



2018

The Wicker King

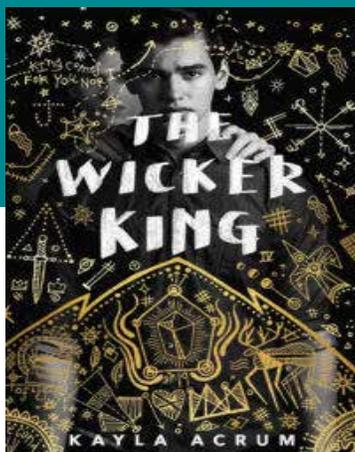
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Book Review

The Wicker King

Author

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Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

305

Year

2017

Publisher

Imprint

ISBN

9781250101549

Jack and August are unconventional friends and have been since they were little. In high school, it seems like nothing much will change: they'll each hang out with different friend groups at school, but in the evenings they'll do homework together, eat dinner together, or explore the woods together. Despite the fact that Jack's parents are never home and August's mom is severely depressed, they are happy with their lives. But soon, Jack starts seeing things that August doesn't, things that scare him. August doesn't know what to do, so he figures the best way to deal with Jack's visions are to ask him questions, and seek to understand. As the story gets darker and more twisted, August and Jack find themselves entrenched in a cycle of codependency that doesn't seem to be helping Jack or August. Without the help of trusted adults, they find themselves both in a mental institution, separated from each other. But Jack and August cannot exist as separate people—even if being separated is the healthiest and most logical course of action.

It's difficult to explain why this book merits an outstanding review. Perhaps it's the sheer fact that this book is so unique and well-written that it's refreshing to read? Or maybe instead, it is the delightfully flawed, twisted, yet somehow sympathetic characters that carry this dark story. The book is more than just a story—it's an experience told through very short chapters and other documents (photographs, school forms, ticket stubs, notes, etc.). As the story gets darker, the pages itself literally get darker and more stained until they are fully black. Even though the events of the novel are bleak, it ends with hope and reconciliation, and the author includes a note indicting the negligent adults of the novel for the tragedies that Jack and August endure. This book includes homosexual content and may be sensitive to some readers. This story is masterfully told, with a new and intriguing plot line and interesting, if not totally relatable, characters. Lovers of fantasy and psychological thrillers will enjoy this delightfully dark tale.

Contains severe language, severe sexual content, and moderate violence.