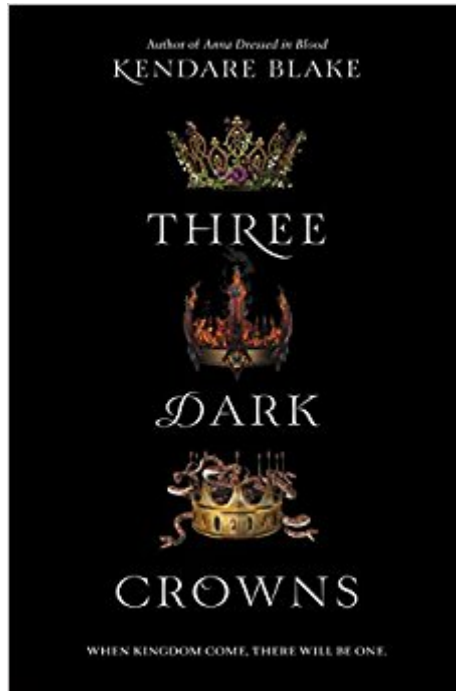


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Three Dark Crowns



Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller * New York Public Library Best Book of 2016 * Chicago Public Library Best Book of 2016 * Kirkus Best Book of the Year Fans of acclaimed author Kendare Blake's Anna Dressed in Blood will devour *Three Dark Crowns*, a dark and inventive fantasy about three sisters who must fight to the death to become queen. And don't miss the highly anticipated sequel, *One Dark Throne*! In every generation on the island of Fennbirn, a set of triplets is born: three queens, all equal heirs to the crown and each possessor of a coveted magic. Mirabella is a fierce elemental, able to spark hungry flames or vicious storms at the snap of her fingers. Katharine is a poisoner, one who can ingest the deadliest poisons without so much as a stomachache. Arsinoe, a naturalist, is said to have the ability to bloom the reddest rose and control the fiercest of lions. But becoming the Queen Crowned isn't solely a matter of royal birth. Each sister has to fight for it. And it's not just a game of win or lose—it's life or death. The night the sisters turn sixteen, the battle begins. The last queen standing gets the crown. Be sure to catch the stunning sequel to this New York Times bestseller, *One Dark Throne*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up • A poisoner • a teen who comes from a line of people who are supposed to ingest poison without being harmed • whose body betrays the gift that should have been innate suffers the ravage of toxins to defend her house's reign over Fennbirn Island. A naturalist

who dims in the brilliance of her childhood friend turns to low magic to mold the earth and its creatures. An elemental whose beauty is made more terrible by her savage fires and storms is trapped within the palms of the Temple priestesses, ruthless in their scheme to overthrow the Black Council. Three sisters celebrate their 16th birthdays at the Beltane festival, but two are to be murdered during the Quickening, and one is to be crowned the red-handed Queen. This is a story entrenched in deceit, twisted by selfish desires for redemption and revenge in a crooked game set in generations of insidious matriarchal rule. Readers will be riveted by Blake's ingenious world-building, stunning developments of main and supporting characters, and spiraling tensions. VERDICT Highly recommended for fans of fantasy action thrillers with strong female leads, such as Victoria Aveyard's "Red Queen" and Sarah J. Maas's "Throne of Glass" series. —Zeying Wang, School Library Journal

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) —“The opener to a pitch-black epic fantasy series. Blake has constructed an insular, matriarchal society from convincing intimate details, vivid, complicated characters, [and] sumptuous, poetic prose. Gorgeous and bloody, tender and violent, precise, and passionate; above all, completely addicting. —(Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) —“With exquisite world building and luminous detail, this is high fantasy at its best. The magic is fierce and the plot intensely twisted, but at this novel's dark heart beats a story about sisterhood, the unbreakable bonds of family, and ties that bind enough to kill. —(Booklist (starred review)) —“Readers will be riveted by Blake's ingenious world-building, stunning developments of main and supporting characters, and spiraling tensions. Highly recommended for fans of fantasy action thrillers with strong female leads, such as Victoria Aveyard's Red Queen and Sarah J. Maas's Throne of Glass series. —(School Library Journal) —“Three Dark Crowns is a brutal and inventive fantasy that is as addictive as it is horrifying. I can't begin to guess the fates of these three remarkable sister-queens, but I'm salivating like poisoners at a feast to find out what will happen next. —(Marissa Meyer, New York Times bestselling author of the Lunar Chronicles) —“Full of mystery, intrigue, and deadly girls I wouldn't dare cross, Fennbirn is a darkly magical world I'm both drawn to and frightened by. In short, this is a book I could linger in for months, with three girls I am rooting for with all my heart. —(Megan Shepherd, New York Times bestselling author of The Cage series) —“I loved this book. Blake's Three Dark Crowns is hypnotic, twisting, and beautiful...as satisfying as a drop of poison in an enemy's cup. —(April Genevieve Tucholke, author of Wink, Poppy,

Midnight)“Blake is a sure hand with complicated and intricate plots, and if that’s not enough to make readers stick around for the next installment, the cliffhanger ending certainly will.” (Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books)“Blake establishes myriad side plots and relationships, builds complex characters, and leaves plenty of compelling avenues to explore in future books.” (Publishers Weekly)

Three Dark Crowns by Kendare

Blake’s *Three Dark Crowns* is a wonderfully twisted and brutal fantasy deeply rooted in bees despite bees never being involved in the book. No, seriously, read the story behind the novels, and it will explain a lot of the premise behind this wonderful novel. I read Blake’s explanation after I read her book, and it made the book all the more twisted for me.

(<http://www.mykindabook.com/kendare-blake-s-three-dark-crowns>) That being said, I would also say that this book feels deeply rooted in Paganism. (What, with a female-centric cast and culture, familiars, Beltane, Goddesses, elements, and herbs, how could I not think of that?) However, I will add that it’s Hollywood’s version of Paganism with more harm than good but I thought it was addressed brilliantly by explaining how poisoners were also healers but had long since forgotten the skill. I loved that. I loved a lot about the book. If you don’t know, *Three Dark Crowns* is about triplet queens, but only one of them can live to rule. Separated during childhood, and living in three different lands, the three girls are raised with their unique powers to kill one another. There’s Katharine the poisoner, Arsinoe the naturalist, and Mirabella the elemental. Each girl has a unique personality and secrets they’re struggling to hide. They also have friendships, tutors, and suitors. So prepare yourself for a full cast of characters to sink your teeth into. The book itself has a female-centric cast, which was my favorite part. (There’s also a Queen Shannon. Or was a Queen Shannon. But still. I hardly ever see my name in a book, and I’m not going to lie, it makes me squeal every time.) That being said, it took me 170 pages to understand what was happening. There are so many places, so many characters, so many relationships and political intrigue happening all at once, that it’s difficult to keep up at first. So, I suggest to just let it all go and go for the ride. I did, and *Three Dark Crowns* fulfilled its promise of unraveling in a beautifully twisted way. My favorite part of the plot was definitely the end, but I will admit that I loved how my emotions changed

throughout the book. An example? I loved Mirabella at the beginning. In fact, she was the ONLY one I liked at first, but by the end, all my feelings were twisted about and confuzzled and didn't know what to do with themselves. And that is where the brilliance hides in Three Dark Crowns. It's in the shifting sides, the ever-changing "loyalty" of the reader and the brutal betrayals of the characters. It's in the love and hate and confusion and "if they only knew what actually happened" suspense. It's truly magnificent. So who am I rooting for in the end? Arsinoe. I liked her the whole way through, because she felt the most real to me. She makes mistakes. She feels hope. She faces despair. She decides to try to overcome it. She fails again. She tries again. She fails more. But so did the other girls. What it comes down to, for me, is that her relationships felt the most natural and honest among the bunch. I liked that she seemed the least likely to succeed at all times, yet still carried on in whatever way she could. Even through hiding or running or lying or deception. I always believed in her. As for Katharine, I never really liked her, even with her suffering. Why? No clue. But I still enjoyed her story. I found her parts interesting, and her character was fascinating to read about. Probably the one to face the most pain out of the girls, and honestly, someone who deserves the most credit, but I never connected with her on a personal level. In regards to Mirabella, I LOVED her in the beginning. I was like, this is it; she's my gal. But by the end, I just feel deeply, deeply out of love for her. If I explained, I would ruin half the book. So I won't say anymore about this YA novel. You should choose your own side. It's the best part.... But wait, can I say one last thing? Hey, Joseph. You're a jackass. Oh, and I can't wait to read book 2. ~SAT Recommended to: YA fantasy readers looking for a female-centric cast, magic, and betrayal. Must enjoy romance and be okay with violence. (There are some scenes in this book that even made me cringe at the blood baths, but in a good way. Just a forewarning for the queasy readers out there.) Favorite Quote: N/A: Please do not get me wrong. The prose is wonderful. The story is riveting. But a standalone quote didn't leap out at me. Maybe because of the present tense? Present tense isn't normally something I enjoy, which actually speaks volumes of Blake, because I really enjoyed her novel and hardly noticed a tense that usually forces me to put a book down on the first page. Favorite Word: Since I didn't have a favorite quote, here's two favorite words used. Comeuppance: a punishment or fate that someone deserves: But any comeuppance Genevieve receives will be kept quiet and private. (pg. 57) Lacquered: a liquid made of shellac dissolved in alcohol, or of synthetic substances, that dries to form a hard protective coating for wood, metal, etc.: The mask is lacquered black, and

stretches over her good cheek and the bridge of her nose to taper her chin on the right side. (pg 274)

I bought this book because of how much I enjoyed Blake's *Anna Dressed in Blood* and *Girl of Nightmares*. I was curious what sort of high fantasy story she might tell. I'm conflicted about writing this review because on the one hand I did not like this book. But on the other hand, I think there are a lot of people who will love it. So maybe my opinion on this one doesn't really matter. The book is the story of 3 sisters, triplets who were separated as children and raised by different magical/political factions. Eventually the sisters will continue the land's mythic tradition of attempting to kill each other using their mystic powers (one can resist poison, one can control the elements, and one can bond with and control animals) and the survivor will be crowned queen. The story moves from sister to sister with each chapter, describing the months leading up to the ceremony which marks the beginning of open war between them. I think the world Blake is striving to create is a dark fairy tale place, a world with strange rules aren't rational but are consistent within the confines of the story. I think many readers will enjoy that element, swept up in the wild fantasy of it, but I was bothered by the fact that her world seems poorly thought out. Though it gives the impression of a fairy tale place, it lacks the clarity and simplicity of fairy tales. Blake tries to create a more complex and nuanced world, but she never steps back to give the reader a clear view of it, so we're left with something that feels cluttered and poorly thought out. Concepts and rules pop up randomly when Blake needs a new plot device to knock the characters around with. Choosing to follow all three sisters is ambitious, but it gets confusing as each sister is surrounded by her own cast of supporting characters, most of whom remain flat and indistinct. About a third of the way through the book I stopped trying to remember who the supporting characters were because other than a few of them (Jules, Joseph, Billy, and Pietyr), they didn't seem to matter. They were just props to torment, comfort, or provide counsel to the sisters. It seems like there's a disconnect between Blake's ambitions for the story and the format she chose to write it in. She should have cut down the number of named and recurring characters significantly, or written a much longer and more detailed book. Lastly, this book is dark. That may seem obvious based on the premise, but there's more to it than that. There's a lot of violence and sacrifice and tragedy that seems to serve no real purpose except to put the characters through crap. The book describes the months leading up to the "action" and yet characters are disfigured, mutilated, and crippled well before there's any reason for the violence to have begun. Death and injury can be very powerful events in a story, but here it felt meaningless... and cheap. Like Blake was saying, "Hey, I've told you twenty times how

nice this character is. Now I'm going to hack off her hand. But it's not going to be important or meaningful except that it'll make you feel lousy."Or maybe the real problem is that I'm just not quite the right audience for this book because I never quite fell into the world enough to be captivated by it.

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