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A Darker Shade Of Magic: A Darker Shade Of Magic, Book 1



Synopsis

Kell is one of the last Travelers - magicians with a rare, coveted ability to travel between parallel universes. As such, he can choose where he lands. There's Grey London, dirty and boring, without any magic, ruled by a mad King George. Then there's Red London, where life and magic are revered, and the Maresh Dynasty presides over a flourishing empire. There's White London, ruled by whoever has murdered their way to the throne. And once upon a time, there was Black London...but no one speaks of that now. Officially Kell is the Red Traveler, personal ambassador and adopted prince of Red London, carrying the monthly correspondences between the royals of each London. Unofficially Kell is a smuggler, servicing people willing to pay for even the smallest glimpses of a world they'll never see - a dangerous hobby and one that has set him up for accidental treason. Fleeing into Grey London, Kell runs afoul of Delilah Bard, a cutpurse with lofty aspirations. She first robs him, then saves him from a dangerous enemy and then forces him to spirit her to another world for a proper adventure.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've heard a lot of great things about V.E. Schwab's writing, in fact I had several of her books on my wish list, so when I was offered a review copy of the first book in her new series, *A Darker Shade of Magic*, I jumped at the chance to read it. I'm so glad I did because I can certainly see what all the fuss was about and I'm definitely going to be working my way through her previous titles while I wait for the release of the next book in this series. *A Darker Shade of Magic* is a wonderful mix of

historical fantasy, swashbuckling adventure and magical mayhem. Here there are three very different versions of London, three distinctive parallel universes that only a rare few people known as the Antari are able to travel between. Grey London is closest to a historical version of our world, there is no magic and most people are completely unaware of the other universes. Red London is a lavish kingdom where magic is plentiful and people on the whole are happy and healthy, most people are aware of the other worlds but have no desire to leave their own home. White London has magic but it is a different, darker, kind and people are constantly battling for power over each other, this London is a place where the weak are preyed upon and only the strong survive. There used to be a fourth world but there the magic was twisted and decayed, Black London was being destroyed from the inside out so the other versions of London banded together to permanently close the gateways and cut them off and it is believed that the world has since destroyed itself. Kell is one of only two known Antari, he was born in Red London and he is tasked with the role of delivering messages between the royal families from each remaining version of London.

I found a preview of *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC* at the end of my copy of *VICIOUS*, and I was instantly captivated. Luckily, I had a copy already, so I was able to dive straight into it. Kell is an Antari, one of the last humans with the ability to travel between parallel Londons. A long time ago, traffic between the four Londons flowed freely, but that was before Black London was overcome by magic, and the other three sealed themselves off, with nothing permitted to cross their borders. Kell doesn't really take these restrictions seriously, though, and has a healthy trade smuggling items between the worlds. But when someone gives him a letter to take across, he finds himself in a whole bunch of unanticipated trouble.. and stuck with Lila, an incorrigible thief who seems to expect him to take her on an adventure. First, the worldbuilding. I liked the idea of the four parallel Londons, each with varying levels of magic, and they were well executed â€” there's our â€” Grey London, with hardly any magic, Kell's native Red London, where people and magic are balanced, and White London, where magic is seen as something to be conquered. And Black London, which was devoured by its magic, and no one talks about anymore. The universes are all very different, aside from having a city named London at the same spot, and it was interesting to see how that worked. I also enjoyed the near-sentience of the magic itself. Just like *VICIOUS*, the book was pretty fast-paced, and the bulk of the action took place over a short period of time. While I enjoyed that things moved quickly, I really wanted to spend more time getting to know the world and characters.

Thereâ€™s this feeling I sometimes get after finishing a book â€” itâ€™s extremely rare, and only happens when the book was a whole other level of intense and amazing. Itâ€™s this euphoric, wrung-out, disoriented stupor, and it leaves you speechless and reeling. Well, I got that feeling after finishing *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC*. And thatâ€™s the highest praise I can give. Victoria Schwab originally teased *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC* as â€œpirates, thieves, and sadist kings.â€• If youâ€™re any sort of fan of her work, and she throws those words at you, youâ€™re a goner. But then you read the synopsis (Schwab-fan or not), and you sort of side-eye it. How is this possible? This book seems to have way too much going for it, way too many good things in it â€” How? Why? Whatâ€™s going on? Is this for real?! Well, before you get too excited, let me just make it clear how many good things there are in this book, because the synopsis actually doesnâ€™t cover it. - (Aspiring) pirate - Thieves - Sadist kings - Amazing magic system(s) - Flawless worldbuilding - London(s) - Fabulous magical coats - Incredible characters - Amazing friendships/brOTPâ€™s/nemeses - Ship potential (no insta-anything) - Banter - FEELS -!!!!!! Yep, your eyes do not deceive you. *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC* ticks ALL THE BOXES â€” and revels in it. *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC* does with the fantasy genre what *VICIOUS* did with superheroes. It takes things weâ€™ve seen before â€” magic, evil tyrants, world(s)-in-danger, etc â€” and turns them upside-down. Raises the stakes. Makes them new. This is fantasy at its finest â€” and Victoria Schwab at her best â€” and it is not to be missed.

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