



The Nixie's Song (Beyond The Spiderwick Chronicles, Book 1)

By Tony DiTerlizzi, Holly Black

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The Spiderwick Chronicles leave the old-fashioned charm of New England far behind and head south for some fiendish faerie fun in the hot Florida sun. Eleven-year-old Nicholas Vargas only *thinks* his life has been turned upside down after his developer father remarries and moves his new wife and daughter into the soon-to-be completed Mangrove Hollow.

But an "expedition" to a nearby lake turns up a little nixie with a giant problem - the huge, lumbering, fire-breathing variety - and it's up to Nick; his stepsister, Laurie; and his big brother, Julian (plus a familiar face from the original *Spiderwick Chronicles*) to figure out the best way to stop a host of rampaging giants before all of Florida goes up in smoke.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Holly Black is the author of bestselling contemporary fantasy books for kids and teens. Some of her titles include *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (with Tony DiTerlizzi), *The Modern Faerie Tale* series, the *Curse Workers* series, *Doll Bones*, and *The Coldest Girl in Coldtown*. She has been a finalist for the Mythopoeic Award, a finalist for an Eisner Award, and the recipient of both an Andre Norton Award and a Newbery Honor. She lives in New England with her husband and son in a house with a secret door. Visit her at BlackHolly.com.

Tony DiTerlizzi is a *New York Times* bestselling author and illustrator who has been creating books with Simon & Schuster for more than a decade. From his fanciful picture books like *Jimmy Zangwow's Out-of-this-World Moon Pie Adventure*, *Adventure of Meno* (with his wife, Angela), and *The Spider & The Fly* (a Caldecott Honor book), to chapter books like *Kenny and The Dragon* and *The Search for WondLa*, Tony always imbues his stories with a rich imagination. His middle grade series, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (with Holly Black), has sold millions of copies, been adapted into a feature film, and has been translated in more than thirty countries. You can visit him at DiTerlizzi.com.

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Chapter One

In Which There Are Many Different Sorts of Developments

After his mother died, Nicholas Vargas stopped bothering. His Aunt Armena had told him to be good and not to bother his father, but he decided that her advice could extend to everyone and everything. It seemed that Nick's brother had the same idea -- Jules never hung around long enough to bother anyone anymore. So the whole family kept on not bothering each other right up until Nick and Jules's dad suddenly decided to get married again.

Leading his new stepsister up the carpeted stairs, Nick had to keep his jaw clenched to stop himself from shouting. He hated that he had to give up his room and move in with Jules, who snored all night and woke up at the crack of dawn to go surfing. If his father hadn't married his stepmother after only six months of dating, Nick would still have his own room. And he wouldn't be stuck with a bedroom-stealing stepsister. Laurie was almost exactly his age and the biggest, weirdest loser he'd ever met. She bothered everyone.

Nick thought he was being fair about it, too, because he'd been called a loser and a nerd and a spaz himself. He was eleven, kind of fat, and bad at sports, while Julian shredded waves and made it to state in track. The

only thing Nick thought he was really good at was school, and that was mostly about being quiet and following directions. So, okay, he knew he wasn't cool. At least he knew better than to advertise everything lame about himself. Laurie seemed to be proud to be the lamest person alive.

"What are you thinking about?" Laurie asked him, hugging a box to her chest. Her skirt brushed the floor, making the little bells along the hem jingle.

Nick cringed and set down another box of her crap on the canopy bed. All the boxes seemed to be labeled unicorns, fairies, or books about unicorns and fairies. A few of them had even bled glitter onto the hall rug.

"Things I hate," said Nick.

"Like what?" Laurie tucked a tangle of blond hair behind her ear. Bracelets clattered at her wrists.

He was tempted to tell her. "Clowns," he said instead. "They creep me out."

"I hate my name," she told him, like he'd just given her the green light to overshare. "I wish I was called Lauranathana."

"That's stupid," said Nick. "Everyone would make fun of you."

"I don't care what people think," Laurie said simply, like she meant it.

He wanted to snap at her, to tell her that everyone cared what people thought about them, but his dad had told him to be "civil" on moving day. He sighed. "Okay, so what stuff do you like?"

He looked out of her window at the empty concrete shells of houses going up all around theirs. When it had been his window, he'd liked to watch as workers poured and smoothed foundations and cut planks and nailed them in place. He liked to smell the sawdust and see that his dad's development was finally, really happening. Even though there was still some swampy forest left, soon it would all be cut back and turned into golf courses, swimming pools, and lots of other cool things. Stuff he liked.

He'd imagined playing out there with other kids, but the construction was behind schedule. Nothing was done. His dad kept complaining about the weather -- it was the hottest summer he could remember. And that, along with the brushfires and water rationing, had everyone on edge. The sun had turned the grass on the front lawn crunchy and brown, and Nicholas's dad hadn't filled the pool in the backyard, even though he usually filled the pools as soon as they were built. Now, with the rainy season about to start, Nick's whole summer was turning out to be as lame as his stepsister.

"I like all this stuff, I guess." Laurie stacked books onto her white beadboard shelves. They were mostly fantasy and fairy tales, but she'd set aside a big tome that had gold letters and what looked like a hawk on the cover.

"What's that?" he asked.

"A field guide. So you can tell which kind of faeries are which. I bet there are a lot around here, since there's so much nature."

"You don't really believe in that stuff, do you?" He took the book from her and flipped through it. It was filled with paintings and sketches of things that made the hair along his arms stand up. They didn't look like faeries. He flipped to the back. "This isn't some kind of ancient magical text. It's fake. It was published in 2005 in New York."

"It's a reprint," Laurie told him.

"Look," he said, turning the book toward her. "It says 'fiction' inside. Explain that."

"They had to put that there," Laurie said, taking it out of his hands. "So they don't get in trouble or sued. And if you don't believe me, you can ask the authors yourself, since they're signing -- "

"Hey, kids," Nick's father called from downstairs in that new, cheerful voice he used around Laurie and Charlene. "Lunch!"

After Nick and Julian's mom died and before their dad decided he needed to impress Charlene and her wacko daughter, lunch had been cold slices of leftover pizza from the night before or, on at least one occasion, a piece of apple pie with cheese melted on it. Now, apparently, it was alphabet soup and bologna sandwiches. With the crusts cut off. Nick wanted to hurl.

Downstairs in the kitchen, Julian was already sitting at the granite island. Earbud cords hung from his head, and his thumbs jabbed at the game console cradled in his hands. His hair was stiff with salt. He didn't even look up when Nick sat down next to him.

Laurie still had the stupid book tucked under one arm. "After lunch, I'm going to go look for faeries," she told her mother.

Charlene smiled mildly. "Maybe Nick can go with you. Show you around the neighborhood."

Nick scowled at his soup. Charlene was okay, but he wished she wasn't around all the time. And he wished she would stop trying to make him be friends with her daughter. Although Charlene hadn't seemed to figure it out yet, he was willing to ignore them if they'd just ignore him back.

Laurie took a bowl and crumbled a handful of Goldfish crackers into it, making a mess. It never seemed to matter what Laurie did or how bothersome she was. No one was going to tell her to stop.

"Faeries," Nick's dad said with a grin, tucking a paper napkin into his collar. "I thought they were only in England. Down here, the palmetto bugs'll get them if the lizards don't."

Nick snickered.

"They're not all small, you know," said Laurie. She clearly didn't think his dad's joke was funny, which, in Nick's opinion, only made it funnier.

"It's too hot to look for anything," Nick said, smiling down at his reflection in the granite. "Especially things that don't exist."

Nick's dad frowned and then rubbed the bridge of his nose. Maybe he was upset his joke hadn't gone over all that well. "Go help her look. Keep her from getting lost."

Nick pushed the noodle letters in his soup so they spelled l-a-m-e. Lame. Like his summer. Like his stepsister. Like how he felt as he slurped his soup down and, without saying a thing, followed Laurie out into the yard. Copyright © 2007 by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black

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