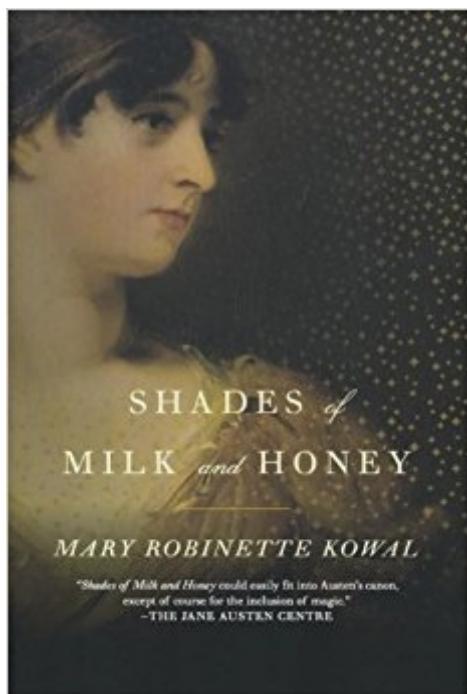


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# Shades Of Milk And Honey (Glamourist Histories)



## Synopsis

Shades of Milk and Honey is an intimate portrait of Jane Ellsworth, a woman ahead of her time in a world where the manipulation of glamour is considered an essential skill for a lady of quality. But despite the prevalence of magic in everyday life, other aspects of Dorchester's society are not that different: Jane and her sister Melody's lives still revolve around vying for the attentions of eligible men. Jane resists this fate, and rightly so: while her skill with glamour is remarkable, it is her sister who is fair of face, and therefore wins the lion's share of the attention. At the ripe old age of twenty-eight, Jane has resigned herself to being invisible forever. But when her family's honor is threatened, she finds that she must push her skills to the limit in order to set things right--and, in the process, accidentally wanders into a love story of her own. This debut novel from an award-winning talent scratches a literary itch you never knew you had. Like wandering onto a secret picnic attended by Pride and Prejudice and Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell, Shades of Milk and Honey is precisely the sort of tale we would expect from Jane Austen...if only she had been a fantasy writer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In Kowal's quasi-Regency fantasy debut, plain Miss Jane Ellsworth envies her sister's looks, while flighty Melody envies Jane's talent with magical glamour. Rude, mysterious Mr. Vincent, a brilliant glamour artist hired to create living murals in a nearby mansion, shows little interest in the niceties of society, and none (it seems) in Jane. As Jane shyly seeks Mr. Vincent's tutelage and approval, Melody pursues a disastrous romance. A sprinkling of Jane Austen's idiosyncratic spellings (shew,

teaze, etc.) doesn't hide the lack of her trenchant wit or distinctive characters, and period errors abound. Despite the tremendous potential in the magical manipulation of light and temperature, glamour is used solely for decoration and entertainment, with implausibly little effect on history or culture. The story plods at a wooden pace until the climax, which achieves a sprightly comedy-of-errors froth. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Take Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and add a dash of magic and you have this delightful story by Mary Kowal. This is the story of two sisters, Jane, who is more magically talented, and Melody, a stunning beauty, and their quest to find love and stability. Both girls hope to marry well despite their lack of inheritance, and are pursued by various suitors. They are quickly embroiled into the intricacies of their neighbors' lives, and the resulting series of events is sure to entrance the reader. For those who love reading Jane Austen's books, this will at least temporarily satisfy the craving. A touch of magic inserted into the story is enough to enhance, but not overwhelm the story line. A quick, light read, with characters that the reader will feel right at home with. --Rebecca Gerber --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

When I first read *Shades of Milk and Honey*, I found it underwhelming. However, since the magic premise was interesting, I decided to continue with the series in the hope that it would improve. Thankfully, that gamble paid off, because each successive book is leaps and bounds better than the last. However, the stronger books make this one seem even weaker by comparison. [MILD SPOILER WARNING] To isolate my primary complaint with *Shades*, it would have to be the decoy love interest. It was obvious from the first few pages that this guy (he made so little impression that I can't even remember his name) was not the man for Jane, so it made the bulk of the novel incredibly tedious, as the reader has to sit through scene after scene of empty flirtation and angst internal monologues to get to the horribly-cliched conclusion. Worst of all, this obsession with a vapid man and the constant "woe is me, I'm so ugly" reflections made me really dislike Jane. Fortunately, *Glamour in Glass* is slightly better, *Without a Summer* is better still, and I just finished *Valour and Vanity*, which was AWESOME. Read this quick little novel for an introduction to the magic system, but keep your expectations low, for starters. The real fun comes in the sequels!

My Disclaimer: I was provided a free copy of this book by the author/fiction representative. I am providing an honest review in which all opinions are fully my own. I am not

being compensated in any way.~ Judi E. Easley for Blue Cat ReviewMy Review:

Yes, yes, yes! You must read this book if you like Jane Austen style stories and magic. This was wonderful. The added touch of magic to the JA style was really marvelous. I really wanted to say magical, but well, it was! We meet Jane Ellsworth, who is plain with a large nose and mousy brown hair. That's her personal description of her appearance. Her sister, Melody, is gorgeous with lovely golden hair and is a happy flirt. Why would Melody be jealous of Jane? Melody took the same lessons with the same instructor when they were old enough to learn glamour. She simply doesn't have the same talent with it. And it seems to be making a difference. While Melody can swish in the draperies for the party, it's Jane who has to add all the details and perfect the elements that go into what's there so that the draperies hang just so and the tasseled tie backs are all tied at the same length. She makes the fruit arrangement in the epergne for the table setting as well since she can perfect the blush on a peach until it looks as if you should be able to bite it and the juice would run down your chin. You see, women are supposed to use their glamour for household things to enrich the home. While for men, glamour is an art. That's where we meet Mr. Vincent. The very mysterious Mr. Vincent. Who is he really? What makes him so rude to Jane? She was admiring his glamour and trying to see how he created it. She tried to do something similar and added a little something to it. She felt she could learn so much from an artist as great as he. The book was paced much like a tea party. Everyone arrived and was admired for this or that. Soon, they are all settled into their places and exchange a bit of gossip. Then for the big moment, the tea and goodies are served. A cup is tipped over and tea is spilled. Someone chokes on crumbs from a tea cake. A lace hankie has been misplaced. Please, pass the glamour and gossip. Then everyone is set straight and all lost items returned to their rightful owners and people are on their way. But did they all go home with the ones they came with? Yes, you really do need to read this book!

After a clunky first chapter, this book rapidly becomes fun, fast paced and enjoyable. It's plenty good enough for suspension of disbelief. However, I'd have liked to see all the characters developed a bit better. The sibling rivalry between Jane and her sister Melody seemed convincing enough, but very one sided-- Jane was clearly the 'good' one, and Melody was the 'bad' one. It seemed like things should be more balanced, with each of them having their own flaws, but also things in common. As it was, Jane didn't need to learn anything or develop as a character (except in her artistry)-- she was perfect from the start. Jane's romantic interest in the hero also seemed to come out of nowhere--

they didn't interact much, and she spent most of the novel in love with another man. When the other man was disqualified by some actions that actually seemed pretty out-of-character, Jane immediately fell for the hero. Again, I enjoyed this story, and read it in almost one sitting. The magic system was interesting and unique. It just needed another 100 pages to flesh out the characters, give Jane some time to grow as a person, and make a more convincing romance.

Being a fan of both Jane Austen and historical fantasy, this book was a good fit for me. I sometimes want to take a break from epic story lines and read something on a smaller more personal scale. With "Shades of Milk and Honey" the author effectively captured the tone and plot of a Jane Austen type novel, while introducing a unique spin on magic. My main complaints would be the lack of development in the Jane/Mr. Vincent relationship, and a hurried haphazard ending to an otherwise beautifully crafted story. These are the main elements keeping this charming tale from being a shining five star read. In all other ways it was very enjoyable and imaginative. I'm definitely going to try the next book in the series, as many reviewers claim it gets even better as it progresses.

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