

Holly Hates ACOTAR: Part One transcript

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0:03

Holly: Hi this is Bimbo Book Club with Holly.

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Harley: and Harley.

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Harley: So, *ACOTAR*. I'm going to save everybody a whole lot of time—by everybody, I mean you—and just go through the books in the series.

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Holly: Great, because I have no idea what is what and who is who and what court is what throne and what thorn belongs in whose face and crowns and, can I have a crown?

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Harley: Very fun listening to some of the combos she comes up with, but she won't stop until I interrupt her. So, moving right along, we have *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, which is where the acronym ACOTAR comes from, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, *A Court of Wings and Ruin* and there is a *A Court of Frost and Starlight*, but we only did the three in the trilogy and we did the three in the trilogy because someone doesn't like the first book.

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Holly: By someone she means me.

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Harley: Same, me as well. But I kept reading whereas Holly read the first one went, *eh* and stopped. So I made her read the other two.

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Holly: Thank you for that.

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Harley: So how do you feel about the books now?

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Holly: Tolerated them? Look, I don't, hate is a very strong word. And I'm very hesitant to use it. Don't think I hate it. But I definitely don't like it. I like exactly one character.

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Harley: You only like one character?

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Holly: Only like one character. You get one guess who that is. And then one guess as to why.

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Harley: Summer or Nesta?

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Holly: Neither.

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Harley: Azriel because he's got shadows.

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Holly: I forgot about Azriel. Okay, I like two characters.

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Harley: Is it Rhysand?

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Holly: It's Rhysand! Moody, maybe not quite a shadow demon, but rules the night court. Close enough.

2:00

Harley: I'm more empathetic to your Rhysand affection than I was to Luke. To be fair, that's got less to do with who he is as a person and more to do with my overall mistrust of crossroad demons and wish-granting beings.

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Holly: Yes, but we know I don't have a great track record or taste in men.

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Harley: But I wouldn't say my taste in men is without flaws.

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Holly: Cover your ears, Peanut.

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Harley: So just a quick summary of the books, which I'm guessing I will do again because Holly likes to stare at me blankly when I asked her questions about anybody other than the main characters.

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Holly: I have a list of them in front of me and I still don't know who's who. But yeah, carry on.

2:44

Harley: She told me she was done making lists of characters and I listed about 50 more that she'd forgotten about. She was not impressed. So *A Court of Thorns and Roses* is basically a retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*, but it's retold with Fae, basically. So it's a human, a mortal woman, who ends up at this Beast's castle and has to break a curse made by an evil witch. But the beast is actually a fae High Lord. So surprise, it's a romance. However, they're not done there because there are other books. So the basic premise of those, this is your spoiler warning. Because from here on out, I'm going to actually spoil some stuff that's not dead obvious. And while I'm at it, you can have a trigger warning too, because we are definitely discussing some things like sexual assault, and other traumas that I can't think of - any other ones?

3:36

Holly: Yeah, sexual assault, false imprisonment, or like, being confined against your will.

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Harley: So essentially, from the second book, Feyre, who's our main character realizes she's not in love with the handsome High Lord.

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Holly: Overbearing. I'll be quiet.

4:02

Harley: Of the spring court. She's actually in love with the moody, handsome shadow prince that is the High Lord of the Night Court.

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Holly: And one of the two people that I like.

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Harley: There's a war with the other nation, I guess, for lack of a better term. It's all of those kinds of basic, young adult, fairy tale and fantasy tropes. Surprise, surprise, they win the war, the Evil Shadow High Lord is actually quite a good guy. Everybody comes close to death, but all the important people make it out in the end.

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Holly: The end. That's all you need to know.

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Harley: We will get into more detail obviously, as we're talking about specific things, but that's the general plot. So we've kind of covered overall. So I think one of the things that is a little bit frustrating and that I do find frustrating about the series is that the first book kind of lacks purpose. Like it's something that I said to you, the first book is not that relevant to the rest of the series.

5:08

Holly: Yeah, so I read the first book a little while ago. And because everyone was raving about *ACOTAR*, it's all over Instagram. It's all over TikTok. Every bookshop, it's front and center. And so I was like, 'Okay, yep, sure. I'll take the plunge.' And I read it. And I really didn't enjoy it. And so I didn't progress the series, which is, this is one of your comfort reads, which is why we decided to do it as a trilogy. And so I was bullied into reading the next two, and by bullied, I mean, lightly asked to do it, maybe bullied to continue reading it. So we decided to do it because I had read only the first one.

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Harley: And it's very much not a representation. I think of the rest of the series.

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Holly: We can sort of look at the first book as a standalone. I just didn't like it.

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Harley: Not everybody is going to like everything. And I think actually, this is a good one to talk about in terms of, I don't necessarily think that it's the best writing in the world, I have plenty of criticisms for things in the book. I mean, the fact that I'm like, 'The first book is largely irrelevant, like you need to read it the first time, but not if you ever want to reread them.' I routinely reread it without reading the first book, but it is something that I enjoy as a comfort read. So, it's not that I don't acknowledge the problems in it, but I enjoy it. Whereas I think for you, it's one of those ones where you're

like, 'No, I can't get on board for this because the problems are too much for me to embrace.'

6:39

Holly: Yeah, well, I think you nailed it on the head, hammered it on the, whatever.

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Harley: Harley was handy with a hammer.

6:49

Holly: Harley was handy with a hammer when she said that it's possibly because I don't identify with the main character Feyre which I think is completely accurate.

7:00

Harley: I can't believe you're actually giving me credit for something Ellie said.

7:03

Holly: Oh, was it Ellie who said that? Maybe it was. So there's other novels that kind of follow the same sort of vein in terms of being like, fae or supernatural beings that have a bit of smarts that have a similar kind of storyline happening that I really enjoy. And they are my comfort reads. This one, I just couldn't get into it. I just couldn't enjoy it. There were elements where the writing just didn't quite feel very like, fleshed out or some areas that were a bit messy in terms of the actual writing style, but it wasn't terrible. It was not trash, even though it's trash, but it's not. It wasn't trash writing, not like some things.

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Harley: Like I'm offended by your lack of skills. *50 Shades*, anyone?

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Holly: Yeah, it's not trash like *50 Shades*. Yeah, trash writing as well as trash content.

8:00

Harley: I do think it is worth talking about Feyre not being a particularly relatable main character, she does have a not to say that she's got no flaws. And I will probably talk about that in relation to something I think we're going to cover later. But she does have a little bit of that Mary Sue quality, like she's almost instantly good at everything. Which is not to say that she's not—throughout the course of the book, we see her learn to read because that's not something she originally has. And she does have to train and all those kinds of things. And I appreciate that. A novel is not always the place to do a

training montage for lack of a better like, sometimes you just have to be like, it was six months.

8:42

Holly: Yeah, absolutely.

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Harley: Like you have to gloss over that. It feels like this it's just a little bit too immediately convenient all of the time.

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Holly: Absolutely. It's way too convenient. It's like oh, I need this skill, particularly at the beginning of the second book when she goes back to the Summer Court.

9:02

Harley: Beginning of the third book, because remember the second book is where she falls in love with Rhys.

9:07

Holly: And also I think it's the Spring Court not the Summer Court because there's too many courts and too many books and too much going on.

9:12

Harley: There's seven courts. It's a fairy tale, seven is a perfect number for a fairy tale.

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Holly: Yeah, two is also a really good number.

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Harley: Two is a terrible number for a fairy tale. There is no magical power in two. Seven is an inherently magical number, Holly.

9:30

Holly: So, at this rate, there will be no podcast. Thank you for joining us for our third and final episode.

9:38

Harley: It's not the animals fighting, it's us fighting for what the most magical appropriate number is.

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Holly: Okay, so at the start of the third book when she goes back to the Spring Court with Tamlin, I believe I have now said it correctly. And she needs certain powers and needs certain skills to protect herself in certain things like creating a silencing bubble type of thing and unlocking doors and all of this, and conveniently all of a sudden she has that power, she has that skill, no *Rocky*-esque montage.

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Harley: She did have a *Rocky* montage in the second book, it's just that it was such a brushed-over thing because it wasn't necessary to the telling of that story. So it really does seem like it comes out of nowhere. But realistically, she has been training with three, very powerful fae in the Night Court for the whole time she's been there, for the majority of the time that she's been there, plus with like Mor and Amren and stuff like that she'd been training with all of them basically, for quite a long period of time. Theoretically, there is one there somewhere.

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Holly: I think, arguably, that the whole book is a montage.

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Harley: I also think that's a spot where we see some of her more negative qualities. Because she has all the powers ever, they're actually not super effective in her achieving what she wants to achieve. Because the twins from Hybern, who's the bad guy, by the way, they have figured out what she's up to really early on. And so they're deliberately weakening her. So things aren't working as effectively as she thinks they are, however, because she understands the kind of people that Tamlin is and his High Priestess is plus the flaws in the court, she's actually very able to be emotionally manipulative, and kind of bait them into showing their true character in a way that makes them unfollowable to the court. So I mean, the reality is that, regardless of her manipulation, and she is a self-involved bitch who will take and take and take and take regardless of whether the people that she's taking from are consenting or she will allow other people to be punished for her like she's a self-serving, horrible woman. And Tamlin is a fairly ineffectual High Lord, who cares more about his status as a High Lord than he does about doing the right thing by his people. That's who they are. But she goads them into revealing that to everybody around them.

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Holly: And it's actually got not a lot to do with her powers.

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Harley: Like she moves a rock that Ianthe was using to mark where she needed to stand to be lit up with the first sunlight on the longest day of the year or whatever. But in terms of her big, impressive powers, shouldn't use very many of them to really—like, that's not really the real power there. So that was a lot of words to say something I probably could have said in two sentences.

12:45

Holly: I agree with that. But I think that what frustrates me is that if she had these big moments of like, *Oh, my God, I need these big powers*, and then just like, digs deep and has these big powers. Great. It's like these little things that she's doing. It's like she needs a tiny, tiny piece of—I don't know how to explain it.

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Harley: I get what you mean.

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Holly: She's doing what I would consider to be intricate magic that I believe would require more montage than she was afforded.

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Harley: Yeah, so I guess it's that thing of the work, actually, weirdly tying it into the fact that she's a painter. But it's that thing of like, you can't paint a Rembrandt, if you've been studying painting for six months, and no matter how intensely you've been studying that painting.

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Holly: I get that there's probably an element of like, innate skill that she's got.

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Harley: So she didn't really have a choice in that, because she didn't realize that—she right at the very start of the very first book, is hunting to feed her family in a very Katniss Everdeen kind of way.

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Holly: It's *so* Katniss Everdeen.

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Harley: And that's why Holly is making a joke about her volunteering as tribute. But actually, she kills a wolf. That turns out to be a fae, who was in his animal form.

14:07

Holly: Also, fuck Tamlin for just being like, 'Off you go, guys go get killed for me.'

14:13

Harley: Yeah. So part of his curse was that he had to find a human woman who hated the fae enough to kill one of them, and get her to fall in love with him and declare her love. That's the *Beauty and the Beast* element. Anyway, there's a treaty that's super, super old by human generations, even though by fae generation, they're like, oh, yeah, that's my signature. So Tamlin turns up on their doorstep, and he's like, one of you killed my lieutenant and it's a life for a life, and to protect her family, and because it was her that did it, she owns up to it being her who's done it. And so he whisks her off and she's like, 'Oh, my God, I'm gonna die' and surprise, surprise, he's like, 'Well, Life for life just means I have to own your life. It doesn't mean that you have to die. So come stay in my magical,' like, what? A townhouse? 'Come stay on my beautiful fae property and challenge all your beliefs about how horrible the fae are.'

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Holly: And also definitely don't go and talk to anything out there.

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Harley: So Tamlin very quickly by the second book displays the negative aspects to his character. In the first book, he actually does a lot of kind things for her.

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Harley: Kind? Controlling?

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Harley: Like, without telling her, he realizes that he's taking the breadwinner for the family away and arranges for her family to come into a windfall, he also because I think Nesta tries to go over the wall. He does glamor them to forget, or to think that she's gone away to try and protect them from coming into her unstable magical kingdom.

15:56

Holly: The glamor didn't work on Nesta. No. So she goes to try and find her sister.

16:01

Harley: Maybe it's him being controlling, that part. But to be fair, he makes sure that her family is actually very well looked after—they're in a better condition than they were. And he doesn't tell her that initially. I can't remember how she finds it out. I think she has a go with him about, 'You've actually condemned a lot of people to die because they're dead without me anyway'. And he's like, 'No, they're not.' But he doesn't

volunteer that information to her. And I think that what we find by the end of the book, is that he does have a capacity for goodness.

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Holly: Yeah, okay, so he does one nice thing.

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Harley: I mean, he also brings Rhys back.

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Holly: I feel like he was peer pressured into that though.

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Harley: But there is an element of like, *Enjoy your happiness even though I get to go back to my manor and be fucking miserable*. He's very much that guy.

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Holly: Oh, he's so that guy.

16:52

Harley: So he's 100% like, when things don't go his way and he's caught ruined and all that stuff. Instead of going *fuck my life, I gotta like, jog on and rebuild and figure it out*. He just mopes around his palace, destroying stuff, destroying shit.

17:08

Holly: He does destroy shit, doesn't he?

17:09

Harley: Lots of temper tantrums that boy, lots of temper tantrums. Someone needs a therapist, not a girlfriend. I do think that's, I guess, the purpose of the first book is to set her up in the fae realm. And to explain why she's at the Spring Court. When I reread it for this, I think until she goes under the mountain, there's not a lot of point to the book.

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Holly: And it could have just probably been achieved by a couple of extra chapters at the start of the second book instead of having a whole book for it.

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Harley: I think a lot of the rest of the timeline could be fudged to fit the whole rest of the story in without necessarily losing anything if you did knock off a lot of that first

book. That said, I did, because it's been a while since I've reread it because like I said, I skip it a lot. I actually did quite enjoy the under-the-mountain stuff. Like her challenges.

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Holly: That's why I think you'll quite enjoy the third *Neon Gods*.

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Harley: So then, if we look at our main characters over this series, we've got the Court of Dreams, which for the record, so the Night Court, essentially is split into two parts. So they call it the Court of Nightmares, which is the public face of the Night Court. And it's like the big bad things that go bump in the night. You know, the terrible evil. The Court of Dreams is the court within the court of night. That is the kind of, I guess, main court. So it's like Rhysand and his actual lieutenants.

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Holly: I know who they are, because I have them written down.

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Harley: I know who they are, because I remember. But I do think there's a lot of interesting characters outside the main cast. So I would call the main cast like, Tamlin Rhys, Feyre, and I don't even necessarily know that I'd go outside of that. There are other primary characters, but they're not really *main* characters. I guess Hybern is the big bad.

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Holly: Yeah, Hybern and also Amarantha for the first one. But, I would agree it's probably only really those three.

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Harley: And then the bad guys on the other side. I think, though, that she's built a really interesting world. And she's got some really interesting secondary characters that I think create some space to—just to go completely off-topic to a completely different author. So there's an author I really like called Anne Bishop. She writes like, sci-fi kind of stuff. I don't know if you've read anything of hers. It's pretty obscure.

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Holly: No, I don't think so.

19:55

Harley: So, I first read her books because I went to school with somebody who liked to be a bit pretentious and was like, 'I'm not recommending what I'm reading to anybody

because she's my favorite author. And I'm gatekeeping.' And I was like, 'That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard.' If you love an author and you want them to be successful, shout their name from the rooftops and get everybody to buy their stuff. So I spite read it and actually quite enjoyed it. It was a good recommendation, even if it was reverse recommended to me.

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Holly: What like, yeah. Is that an insult or you won't like this, because it's my favorite and you're...

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Harley: She literally said to me, because she was reading it and raving about how it was her favorite thing ever. And I was like, 'That sounds cool. I'd like to look into it.' And she literally was like, 'I don't want you to, because I like having something that's just mine.' But in that way she's very specific about it, where it's like, 'I want to have an author that nobody else has heard of. And so I have to gatekeep, so that nobody else can talk about these books. So I can just, I guess, lecture people on them.' I don't know.

20:57

Holly: That's like telling people that you saw Coldplay at some little tiny pub 1000 years ago, before they got busy, but then also not allowing anybody to then go and buy tickets.

21:11

Harley: I saw Coldplay, so I crashed their websites. That was 100%, I was going to read everything that woman had ever written out of sheer spite. But it turns out, she's actually quite a decent author. And I quite like how she writes. But yes, to get back on topic. So she's got a trilogy called the *Black Jewels* series. And it's a series because within this world that she's created, she has a lot of like collections of short stories, standalone novels, and most of the ones that are standalone, are legitimately standalone, even though they tie back into the main stuff. So a really great example of this, and there's heaps of stuff set in this world. So if you know who I'm talking about, and I'm ignoring your favorite, sorry, I have read it. I like it, too. So part of the main storyline, the main part of the books is there are magical beings called the blood and a taint has crept in. So there's bad guys in there. And one which rises above to be the all-powerful one who can hopefully save the day. Surprise, surprise, she succeeds,

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Holly: And it takes her several books to do so.

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Harley: Only three. And there are good reasons in those ones.

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Holly: Unlike the reasons in *ACOTAR*.

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Harley: You said it. I know that's your opinion. But one of the things in the final book, where she's trying to figure out, because her whole thing is the like, I have enough power to get rid of this taint. But like, I don't know how to do it without essentially just destroying every magical being. So it's like all or nothing. And her lover in the books goes, 'Actually, I might have a solution.' He's part of a long-lived race. So he's lived for 1000s of years. And he's like, a few thousand years ago, whatever. I met this warlord, and they did something on a smaller scale. But they had a similar thing where they needed to separate some magic people from others. And he left a written record somewhere, let me go find it. And I'll bring it back to you. Separate to that is a book called *The Invisible Ring*, which is the recounting of that story.

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Holly: Of him going off and finding the thing?

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Harley: So, it's the manuscripts that are left for the lover. So it's the story of this territory, that had to do the same thing. But it's a standalone book about, I mean, it's about a whole lot of other stuff, and all that kind of stuff. So the book itself isn't designed to be tie-in directly to those books. It's about a man who has been trapped as a slave, and discovers the ability to be of service in this. It's very complicated. It's very much sci-fi. So there's a lot of different rules and things that play into each other and yada yada, yada. So I'm really trying to simplify here. But basically, he's been a slave his whole life and he is learning in this book—he's falling in love, but also learning to be of service to a queen in a way that is for him and not just *I have to submit to your every demand because I'm your slave*. And how being protective of her can be saying no to her and all that, you know, so it is a standalone story entirely. And it's only when you read all of it together that you go *Ah right, these connect*, but if I gave you *The Invisible Ring*, and you read that with no context on the other ones, you could read it and know exactly what you need to know, know exactly what's going on. No issues, because it is a completely standalone novel set in the same universe. So Deamon shows up early on because obviously he meets this warlord, which is why the warlords like, 'Thank you for your help.'

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Holly: This is like, several 100 years earlier.

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Harley: So, essentially it's covering a side quest.

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Holly: That's so cool. So I could just read all the side quests and not ever embark on the main journey. That is how I play most video games.

25:22

Harley: I have a few games that I've not actually finished because I've gotten distracted playing side quests. Speaking of, to bring this back around what we're actually talking about. I think that Sarah J Maas could do a very similar thing, where she, for example, has a collection of short stories that cover, like, what happened to Alis, does she find her nephews? There's a whole other story there in terms of does Lucien ever figure out who his real father is. We know the short story would be about the affair between his mother and is it Dawn? So there's a whole lot of side quests that would be really interesting stories that she's set up in this world where I think that she's got the potential to take a leaf out of Anne Bishop's book and have some really like, yeah, I guess a compelling world-building, maybe even would bring you back to that main series and be like, I'm excited to read it. So I'm really fond of this character in this kind of way.

26:18

Holly: But then, I guess, how planned was this whole series? Because a lot of the time it feels like there are elements of plot and backstory that just kind of gets slotted in. And then it's like, oh, now this thing's happening. But here's the backstory. But here's this thing.

26:37

Harley: I would say my frustration goes the other way, is one of the things that I find she does is she invalidates what happened in the previous book at the start of the next one. So Fayre and Tamlin finished the end of book one with the happily ever after. And then at the start of book two, she's like suffocating under the weight of his not allowing her to do anything other than be pretty and sit around and paint. And then actually another one that I'm going outside the scope of the ones that you've read, but I'm this time staying in this universe. This author, at the start Nesta's as well. And I know you were like, 'Yeah, well, obviously, she ends up with Cassian. And you can see that coming.' But Nesta's book starts off with her like not having spoken to them for ages. And she's like, shut everyone out. And she doesn't even speak to Cassian. And like, so it's back to square one, in order to tell this love story of them kind of coming together, I guess, literally and figuratively. It's a bit like she kind of erases the previous theme in order to tell the story that she wants to tell now.

27:47

Holly: It's almost like she's written something and then like an editor or someone on Instagram has said, Oh, this would be a good next step. And she's like, Yeah, actually, that would be a good next one. And then just like, has to go back. She's done a really good job of creating a universe. I think the universe is very well thought out. I think there's a lot of characters there's a lot of people to keep track of, but I feel like the ultimate story and all of the little side quests spin-off novels just have not really been planned from the start.

28:22

Harley: To be fair, I think that actually, if anything, suggests that maybe you should spend less time writing a main overarching plot where everything ties in together and start writing some fucking side quests. Because at the end of the day, aside from the major points of the war and when she left the Spring Court, for example, following Alis, it has no bearing on the main major books and the plot points there.

28:50

Holly: I don't have a written down. I don't know who she is!

28:55

Harley: From the Spring Court.

29:01

Holly: What's the creature that she catches in the snares?

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Harley: No that's the Suriel. To be fair, Alis is the one that, Lucien teaches her how to trap it. But then, when she gets back, Alis is like, you're an idiot. Give it a new cloak.

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Holly: Yeah, it's like you don't need to set this elaborate trap with chicken carcasses and shit. Just give it a cloak.

29:32

Harley: Anyway, connecting the dots totally wrong.

29:35

Holly: I'm not connecting any dots I'm coloring on the table. I'm no longer even coloring on the same book.

29:40

Harley: You know when you see the like, Sharpie that has clearly gone through the paper and then they just started drawing on the table that's totally Holly right now. Yeah,

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Holly: I don't know if I have the Sharpie or the table or the piece of paper that's got a hole in it.

29:51

Harley: Or the toddler that's just, *weeeeee*.

29:53

Holly: We started on the paper, went on the table, drawing our walls now. I've been pushed under the TV, you know, at this stage.

30:04

Harley: So quest, I think Alis is one example of it, even actually the so I'm gonna veer into some other characters that you may not remember, I don't know if you wrote them down. So just bear with me, smile and nod until I get to the end of my point, if you don't know who the fuck I'm talking about. So there's a big wall that divides the fae and the humans. And on the human side of the world, there's a bunch of Queens who rule everything one of them is missing. Halfway through the book, I'm getting like, smiling and nodding from Holly and a thumbs up, which means, she knows who I'm talking about.

30:45

Holly: Sriracha!

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Harley: Sorcha, you need to stop calling her hot sauce.

30:48

Holly: She's a firebird.

30:52

Harley: So essentially, this queen is opinionated, and all this kind of stuff. So she's inconvenient to the other queens. So they sell her to an evil sorcerer, who turns out to be one of three death lords that we meet throughout the series. We don't actually meet this one. But we meet his siblings, the weaver and the bone carver. This should be a YouTube video, you should see her faces. So anyway, those siblings are in the main story, which is why we're not talking about them right now. So she essentially is betrayed to this evil

magician, and death Lord, and he essentially turns her into a firebird at night and a woman by day so it's the swan princess.

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Holly: One of many fairy tales, that she's not ripped off. What was the word that I want, been inspired by? Retold, retold, ripped off. I mean, inspired by. Carry on.

31:42

Harley: I like you've looked for a second there, like you were just going to end your sentence at, 'That's one of many fairy tales.' Yes, Holly, it is one of many fairy tales.

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Holly: Yes, one of many, seven, apparently.

31:53

Harley: We're really committing to this *I'm drawing on the walls* thing. But the majority of that story occurs outside of the main plot. So they do eventually obviously show up in the main plot, or we'd have no idea that this was going on at all. But all of this stuff happens very, very far away from the main story. So that's yet another one that could be told as even a series of short stories, or as a standalone book or things like that, where it is only very loosely touching the main storyline. If you did say Alis finding her nephews. You did her finding her nephews as a short story, you could potentially have another short story and that be the affair with Lucien's mother and Dawn. Because again, it does technically have an impact on the main storyline, because it's how Lucien's born, it's why Beron doesn't fully trust Lucien, even before, he's not part of the Autumn Court. But there's a whole lot of that kind of stuff where it's so far in the past, and it doesn't hugely affect the main story. So she can tell all of those stories. And if she goes a little bit off tap, in terms of the like, oh, right, there was a main plot, it's not a big deal, because they're not significant events to the main plot. Trouble is she stays in the main plot, and then she goes, never mind.

33:30

Holly: That was quite annoying.

33:31

Harley: Yeah, I think one of the most frustrating parts of the, *have you planned this*, is, I really like that—it's gonna sound a bit strange until I explain myself. Rhys is the one that's got a lot of the trauma, purely in terms of, usually men don't have to suffer much significant trauma that we see. And they very rarely in fiction have to suffer anything that is humiliating or sexual.

34:05

Holly: And definitely not at the hands of a woman. Usually, if they are suffering, or being abused. It's at the hands of another man.

34:14

Harley: I don't feel like she necessarily fully addresses that beyond like, he has nightmares.

34:21

Holly: Yeah, I completely agree with you that I appreciate that she hasn't gone and given that trauma, and that abuse to a female and to someone who's not the main female, because Fayre has got her own shit that she's dealing with. Sarah J Maas has given it to a guy and I do really appreciate that, but I do feel like she has decapitated him because he is emotional. And you can only shove so much of that down.

34:54

Harley: Yeah, maybe it's just a lack of understanding of complex trauma or maybe it's like, *Guys, I'm writing for young adults*. Especially because I mean, the way that other people see him as Amarantha's whore, is something that carries throughout the novels. I think that it is a little bit of a disservice to what she has done. And to Rhys, that she hasn't then balanced that out with more directly addressing the fact that, regardless of the fact that he sort of willingly went to her bed, he was in a position where he didn't have a choice to do anything else, which is not consent. Even if he's like, 'Yay, I'm so excited to do it.' If his only other option is that he and everybody he loves dies a horrible, horrible death, that's not consent.

35:46

Holly: Absolutely not consent. And it's 50 years of abuse, they're under the mountain for 50 years. Yeah, okay, I get that. He's what 500? At least 300, many hundreds of years old. So 50 years drop in a bucket. For his lifetime, I get that. But regardless, it's still a long period of time.

36:09

Harley: I mean, that's arguably like saying, Somebody was raped for five minutes. So why are they traumatized by it? Trauma's trauma. So maybe you could argue that it's not complex trauma, but—

36:22

Holly: I would say 100% is complex trauma, because you've got that light and dark. So he has to portray a certain image in front of other people. And then he has to be a

different person in her bedroom. And then he gets to be more himself when he's visiting Fayre.

36:38

Harley: I agree with you that it is complex trauma, just if we're going like oh, no, then it's just like a straight, because the definition of the difference is one is trauma sustained over time, and the other is trauma sustained in a moment, and then it becomes that argument of how do fae perceive time and all that stuff. I think as a mortal person reading the book, it occurs over the course of 50 years. That's over time. So shut up. It's CPTSD.

37:03

Holly: Absolutely, it is. And I do feel like what you're saying before is so correct, how she just hasn't quite given it the depth that it deserves.

37:13

Harley: I actually think there's a really specific scene where I feel like it could have one, been more addressed. And two, been actually quite compelling as a plot point. Do you remember in book three...?

37:31

Holly: They have blurred into one at this point.

37:33

Harley: So where all the High Lords meet, and she's already become Rhys's High Lady. So she's back at the Night Court, so it has to be book three. So she loses her shit. So Azrael loses his shit. She pulls him out of there, and then she has a meltdown over. I cannot remember what, she has a meltdown over something. Baron says something disgusting, I think about Mor. And she hits him with all of her powers.

38:02

Holly: I liked Mor. There's three characters.

38:04

Harley: So see, I just have to list characters until Holly remembers who she likes. Because when she says 'I only liked one character,' what she means is I don't remember 90% of the people in this book, so I only remember the main guy and everybody else is a blur of nothing.

38:17

Holly: Yeah, shadow demon. Annoying main character. Everyone else.

38:22

Harley: Overbearing Spring lord, I've heard you rant about Tamlin enough that you don't get to pretend that you forget him.

38:30

Holly: I just tried to actively block him out. But please tell me about the scene. Is he in this scene?

38:37

Harley: He actually is. So they've kind of decided to reveal the court of dreams to the rest of the world because up till now it's been hidden and protected. And they want to go in being honest with the High Lords, but they've decided not to show Feyre's powers so they aren't kind of goading her to explode, so the ones that are suspicious, so that she demonstrates the powers to everybody, and she shows that she's got everyone's powers and all that stuff. I think that that scene would have been even better if she exploded over like Beron is a great person to still do it.

39:19

Holly: I'm just checking my notes. I wrote his name down.

39:22

Harley: So he's being like an asshole or whatever, she explodes. But she doesn't just hit him with power. She also hits him with though like, you know what, you were not in a position to make that choice. Every single court, every single court, every single High Lord had to make brutal, awful decisions and had to do terrible things in order to survive. And maybe he had to play this role, but he was the victim here. How the fuck day you act as though he is the villain in this. You don't have to trust him. You don't have to work with us. You don't have to like us. You have the ability to sell us out to Hybern, but you don't get to say this about him anymore as though he is completely at fault here and not the victim. And I think that there's two things there. One is it still serves the purpose of revealing that she's got everybody's powers to everybody, while also forcing the other High Lords to rethink how they're looking at Rhys because they've come in, like, if we take away the fact that we've been with the court of dreams this whole time, so we're like, *we know they're good guys. And we know their motivations.* To the other High Lords. He has been the big bad, and he did sell himself out to Amarantha and then immediately disappear afterwards and all that kind of stuff. So there's a lot of them that are still struggling with that Amarantha's whore label.

40:43

Holly: Yeah. And then like from the outside, it looks like he's just swooped in and stolen Feyre from Tamlin at their wedding. It doesn't look good from the outside.

40:55

Harley: We kind of get a workaround of that, in that he has been working with some of the other High Lords behind the scenes. So they actually know more about him being a good guy than they let on. But I think that that would have been a really good moment of reframing for them where they go, 'Yeah, I really haven't given you a chance to be anything other than the bad guy.' Or the like, 'Okay, I have thrown all these labels on you. And I don't necessarily have to trust you. But I do have to question what I know about you.' I also think it would make a lot more sense in terms of Tarquin, who's the Spring Court?

41:34

Holly: Summer, he's the Summer Court.

41:36

Harley: I do that every fucking time. Apparently, I can't tell my seasons apart. I'm like, hot time of year, cold time of year, same thing. So Summer is betrayed by Rhys and Feyre and they get sent blood rubies, which are basically like, a death threat. But he rescinds them eventually. But I think that this would have been a really good point for him to go, maybe there's a reason why you guys are so untrusting. And to kind of just crack that little kernel in his mind so that when they show up at Summer and help, there's a reason why he's been like, *Hang on, this is the last bit of proof I needed. I already had that seed of doubt. And now you come to the rescue and saved me and maybe we can have our rubies back except for Amren's. Because no one's fucking with that one.* I just think that that's something that she's almost done well, but hasn't quite...

42:29

Holly: Hasn't quite followed through. And I don't know if it's because she's decided that it needs to be a little bit more palatable for a wider audience, or if it's an editor's choice, or if it's just a lack of knowledge, like you were saying before, that it does feel like it's hollowed. And it's kind of doing a disservice to people who have been in those sorts of situations.

42:52

Harley: I think it's also doing a disservice to the power of what she has done by making him the victim.

42:57

Holly: Yes, you are so on track here and then you've just gone and derailed it. Not dissimilar to how we have derailed this conversation that many times.

43:08

Harley: Speaking of derailing, we are going to derail this conversation or real hard by splitting this episode in two and making you will wait until next week to see how this conversation ends.

43:19

Holly: Pro tip, it ends with soup.

43:21

Harley: I really wish I could say that she's joking. Sadly, she's not joking.

43:27

Holly: Yeah, I'm not joking. Well, thank you for listening so far. As always, we appreciate your support five star reviews on Apple podcasts make a huge difference. So please leave one if you're enjoying the podcast so far.

43:35

Harley: Links and other fun things are in the show notes and you can find us at www.bimbobookclub.com or on all your favorite social media platforms.

43:45

Holly: Bimbos out.