

BOOK CLUB KIT

"A fantastical yet deeply human tale filled with love, betrayal, and magic."

— ALISON KIMBLE, author of *Strange Gods*



THE DRYAD'S CROWN

DAVID HOPKINS

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL IRVING DECENA

LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

A special introduction from the author (just for book clubs):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZPBcV5hM8A>

Dear Reader,

I'm dubious of writing craft books that fixate on a grand narrative or monomyth, and then try to shove every single story into their model. These templates work well in hindsight as an analytical tool, but they rarely capture the truth behind varied story structures. Anyone who draws a little pyramid on a chalk board and tells you this is what a novel should look like is not giving you the whole picture, which is far messier and more magical.

The Dryad's Crown is a sweeping epic about a mother and a daughter, but we also get bits and pieces of another woman's life, an immigrant finding a home in a new world. We also witness the final act of a legendary hero and the Shakespearean drama of murderous succession. And behind these stories is another story tucked away, which doesn't reveal itself until much later. More than any other story I've written, the Dryad's Crown doesn't fit comfortably within a rigid outline.

My favorite fantasy stories feel more like an unfolding of history than a hero's journey. You don't see the structure. Instead, everything holds together, but just barely. That "just barely-ness" makes for a good book club conversation afterward. The messy moments in the Dryad's Crown? That's where the magic is.

A steady journey,



ONLINE RESOURCES

The author's website contains bonus material, which might enhance your reading experience.

All the art from Daniel Irving Decena

<https://thatdavidhopkins.com/art>

A playlist of music that inspired the story

<https://thatdavidhopkins.com/playlist>

Notes on the mythology, cosmology, history, and customs of the setting

<https://thatdavidhopkins.com/setting-guide>

Content warnings for readers who might be sensitive to particular subject matter (may contain spoilers)

<https://thatdavidhopkins.com/content-warnings>

Video chat with author

If your book club would like to talk with the author, send an e-mail to

david@thatdavidhopkins.com to arrange a time that would be convenient for your group.

He's available via Zoom or Discord (<https://discord.gg/une7VT>) in the "book talk" channel.

Longer than your average book-club book?

If you'd like to divide the novel into two meetings, consider reading books I-V (pages 1-356) and then books VI-IX (pages 359-605). The second epigraph indicates an "intermission" break in the novel. For groups wanting to move at a more relaxed pace, each section is roughly 60 to 70 pages.



MAP



Cartography by Francesca Baerald

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

The guide provides the author's suggested pronunciation for the characters and places. Keep in mind: it's a fantasy novel. You can pronounce these characters and places however you want to pronounce them. Don't feel like you're obligated to follow this guide, and please don't pick on anyone who pronounces a name differently than how you do. (Is it AUS-dray or Aus-DRAY? You're fine either way.) The only real concern is that you enjoy what you're reading.

Albjorn	al-bjirn	Kaleb	No different than "Caleb"
Ald'yovlet	AULD-yohv-let	Keote	KEY-oat
Amoet	AY-moh-et	Kyran Bloom	KIGH-ran Bloom
Amon	AY-mun	Lilit	lil-IT
Annet	ann-et	Maricel	MAIR(like "hair")uh-sel
Arelus Fall	ah-RAIL-ee-us fall	Mendal Caius	men-dull KI-us
Aubec Skarsol	AH-beck scar-soul	Olar	oh-LAR
Audre	aus-DRAY	Olstel	ohl-STELL
Belgore	BEL-gohr	Olvi	ohl-vee
Bren Caius	BREN like "Wren," KI-us	Oren of Angnavir	OR-en of ainguh-nah-veer
Callis	CAL-is (not a "z")	Oshmeldai	osh-MEL-die
Cerneboch	sir-NAH-bock	Penderyn	PEN-duhr-IN
Corrinae	CORE-ih-nay	Qotha'tunach	goth-AH-two-NACK
Cyru	SIGH-roo	Raustfweg	RAHST-fweg
Cyruth	SIGH-rooth	Roby Roundtree	ROE-bee round-tree
Dahlia Tulan	DAH-lee-ah too-lane	Rue	ROO
Dodrik	doh-drik	Shirin	sheer-een
Durahal	durah-hall	Silbrey	sil-bree
Eirwen Frost	AIR-when frost	Skuldi	skull-dee
Efre Ousel	EF-ray OO-zhul	Sven	sVEN
Efrynir	eh-fear-eh-near	Taraki	tuh-RAH-key
Feste	fest	Timon	Like from Lion King
Golwin	goal-win	Udger	UHD-ger
Gydan	GEE-den (hard g)	Usios	EW-see-ohs
Gymin	GUY-mihn	Vasterghent	VASStur-hent
Halsten	HAL-sten	Vasilisa	VAUsy-LEESA (Russian)
Hazelef	Hazel-eff	Vindel	vhin-dell
Hrutib	hROO-tib	Volir	vol-eer
Igvan	ig-vehn	Wardi	WAR-dee
Ilset	ill-set	Yoon	Like "June" but with a "Y"
Jori	JOR-ee, JOR like "chore"	Yurig	yer-IG

FOOD & DRINK

Almond cakes are Silbrey's favorite treat. This recipe comes from *Pleyn Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks* (Second Edition) by Hieatt, Hosington, and Butler.

1 cup breadcrumbs (or more depending on freshness of bread)
4 ounces ground almonds
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar (separated)
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
oil and/or fat for frying



Blend dry ingredients with eggs (reserving the extra 2 tablespoons of sugar).

Heat the oil or fat in a frying pan and drop in the batter in small spoonfuls, flattening with the spoon if necessary. Turn over once if not using deep fat. Drain on paper and sprinkle with the reserved sugar before serving—preferably warm.

Alternatively, chill batter for about 1 hour, then divide it into 20 balls and flatten into cakes. This way, most of the work can be done ahead of time and the cakes will be more uniform in size and shape.

It's important to compress the mixture so it stays as a patty instead of breaking up in the oil.

The patties need to be thin—between 1/4 to 1/2 inch, mostly closer to 1/4 inch thick—because they cook so quickly. Have the paper towel covered plate ready in advance so you can stop the cooking process when the patty is a dark golden brown.

Walnut, figs, and soft cheese are served during the midsummer feast. Recipe featured on EatSmarter.com.

12 walnuts
2 teaspoon powdered sugar
12 ripe figs
100 grams blue cheese
80 grams cream cheese
Salt
Freshly ground peppers



Toast walnuts in a dry frying pan. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Let caramelize. Remove from the pan. Place on parchment paper and allow to dry.

Rinse figs, cut crosswise (do not cut completely through) and create a pocket. Cut blue cheese into small cubes and mix in a bowl with cream cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Put blue cheese mixture in a piping bag and inject into the middle of each fig. Arrange filled figs on a plate and serve garnished with one caramelized walnut half in each fig.

FOOD & DRINK

Obviously, **mead** should be the beverage of the evening.
(Author's recommendation: Fate of the Gods from Bee & Brew).
As a toast, you might even want to recite Soren's mead oath.

*Oh mead, I bow before you.
I pledge my sword to this arrogant ass beside me,
But I pledge my belly to mead.
Kings and generals will fail and fall.
Mead will never disappoint me.
May I live for many days, so I can drink again from this cup.*



Order it online, here:

<https://beeandbrew.com/products/copy-of-fate-of-the-gods-750ml>

CRAFT PROJECT

Tools:

Wire cutter

Glue gun (optional)

Materials:

Faux flowers in various sizes and textures

Faux greenery for filler

Floral wire

Floral tape

Note: When choosing floral wire, get at least a 22-inch gauge, which is a thicker wire. If you can only get a 26-inch gauge, you can use it, but you need to double it up to make the wire stronger to support everything.



1. Make the base.

Create a base for the flower crown. Cut a length of floral wire that's long enough to wrap around the crown of your (or the wearer's) head twice, with a little room to spare.

Measure around the head with the wire and plan where you'd like your crown to sit. Create a loop with the wire, twisting one end around the middle of the wire in the size you'd like.

Wrap the long end of the wire around, weaving in and out of the loop to create a strong base. Continue wrapping until you reach the end and twist the end around the loop to secure.

2. Wire in the main blooms.

Once you have a base, start placing your main flowers. Start with the largest blooms and place them where you'd like them. If your stems have wires in them, you can wrap the wires around the base of your crown. If not, use floral tape and wrap it multiple times around the trimmed stems of your blooms.

3. Add filler between your flowers.

Using the same technique, start covering the entire loop of the crown base with your filler greenery. Every so often, you may choose to include a smaller flower. Work your way around the base until you fill the entire crown with greenery.

4. Add any extras.

Once you've completed the crown base by covering it with greenery, go back and add any other flower or leaf pieces that you might like. You can insert the wired stem of your florals into the wire of the crown base, but for it to last longer, use a glue gun if you want to apply individual leaves and stems and attach them to the existing foliage.

This craft is courtesy of LovelyIndeed.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. While writing the Dryad's Crown, the opening scene changed several times—from a detailed description of Silbrey's staff to Silbrey walking Penderyn's cobbled streets to a mother waking up in the middle of the night. Why do you think the author ultimately decided on this opening?
2. Daniel Irving Decena worked on the Dryad's Crown illustrations over the course of three years, creating a new piece every three months. How does the art enhance the reading experience? Do you have a favorite illustration?
3. Silbrey's anger about her past and grief about the loss of her husband are often intertwined. How does this emotional journey change throughout the story? Did it make her a more sympathetic character or less?
4. In book III, several scenes are about "appearance vs. reality," e.g., the fake menhir, Gydan being disappointed by the real Bren, the shadow play, the revelation about Maricel and the misunderstanding that followed. In what ways does this motif extend throughout the Dryad's Crown to other parts of the novel?

Did you know? Gydan's encounter with Speck in the cave (and made more obvious with the shadow play in book III) is based on *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald, generally regarded as the first fantasy novel. There are also elements of *Hansel and Gretel*, i.e., a brother and sister confronting a witch in the woods and working together to defeat it.

5. The fate of the world was at stake, and Ausdre abandoned her call. Even when she knew where Silbrey was (via her daughter's visions), she didn't go after her. Why do you think she acted this way? How does her story compare with Timon's?
6. The pace slows down between books V and VI, transitioning from external conflicts (the siege of Aberton) to internal and interpersonal conflicts within a claustrophobic setting (the hull of a ship). Why do you think the author did this? Did you find it effective or were you just ready for them to get to Alda Feren?
7. Book VIII includes the story of a god, Tian, and her attempt to save the people of Efre Ousel by enlisting the help of the Fey Court. How does this storyline change your understanding of previous moments in the novel?
8. Names are important in the Dryad's Crown, e.g., the various names that Silbrey acquires as she passes from surrogate parent to surrogate parent, the many honorifics of Bren Caius, the significance of Gydan's name, the scene where Willow demands to know her daughter's name. Silbrey's name isn't mentioned at the end of book for over 100 pages. She appears to lose her name during her fight with the Ancient Beast. Why are names so powerful?
9. There is a ten-year jump between books VIII and IX. Were there any surprises?
10. While the next novel in the series *War of the Hounds* focuses on a young Bren Caius, the third novel (*The Summer Sword*) continues where *The Dryad's Crown* left off. Do you have any predictions for what might happen in that next book?

NOTABLE PASSAGES

Page 15:

That is the way of the gods. When they intervene, everyone loses something.

Page 69:

The smell of salty sea air wafted throughout Penderyn, but at the docks, the foulness of fish hit like a sucker punch. To the nobles, it was unbearable. To the residents, it was familiar. But to the fishermen, it was the smell of a good haul and honest work.

Page 102:

It was a forest for hiding in or getting lost. It was a forest for things that crept and crawled and slithered, for snakes and spiders and monsters.

Page 182:

Keote would go on about how terrible war was, and then reminisce about how much he missed it. Silbrey decided teachers were the loneliest people in the world—so eager for someone to care about what they knew.

Page 217:

Gydan obeyed. She took the sword hanging on the wall and handed it to Bren. The sword was a reminder to all who visited of what she had accomplished in life. It was a myth built on a lie.

The passages you'd like to discuss:

Show up to the book club in style.
If you'd like a Dryad's Crown t-shirt,
use this special book club
discount code (TDCBOOKCLUB)
at checkout to get 19% off.



<https://david-hopkins-shop.fourthwall.com/products/the-dryads-crown-official-release-t-shirt>