I think historical fiction. Yeah, too. For sure. Because for what?

kelly [00:47:13] Like anything about courts. Yeah. It's like, I don't know, Henry the VIII and shit.

jessie [00:47:16] Like courtly politics, that sort of thing. I also read these or if you like to the crown. Yeah. And the crown is great. So good.

kelly [00:47:25] Maybe we need to recommend, if you like, to expand to be on the textual medium and be like if you liked watching this.

jessie [00:47:32] Yeah. That's a good idea. I like this book. You might like it if you liked Carnival Row, which had its own race issues that I had.

kelly [00:47:39] Oh yeah!

jessie [00:47:40] But also a fairy story kind of cyber punky. There is a series of books I read when I was younger. So these books are old now and they're going to like age me. But the Wicked Lovely series by Melissa Marr is kind of like urban fantasy with fairies, like it takes place in the real world. So those are pretty interesting, if I remember correctly. I would recommend those two. If you like, seeing Jude and like the fairies and stuff in the mortal world, then I think you'll like those books.

kelly [00:48:12] Excellent recommendations.

jessie [00:48:15] Before we end, it's time for real talk. Did reading this book make your perspective change in any way, or did it make you interrogate a concept system or trend you hadn't before?

kelly [00:48:26] I want to hear from you.

jessie [00:48:29] When I was initially reading this book, I was also watching Season three of the Crown. And there are some parallels between Cardan and the story the Crown tells

the audience about Prince Charles. Obviously, I don't know how much of the crown is actually real and what isn't. But both have parents who didn't seem to care about them. Both of their families are more concerned about their place that the family's home and society as the most important things. All that is to say, it seems like a very sad way to grow up. And parents are the worst. And I say that as someone who loves learning about the you know, the British monarchy is like very interesting stories to me. But at least the way the crown portrays Queen Elizabeth and her relationship with her child. And, you know Prince. What's his name? The Duke of Edinburgh. Whatever his name, it's her husband,.

kelly [00:49:22] Philip

jessie [00:49:23] Philip. I felt Philip like the way that they show those two treating Charles like is no surprise. About like maybe how his life turned out. And like, it was just really sad to watch that, like you really feel for Charles, even as like a person who's like in the top tier echelons of society. Like, I can't imagine growing up having those parents. Like, it just seems really hard.

kelly [00:49:49] Yeah. Yeah, it really does. You know we're seeing really laid out just basically a sustained neglect, emotional abuse.

jessie [00:50:01] Emotional and physical abuse, all kinds.

kelly [00:50:04] Yeah, we see, like laid out as a lot of emotional and physical abuse over a sustained period of time, and I think it's just like important to talk about how late I think it's. It happens even in communities where there's a lot of concentrated privilege and wealth and power.

jessie [00:50:22] And maybe sometimes even to a greater extent, because, like, they're so controlling over, you know, appearances like in in that situation in particular. But I'm guessing even like books like this, like. Cardan is only perceived as being a child of the crown. So, like there's just so much more pressure put on you, I guess, like for appearances sake, which is not a good way to live your life.

kelly [00:50:46] Mm hmm. No.

jessie [00:50:47] Yeah, so I really feel for Cardan. It was sad. Also, watch the crown if you haven't. It's very interesting. Like, they live some wild lives, [laughs] but even if like a fraction of it is true. It's wild. Did you have anything?

kelly [00:51:04] No. Nothing for me.

transition [00:51:06] [jaunty string music plays]

kelly [00:51:13] Thanks for listening to JK, it's magic. We'll be back in two weeks for a discussion of Crier's War by Nina Varela. As always, we'd love to be in conversation with you. Magical folks. [coughs in the background] dammit!

jessie [00:51:31] Kelly's got covid.[laugh.

kelly [00:51:34] We have a joke in my house. Anytime anyone coughs we yell "covid 19 protoco".

jessie [00:51:42] I mean, it makes sense, we're we're making lots of coronavirus jokes around here as well. Sometimes we hear sneezes from neighbors and we're like, oh, my God, they have Coronavirus [both laugh]

kelly [00:51:53] Anyway, where was I? Oh. Let us know what you think of the episode. Anything we missed or just say hi by dropping a line in the comments or by reaching out to us on Twitter or Instagram @jkmagicpod, you can post or tweet about the show using the #criticallyreading. And you can contact us via email at jkmagicpod at Gmail dot com.

jessie [00:52:14] You can subscribe to "JK, It's Magic" on the podcast app of your choice, and we'd really appreciate it if you would rate and review the show and spread the word to other rad people out there. No TERFs, though. If you're able to support our labor fri-, uh, if you're able to support our labor financially, you can make a One-Time donation to us on ko-fi. You can also support us monthly on Patreon in exchange for mini-sodes, bonus eps, swag and much more. And you can now support the show by shopping at our bookshop dot org affiliate page.

kelly [00:52:44] Until next time. Stay magical and masked!! Goddammit.

transition [00:52:48] [whimsical harpsichord music plays]

kelly [00:53:01] Let's talk about gender.

jessie [00:53:02] Hold on, Lainey's like moving my mic.

kelly [00:53:06] Does she have anything to say to the to the good people out here?

jessie [00:53:09] No, but I hope one day I can get her on on the microphone to meow.