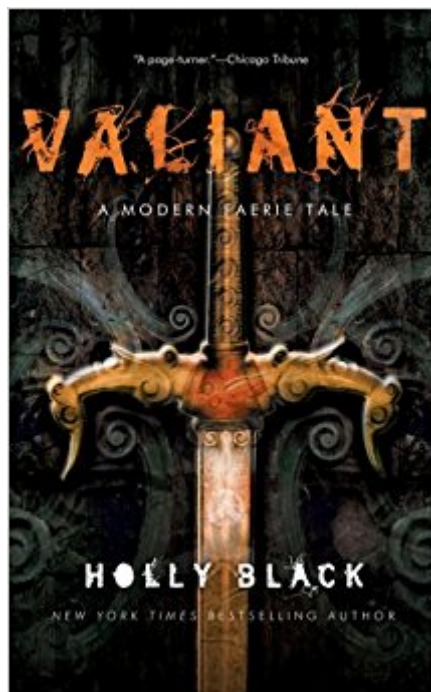


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Valiant



Synopsis

When seventeen-year-old Valerie Russell runs away to New York City, she's trying to escape a life that has utterly betrayed her. Sporting a new identity, she takes up with a gang of squatters who live in the city's labyrinthine subway system. But there's something eerily beguiling about Val's new friends. Impulsive Lolli talks of monsters in the subway tunnels they call home and shoots up a shimmery amber-colored powder that makes the shadows around her dance. Severe Luis claims he can make deals with creatures that no one else can see. And then there's Luis's brother, timid and sensitive Dave, who makes the mistake of letting Val tag along as he makes a delivery to a woman who turns out to have goat hooves instead of feet. When a bewildered Val allows Lolli to talk her into tracking down the hidden lair of the creature for whom Luis and Dave have been dealing, Val finds herself bound into service by a troll named Ravus. He is as hideous as he is honorable. And as Val grows to know him, she finds herself torn between her affection for an honorable monster and her fear of what her new friends are becoming. Bestselling author Holly Black follows her breakout debut, *Tithe*, with a rich, harrowing, and compulsively readable parable of betrayal, abuse, friendship, and love.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Margaret K. McElderry Books; Repackage ed. edition (June 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0689868227

ISBN-13: 978-0689868221

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 150 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #272,052 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Runaways](#) #99 in [Books > Teens > Literature &](#)

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up
The author of *Tithe* (S & S, 2002) returns to her dark, dangerous, and amazing world of Faerie. When 17-year-old Valerie catches her boyfriend and her mother fooling around, she runs away to New York City. There she falls in with a small group of teens who live in the subway

tunnels. But there is something more to their stories than that of normal street kids. When Valerie begins to notice odd things about the deliveries they make, and when she meets Ravus, a troll, she understands that there is an entire world that she has never known existed—the world of Faerie. Valerie and her friends begin to steal from Ravus's deliveries, using the Never that he provides to the faeries as a drug. But those who receive the deliveries are being found dead. Is Ravus the poisoner or could it be another of the fantastic creatures they have met? This dark fantasy includes drug use and strong language, but beneath its darkness readers find well-rendered characters, a gripping plot, and pure magic.

—Tasha Saecker, Caestecker Public Library, Green Lake, WI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 8-11. An exile from the Seelie court, the hunky, sensitive troll Ravus resides in a secret laboratory inside the Manhattan Bridge, ministers to other city-dwelling faeries with healing potions, and has exotic golden eyes and jutting fangs. Runaway Val meets the troll through a trio of homeless teens, runners in Ravus' potion-distribution network. They introduce Val to subway squatting, Dumpster diving, and "Never"—the drug faeries use to protect themselves from iron, but which affects humans like heroin. A twisted Agatha Christie-style plot unfolds as faery partakers of Never begin to expire, and Ravus is accused of murder; Val's feelings for the troll prompt her to clean up her act and investigate the true poisoner. As in Black's companion novel *Tithe* (2004), the plot matters far less than the exotic, sexy undercurrents (including a scene where Val overhears teens having sex), the deliciously overripe writing, and the intoxicating, urban-gothic setting, where "everything was strange and beautiful and swollen with possibilities." Jennifer Mattson

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We picked up the first book in the series at a thrift store recently and enjoyed it, so we ordered this book. I believe that one was her first novel. This one showed definite improvement in her writing skills, over the first. This novel was fast-paced, her vision of Faerie is interesting, as are the characters, so I didn't mind that it was written for a YA audience. We will order the third book soon.

I really enjoyed this book. So far I have been very happy with Holly Blacks books. It was neat that all three were held in the same world as the first book, but was yet an all new story. I'd like to see more books from this world, though as far as I know there is only 3 from the 'A Modern Fairy Tale' series. If you enjoy dark fairies, the idea of how they may really be, believable world creation, and

fun story lines, then you'll enjoy these sets of books.

While this is written in the same universe as Tithe, it is not about the same characters. It is also a very different kind of story than Tithe, so be warned. In Tithe, the protagonist shoplifted, smoked, and was a high school dropout, and all of these (relatively) minor flaws are kind of overshadowed by the fact that (spoiler) she isn't human. In Valiant, the protagonist does a lot of things that people consider morally reprehensible (crazy drugs, casual sex, etc), and is ultimately held more accountable for her behaviors because she is human. I would like to point out that by the end she overcomes all this, which is more than what we can say for Kaye. Valiant is darker and seedier, but I still think it made for an amazing read. Also, and this is just my feelings on this, I think a lot of people don't like Valiant as much as Tithe just because the male lead doesn't fit in as well with their idea of Prince Charming. Not saying that there aren't legitimate reasons why people don't like it, but for some people, I'm pretty sure this is the root of their problem.

Bought for a friend's birthday. I love it and we both love Holly Black.

After finishing Tithe, which was just ok, I decided to continue on with Valiant. I must say it was MUCH better. This book dives straight into the plot without the confusing introduction that was in Tithe. The first chapter gives you just the right amount of background to understand Val's state of mind in the rest of the book. It catches your interest right from the beginning, but it does not keep going and going and going to drag the plot down. As the book continues on, you are introduced to a group of troubled teens who are well developed characters that, regardless of who you are, you can relate to on some level. This book was much more believable and enjoyable because of this. The faeries in this book are similar to the teens: troubled yet well developed. You find yourself drawn to the faeries and also relating to them. I also found myself falling for a troll in this novel and rooting for the creature. All in all, because of the much better and less confusing writing and the well developed characters, I will continue to finish the rest of this series. I am hoping Ironside continues the getting better trend.

I didn't really go into this book with many, if any, expectations because I already knew that it was going to have little to do with the first book Tithe. In this one the author didn't jump into the story right away. There was some lead up to the events and a little more explanation this time which I liked. Her descriptions of how it is to live on the streets of NY seemed so well put that I actually

began to feel cold and dirty reading it. I, again, had a hard time picturing these characters so I just made up my own description and images of them (didn't mess with the story any, I just like to picture the characters clearly in my head). If I were Val in this book I would have done a lot of punching in the face starting with dear old mom. I like the kind of bad a** Val was...a complete human willing to do anything for the "creature" she loved. There's not much, good or bad, that I can say about this book...It just registers right there in the middle. Nice ending, it didn't leave me feeling all warm and fuzzy inside and it didn't have me throwing it aside ready to move on. Altogether, not a bad story and I'm glad I read it.

Starting off, I will say I was disappointed this did not pick up where Tithe left off. We got all new characters within the same world and Kaye and Roiben weren't reintroduced until late in the book, and dismissed just as quickly. That said, I did love this new story in that world. While I did enjoy some of the new characters, most of the misfits were just scummy. I didn't understand why they would choose to live in an abandoned train station if taking Never made it so easy to get what they wanted; why not get an apartment? But at the base, they were just "drug" addicts, so I can almost understand the need for the fix and not really caring, but still. The plot was new and enjoyable; the characters deliver packages (Never) to faeries that are outcast. Never helps these Faeries live in the city keep from getting too sick from the iron they are exposed to. When humans take Never though, they are able to, for a time, develop faerie powers such as illusions and glamour. It made for a very interesting read, and also a sad, hard lesson in drug abuse. The end was satisfying and I could hardly wait to start reading Ironside after that!

Ultimately there's too much time outlining the flaws and weaknesses of every character and too little time allowing them to redeem themselves. The main character is not very likable and remains that way almost to the end. And even then she's not very interesting. Love all the other books I've read by the author, though.

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