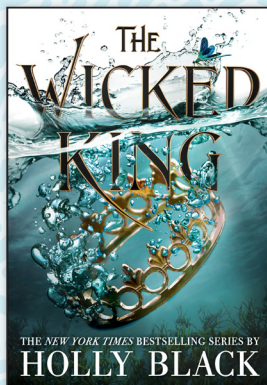


THE WICKED KING

HOLLY BLACK

★ **“Intense and entertaining storytelling at its finest.”**

—BookPage (starred review)



Book Club Pick

ABOUT THE BOOK:

After the jaw-dropping revelation that Oak is the heir to the Faerie throne, Jude must do everything in her power to keep her younger brother safe from the savage folk surrounding her. And to keep Oak safe, Jude must keep the wicked king, Cardan, bound to her and on the throne . . . even as he does everything in his power to humiliate and undermine her. But when it becomes all too clear that someone close to Jude means to betray her, threatening her own life and the lives of everyone she loves, Jude must uncover the traitor and fight to keep control as a mortal in a Faerie world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. On page 6, Madoc tells Jude, “Power is much easier to acquire than it is to hold on to.” Do you agree with him—why or why not? Based on what happens in *The Wicked King*, how is this sentiment true for Jude?
2. On page 38, Jude says of Taryn, “She is a mirror, reflecting someone I could have been but am not.” In what ways is Taryn a mirror to Jude? Why are the choices they’ve made in the past similar? How are they different?
3. What does Val Moren, the old High King Eldred’s human seneschal, represent to Jude (p. 93)? What does she think of his presence in Elfhome?
4. At the end of chapter 19, Jude practices her sword-fighting technique while watching herself in the mirror and says, “I battle on until perspiration stains her shirt, until she’s shaking with exhaustion. It’s still not enough. I can never beat her” (p. 188). What does Jude mean?
5. How do you think what happens to Heather at Taryn’s wedding will affect Heather and Vivi’s relationship in the future?
6. Knowing Cardan’s childhood in Elfhome, why do you think Cardan becomes a cruel prince (and a wicked king)? Or is Cardan cruel and wicked at all? Why or why not?
7. While being tortured in the Undersea, Jude thinks of the Folk, “They are more like mortals than they believe” (p. 235). How are the fey like humans? How are they different?
8. Why do you think the author chose excerpts of the poems “Nymphidia” and “The Fairies” to begin Book One and Book Two of the story?
9. Throughout the book, it becomes more difficult for Jude to deny her attraction to Cardan. Why is she so resistant to her feelings for him? If she expresses her feelings to Cardan what would she gain and what would she lose?
10. *The Wicked King* begins and ends with Madoc’s advice to Jude: “You must be strong enough to strike and strike and strike again without tiring. The first lesson is to make yourself that strong” (p. 1). What does this counsel mean to Jude at the beginning of the book versus the end?
11. Why do you think Cardan betrays Jude at the end of *The Wicked King*? Do you think he was planning on betraying her the whole time? What do you think will happen to Jude in the next book, *The Queen of Nothing*?