



A Darker Shade of Magic

V.E. Schwab

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Kell is one of the last Antari—magicians with a rare, coveted ability to travel between parallel Londons; Red, Grey, White, and, once upon a time, Black.

Kell was raised in Arnes—Red London—and officially serves the Maresh Empire as an ambassador, traveling between the frequent bloody regime changes in White London and the court of George III in the duller of Londons, the one without any magic left to see.

Unofficially, Kell is a smuggler, servicing people willing to pay for even the smallest glimpses of a world they'll never see. It's a defiant hobby with dangerous consequences, which Kell is now seeing firsthand.

After an exchange goes awry, Kell escapes to Grey London and runs into Delilah Bard, a cut-purse with lofty aspirations. She first robs him, then saves him from a deadly enemy, and finally forces Kell to spirit her to another world for a proper adventure.

Now perilous magic is afoot, and treachery lurks at every turn. To save all of the worlds, they'll first need to stay alive.

Shades of Magic series

1. *A Darker Shade of Magic*
2. *A Gathering of Shadows*
3. *A Conjuring of Light*

A Darker Shade of Magic Details

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From Reader Review A Darker Shade of Magic for online ebook

Emily May says

Every night of the year, the market lived and breathed and thrived. The stalls were always changing, but the energy remained, as much a part of the city as the river it fed on. Kell traced the edge of the bank, weaving through the evening fair, savoring the taste and smell of the air, the sound of laughter and music, the thrum of magic.

I'm already a Victoria Schwab fan after reading her good vs evil superhero urban fantasy novel - Vicious - so I couldn't wait to get reacquainted with her addictive writing style, complex characters and wonderfully-conceived fantasy worlds. As it turns out, A Darker Shade of Magic was even more than I'd expected.

This book feels more like traditional fantasy than Vicious with the style, the invention of a new language, the large cast of characters, the magic, and the focus on royal/political dynamics. And yet, to use the word "traditional" anywhere near this novel is an injustice because **it's unlike anything I've ever read before.**

The characters are weird and colorful. We have a protagonist - Kell - who is strong and badass enough to root for, but also complex and layered enough for us to truly care about and relate to. Plus, he has a coat that has many sides, which he turns around depending on how he wants to look - insane, unique, wonderful. Schwab's imagination clearly knows no bounds.

We also have a cross-dressing pirate who happens to be a tough, infuriating and lovable female character - Lila. And a promiscuous prince, villains who are blood slaves, evil twin rulers and much more.

And then there's this bizarre world that just played on every one of my senses. The author asks us to believe in a setting that is incredibly farfetched and yet she breathes life into this world with evocative language and makes the unbelievable something we can picture in our heads. She shares little stories from this world's history to flesh out the picture:

The infamous Kro's Mejt, the "Stone Forest," was made up not of trees but of statues, all of them people. It was rumored the figures hadn't always been stone, that the forest was actually a graveyard, kept by the Danes to commemorate those they killed, and remind any who passed through the outer wall of what happened to traitors in the twins' London.

What's all this about the "twins' London"? Well, in this world there are four different versions of London that only the Antari like Kell can move between. Technically, there are only three these days because Black London fell, consumed by its own misuse of magic. The others are Grey London (the one we know), Red London (the one Kell is from) and White London (ruled over by the sadistic Danes twins).

Everyone, it seems, is out to use magic for their own selfish goals in this book. And when a mysterious relic from Black London - a relic that should have been destroyed - reappears, Kell and Lila must do what they can to protect it from all those who wish to claim it as their own.

Nothing short of a wild, fast-paced adventure.

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Petrik says

This is an unpopular opinion, if you're easily offended, please don't read this review.

Okay, 3 stars is still a good rating but I think rating aDSoM 3 stars on Goodreads is like I'm an E.T who arrives in London. This is my sixth month on Goodreads and throughout that period, there are three series that always appeared on my feeds and probably everyone else. First, Six of Crows duology, second, anything that came out of Sarah J Maas's head and finally, the Shade of Magic trilogy by V.E Schwab. **It needed to be said first that I'm not a fan of the YA genre but these series are hyped as drug dealers search for heroin and I decided to give some of them a try with hope it will changed my mind on the genre.** Sadly it didn't, Six of Crows duology disappointed me (*Oh look, so many arrows. Casted magic barrier to block all the arrows shooting at me*), this book also disappointed me (*Magic Barrier is now broken*) and I won't even touch anything by Sarah J Maas. (*Endless arrow pinned me to a wall.*)

Don't get me wrong, I never said I hated the Six of Crows duology or this book, it disappointed me but I actually think both series is still good to read. I actually liked this book for a while until the underwhelming climax happened. It's just a shame there are a lot of parts that obstructed me from loving aDSoM. I love V.E Schwab's work on Vicious, it was unique, morally ambiguous, suited for adult audience and have great characters. It's why I gave this series a try and turns out I've been fooled. aDSoM's plot is really YA-ish and it's the exact opposite of what made Vicious great for me.

There is nothing remotely interesting about the plot. It's a very typical McGuffin story which had been overdone to death already. These days, there are a lot of stories and themes that have been overdone but somehow managed to deliver immersive and intriguing plot with great casts of characters and their developments.

That's the other main problem with aDSoM, I'm so detached from the story and the characters that I honestly don't care about any of them if they died or not. There are no developments at all for the main characters except Lila. Kell is angsty but he cares about Rhy, Rhy is gay (*or bisexual or nymphomania I don't know, seems like he'll have sex with anything that moves.*) and he cares about Kell, Lila is adventurous,

"I'd rather die on an adventure than live standing still."

Holland is mysterious and the Dane Twins is sadistic. There, I talked about the main characters personality and their development progression throughout this whole book within one sentence. Lila and Holland is probably the only saving characters of this book, Lila character is more fleshed out compared to the rest and for Holland, he's just more interesting and every scene where he appears really shine for the book.

Holland and the Dane Twins

I honestly prefer Holland to be the main character compared to Kell. Seriously, out of everything I ever read, Kell is one of the most boring character of all time. The only thing intriguing about him is his coat and it's always a bad sign when the clothes is more captivating than the person. Don't even compare him with Kelsier from Mistborn just because they have similar name, just... don't.

Finally, the last problem I have with the book is the underwhelming magic and climax. If there's one thing that V.E Schwab haven't improved since Vicious, it's definitely the climax scene delivery. Vicious would have received a 5 star from me if it wasn't for the super underwhelming climax and sadly, it's still the same here. Even all the action scenes in the book are really standard and provides zero intensity. I read the climax sequences with a face and emotion so flat that drinking a hot Chamomile tea will give more reaction to my emotion.

Now, with all the problems I have with the book, you're probably wondering why this is not a 1 star or 2 star review. Here's the thing, even with all the negativity, I still don't hate the book, I still enjoy reading it. Why? Because of these 3 factors that really shine from aDSoM. 4 alternative London concept, V.E Schwab's writing and Kell's Coat, yes that coat is a work of brilliance and deserve an extra star.

The 4 color alternative London is a really great concept, it's one of the biggest reasons why I bought this book in the first place other than the fact I thought it will be more adult oriented than Vicious. It's like V.E Schwab took Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere imagination and gave it a twist to make it her own idea. All 4 version of London have their unique characteristic. **Grey London, our version of London which smells like smoke, Red London, Kell's version of London which smelled like fire, White London, the Dane Twin's & Holland's version of London which smelled like blood and finally Black London, the lost London which smelled like teen spirit. Okay I'm joking, there is no known smell to Black London since no one can go there anymore.** I do wish there's an explanation though on why there is 4 London in the first place since the setting is in our real world, maybe the future sequels will enlighten me on this.

I have always loved Schwab's writing, her choices of words and pages format never fails to make me turn those pages even when things aren't interesting. Finally, Kell's coat, I won't talk about this much since I honestly think it's better for you to find out about this peculiar coat on your own. If I have Kell's coat, I don't think I'll ever need another coat again. Take note fashion designers, when you make do a Men's fashion show, Kell's Coat is the kind of shit I will buy in a heartbeat.

Not this cereals costume

Not this Frankenstein's monster wannabe, why would I want to eliminate my own neck?

And for the love of all that is holy and sacred not this abomination

Despite everything, I still like the book enough to finish it and I still have hope for the future sequels. It won't be soon but I will continue with the series eventually with really low expectation. **I'm hoping a Gathering of Shadows and a Conjuring of Light will be better than aDSoM since obviously to me this book is clearly an Overhyped Shade of Magic. It lacked a touch of brilliance to make the book reach its maximum potential that the concept provides and I sincerely hope the sequels will receive the shade of magic it needs.**

Booknest

Rick Riordan says

YA/adult Fantasy. There isn't just one London. There are, in fact, four cities sharing that name and geographic location, each in a very different plane of existence. The novel takes place in the early 1800s, when magical travel between the different Londons has been severely restricted. Long ago, the place called Black London underwent a massive magical accident -- a sort of implosion during which the forces of magic consumed the humans who tried to wield it. Since then, the doors between the worlds have been sealed. The only ones who can travel from world to world are the blood magicians known as Travellers. When we first meet the traveler Kell, he has arrived in Grey London (in our own un-magical world) to deliver a message from his own sovereigns of Red London to King George III and the Prince Regent. The existence of other Londons, we learn, is a closely guarded secret that only the rulers know. We follow Kell's travels from Grey London to his home, the magical Red London, to the sinister world of White London, ruled by a pair of despot siblings who make Vlad the Impaler look like a nice guy. At the same time, we meet a young thief of Grey London named Lily Bard, whose life becomes entwined with Kell's accidentally as they are both plunged into a plot to reawaken magic and tear down the walls between the worlds.

Phew! Just describing the book makes it seem complicated, and it is an intricate world that V.E. Schwab has created, but it's not as confusing as it seems. I highly recommend checking it out if you like fantasy. The idea of four separate Londons is fascinating, and like all the best fantasies, this novel makes its system of magic seem absolutely plausible. Me -- I hope I never get stuck in White London. That place is YIKES. Having said that, I would definitely sign up for more adventures with Kell and Lily!

Lola says

"I'd rather die on an adventure than live standing still."

Isn't it astonishing how upon our second readings of our favourite books, we discover so much more about our beloved characters and the world-building itself than the first time around?

And so in consequence to my rereading of *A Darker Shade of Magic* in order to be fully prepared (memory-wise) for *A Gathering of Shadows*, I started seeing redeemable qualities in Delilah Bard, the fierce, courageous (yet reckless) thief.

When she and Kell—the gorgeous Kell, my sweetheart, Kell—had gotten *closer* on my first reading of this book, I damn straight wanted to chop her head off.

But now, my wish is only to smother her a little bit in her sleep—just a little bit.

Progress, right? Saves me a death sentence.

A Darker Shade of Magic is such a colourful book. I say that because there is not *one* dull character or moment in the story. Even Holland—yes, the poker-faced Holland—released a feeling inside of me... curiosity.

It's a dangerous world—forgive me, *worlds*—Kell lives in. In Red London is by far the most agreeable place to live in, but *the other worlds* (or shall I say "alternative Londons")—Grey London, White London and (dead) Black London—are not as pleasant.

But magic runs through his blood, for he has a great purpose: to travel through the Londons for diplomatic purposes and to keep peace... He's somewhat of a guardian to those lands.

Kell is incredible. It's—and I mean it—impossible to dislike him. He's understanding, temperate, calm, powerful and charming without even trying to be (he really isn't), unlike his brother, Rhy, whom I love dearly but do not get to spend much time with (what's with not including him in the adventure, Miss Schwab?)

Miss Schwab is a very skilled writer. What's funny is that even though this is a relatively dark fantasy novel for (debatably) mature teenagers, it strangely feels like a fairytale, or a cautionary tale, rather. It's just so... memorable and... re-readable, like a classic.

Love, love, love! To all fantasy readers who have yet to plunge into *A Darker Shade of Magic*, feel my wrath! (You need read it.)

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Cece (ProblemsOfaBookNerd) says

*Upon a reread, my passion for this book stands. I love it so much. I can't believe I actually get to move on to book 2 this time. I JUST LOVE IT.

My thoughts: "Now, think critically. There were one or two things you maybe didn't love quite as much as everything else. A 4.5 accurately sums up your feelings and shows you didn't think the book was absolutely perfect."

My actions: *RUNS DOWN THE STREET SCREAMING "5 STARS OF PERFECTION" AT ANYONE WHO WILL LISTEN*

Victoria Schwab says

I wrote this book, so I'm probably biased. Since it's early, and the full jacket copy isn't out, here's a list of things in ADSOM:

- Magic
- Cross-dressing thieves
- (Aspiring) pirates
- Londons (plural)
- Sadistic kings (and queens)
- A royal who is equal parts Prince Harry and Jack Harkness
- More magic (blood magic, elemental magic, bad magic, etc. etc.)

–Epic magicky fights scenes

–Angst!

–And coats with more than two sides

C.G. Drews says

RE-READ UPDATE:

So, in a startling turn of events, this book is even more insufferably perfect the second time round and I'm so in love with it I frequently forget WHAT AIR IS. I love Kell. I love his frown. I love his love for his brother. I love his smol fragile beginnings of a relationship with Lila. I love his bloody magic. I love his dark side.

I LOVE THIS BOOK AND THIS WORLD AND THESE CHARACTERS SO MUCH IT HURTS JUST A LITTLE WHICH CAN BE TRANSLATED A LOT.

Wow. I may need to go lie down or else faceplant into A Gathering of Shadows for the second time. <3

(FYI the audiobook was fantastic.)

ORIGINAL REVIEW: 2016:

It took me 90001 years of procrastination to read this. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY???? I over-hyped to *myself*??? (Despite already having read and adored Vicious. So clearly I am the most pathetic of grapefruit fiends.) **So of course I ADORED this book.** It was violent and magic and bloody and *incredibly written*...and I have a **severe love Kell's magical multi-sided coat**. Like seriously, I want one. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH I LOVE HIS FREAKING AWESOME COAT. Ahem.

Also this book just had this WHOLE LIST of things I love...seriously, it's like it stole the checklist of "things Cait likes" and just completed it all perfectly.

For instance:

- Magical multi-sided coat ✓
- Characters who put things in pockets, like millions of things (I have a pocket infatuation btw) ✓
- Sassy, snarky witty banter ✓
- A girl who's #1 aspiration is to be a pirate (#goals) ✓
- Evil magic ✓
- Concise writing ✓
- Lots of stabby stabbing all the time ✓
- LIKE STABBY STAB EVERYTHING OMG ✓

...I told you...IT WAS WRITTEN WITH ME IN MIND. (Ahem.)

Also I absolutely adore VE Schwab's writing style!! Like it's brisk and to the point. It doesn't fluff around. And she is QUEEN of world-building. Gah, I am *in love* with the world building skills. Seriously not a lot of books manage to make a world this complex and dimensional but EASY TO UNDERSTAND so so simply and fast. I actually **never had any "Huh, I don't get it?" moments**. Which is a big deal for me. Because 87% of my life is spent saying "Wut. I don't get it." BUT NOT WHEN I READ A SCHWAB

BOOK HUZZAH.

And the characters?! Omg...I shall pause here and SHRIEK MIGHTILY OF MY LOVE. Shriek loudly, I tell you.

- **Kell** was perfect. Like, literally *perfect*. A little bit tragic and lost and longing...and also totally sassy with the perfect comeback waiting. I love how basically the ENTIRE book is because he made a stupid mistake...so he's a gorgeous little darling, but at the same time immensely flawed.
- **Lila**, of course, is my hero. She's NASTY. She's a thief and so snarky...omg, she'd bite you. She really would. And she's *wondrous*. I love how she starts off just wanting an adventure -- BUT THEN SHE GETS A FRIEND IN KELL. <333 And the way she and Kell continually had to save each other?!?!?? My favourite thing of ever.
- **Rhys** was definitely a potential favourite. I mean, I DID love him. He was really overconfident and dashing and dazzling and spoiled and vibrant and INCREDIBLE. My favourite kind of character, tbh....*but*....he really wasn't in the story very much. For this I am sad.
- **Holland?** I feel I want to mention Holland, who is another magician like Kell (they're the only two of their kind who can jump through worlds), and he was really CREEPY. But tragic? Like I felt really bad for him even as he was doing terrible evil things. He was enough of a villain to be hated, and enough of a victim to make me whisper a small "oh dear" and feel sad for him. #perfectwriting

...basically everything in this book was freaking perfect. nUNNNNNNGH.

OH WAIT. **One thing wasn't perfect.** But this is purely *me*? And I dare say most people wouldn't have this problem: **but I found the book very predictable.** Seriously I KNEW what plot twists were going to go down most of the time??? It was really weird. I have this slight suspicion that it's sort of how I would put together a story? (I am in NO WAY claiming to be as good of a writer as Schwab. HAHAHAH NOPE. I am like a toddler with a crayon compared to her. But...yeah. I would choose all the plot directions she went in, which made me sort of know they were going down?) SO THAT'S WEIRD. BUT THAT HAPPENED.

Also pleeeeeeeeeeease tell me I'm not alone in catching the potential-plot-twist-about-Lila?!?!? (view spoiler)

...also **I feel like I read somewhere that there was no romance in this book?** WELL HECK NO. I SHIP KELL AND LILA LIKE NOTHING ELSE. There was a kiss. That's ship material there.

I also really liked how it didn't spare the characters. And like everyone's moral compasses were soooo twisted. AND THERE WAS TONS OF STABBING AND BLOOD EVERYWHERE. I'm like such a violent little squid. *I know*. But omg, so much blood. Everywhere. (Also it gives me the shivers when they cut themselves for spells. Ugh.)

So basically this book is perfect. BUT YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT. And I'm actually glad I only read it just now?? Because I can go buy A Gathering of Shadows straight away! HAPPY DANCE. I love the characters, I *am so sucked in by the writing*, and I can't get enough of the epic dialogue and the perfect plot twists and the bloody spectacular brilliantness.

YES I'M DONE GUSHING. OMG.

(You can all say "I told you so" but I will smush cake in your face and glare.)

(Also the part where Lila knocks Kell out with a book is basically the best part of the entire book and gives

me life quite frankly.)

Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

I'm so glad I decided to re-read this before carrying on with the trilogy! There were SO many things I had forgotten. Can't wait to get to book two!

V.E. Schwab does it again! It amazes me how she continues to get better and better with each book she puts out into the world. I need the sequel ASAP.

Hannah says

My spoiler free video review is now up!!: <https://youtu.be/hINnk0eqj8I>

4.5 Stars

All I can say is WOW!

That was incredible!!

First off, the characters were FANTASTIC! Schwab is truly a master when it comes to crafting multidimensional, well rounded, and flawed characters. Rhy is so pure and precious. Kell deserves love and happiness. And Lila. Lila Bard is my new queen.

This was truly one of the most realistic fantasy worlds I've ever read about. I mean that in the sense that the world seemed like something that could actually exist. The world was complex and intricate, but just grounded enough that the concept of 4 parallel London's is something I can truly conceptualize. In other words, it made me believe that the magic was real.

As always, Schwab's writing was absolutely engaging. It's concise and simplistic, yet still full of warmth and depth. This book was a bit slower paced but I thought that it matched the world perfectly. It was fast-paced and action-packed where it needed to be and still took its time to develop the world and characters completely.

Needless to say, I loved it. And I can't wait to continue on in the series!

Sana says

Major spoilers ahead. They won't be marked

I was really hesitant going into this one because hello??? I usually end up hating on the most hyped books loved by all my friends. However, I'm so fucking happy and shocked that I *actually* enjoyed this.

This book is dark and gripping book full of magic. I loved it and I wanted to give this 5 stars, I really wanted to, but the beginning took some time getting into and it was very dull and boring. The beginning of this book felt like I was reading a textbook. The writing was bland and there was lots of info dump towards the beginning. Later on, I did grasp the idea of the different Londons and magic. This book has such a fantastic world building and once the info dump was over, I understood it all. Anyways, the book did get better, *a lot better* when **Lila Bard** made an appearance. Things got 200% more fun and interesting and I WAS HOOKED.

● This is a reaaaaaaal slow burner and guess what? I loved it. I seriously fucking hate slow plots, but this book does it so well, it's impossible not to like it?? This book is literally almost perfection from multiple Londons, complex sexy coats (yes I have issues), badassery, badass female leads, RHY (my new husband, guys), KELL, magic, and evil. The plot of this book seems like any other plot with evil magic on the loose and then we have a hero who has to save the world from bad people *cough* FUCKING HOLLAND AND THE FUCK FACE DANE TWINS* who want to misuse the magic, but Schwab has a way of weaving this plot into something entirely new and thrilling once more for me. It seems so original and gripping even though I've a hundred other books with such a similar plot.

● I love how this book had no romance AT ALL (well maybe a little). Yo guys, it's **refreshing** to read a book where the characters don't think about kissing and fucking each other while trying to save the world. I like books with a *litttttllleeeee* bit of well done romance so I was kind of worried this book would turn out dull because I've heard there was no romance, but WORRY NOT, it was bloody fantastic. I couldn't stop myself from shipping Kell and Lila. However, I'm actually really glad they had no romantic development because Kell and Lila staying just as friends (??) is much much better and refreshing. ~~I WANT LILA AND KELL TO HAVE SOME SWEATY SEX OKAY BYE.~~

-This book has a captivating plot, characters that will make your heart ache and villains that you'll want to fucking murder so bad. Overall, IT HAS LITERALLY EVERYTHING YOU CAN WISH FOR, SO GO FUCKING READ IT OKAY.

Another thing that made this book much much more enjoyable for me was turning innocent quotes into dirty quotes. :))

Lmao just check these status updates out for all the dirty

-https://www.goodreads.com/user_status...

-https://www.goodreads.com/user_status...

-https://www.goodreads.com/user_status...

-https://www.goodreads.com/user_status...

Other than that guys, I want to marry Rhy bc he's such a flirty, sweet bastard, how can anyone not love him??? I want to adopt Kell as my new son and go cut some bitches with Lila Bard. Oh, I would particularly like to cut that Holland bitch right in the face, that would be great! :) LMAO SORRY I HATE HIM, WHY DO PEOPLE LOVE HIM???

oh my fucking balls of titanium, my soul is hurting, who the fuck allowed this ???

i love Kell and Lila Bard the bitch so so much i love these characters.

full rtc soon

Raeleen Lemay says

I sort of flew through this book.

Or rather, I listened to the audiobook extremely quickly. I found the story interesting at first but it rapidly lost steam for me... The writing was great, but I didn't care much for the plot (which seems to be a pattern with Schwab's books for me, with *Vicious* being the exception). The concept of parallel Londons was really cool, but aside from that I didn't find it very interesting.

I was also left wanting more character development. All I could think during this book is how much Kell and Lila reminded me of Kelsier and Vin from *The Final Empire* by Brandon Sanderson. I'm not even completely sure why, but there it is. They didn't feel like new characters to me at all.

Also, I wouldn't recommend this audiobook. The narrator does wacky, over-the-top accents that lessened my enjoyment of the book and took away from the story. (Victoria even told me she didn't like that about the audiobook. That's a sign that it's PRETTY BAD.)

All of that being said, I didn't hate the book, so I feel like 3 stars is a good rating to represent how I feel.

Darth J says

An Overhyped Shade of Mediocre

Before you jump down my throat, I didn't *hate* this novel as much as I felt let down by it. Let me explain: it's been hyped up everywhere and when that happens, expectations tend to run very high. Think back to when you were a kid and wanted something for your birthday so much and were so sure that you were going to get it; and even if you got plenty of nice things, the fact that you didn't get the one thing you wanted made you disappointed. That's the same feeling I got from this book.

Further, I felt like there was a lot of pandering going on here. Currently, YA books are trying their darnedest to be inclusive, which I personally think is a great step in modern storytelling. However, I don't care for having one-dimensional characters just for the sake of faux-representation. Prince Rhy is well, a prince, but he's also bi/pan/omnisexual.... and that's about it. Sure he is our MC's best friend/adopted brother and serves some purpose in the story, but he's mostly a token character since there is nothing more to him. Our second case of pandering comes from our female MC, Lila*. She's a tough female protagonist with a dark past, because *we've never seen that before*. *eye roll* Okay, I get that audiences need strong female characters and are sick of Mary Sues, but Lila reads like a stock character. She's tepid and boring, just like the writing.

This book took me longer to finish than I would have thought, simply because the writing is so dry and flat. On nearly every page I pendulated from interested to bored and back again like a metronome. The story itself is captivating in parts, but the actual prose has no life. There's no heart in it at all, and you don't care about the characters so when they die it's no big deal. It sits there listless and says,

Our main character is Kell, and he is *oh so original*. You guys, he's "one of the last travelers—magicians with a rare, coveted ability". Are there any protagonists that don't have rare gifts anymore? Wait though, he has a completely black eye and does blood magic and there is only one other blood magician in the story so

of course they have to face off. Not only that, the MacGuffin in this book is a stone split in half, and wouldn't you know it? The other half of this stone belongs to the villain! I have never heard of a hero and villain having some sort of weird twin connection between their magical foci before /sarcasm

Back to Lila. (view spoiler) It seems like the very idea of her was taken from watching Kiera Knightly in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films. By the end, she has a pirate coat and is seen looking at a bunch of ships deciding which one to steal.

There's a lot to be confused about in this book too. Especially, trying to remember the differences between the 4 Londons. Yes, there are 4. It's some alternate dimension thing?? There's really no explanation as to why there are at least 4 different (overlapping) universes here other than the need for Kell to jump between them because of some quasi-political reasons.

All in all, it's interesting concept that was dryly executed with borrowed characters and buzz that will make you expect more than this book actually has to offer. If you just want a mindless popcorn book made up of ideas seen elsewhere and are clueless enough to think that one-note tertiary characters are progressive, then you'll probably love it.

Jessica ✿ ➡ Silverbow ➡ ✿ Rabid Reads-no-more says

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads

4.5 stars

A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC is one of those books that I needed to reflect upon before reviewing.

As far as I can tell this happens to me for one of two reasons:

1. It was awful, but in a way that confounded me, either b/c it was an author whom I love and trust and WTH happened? Or b/c my issue(s) is nebulous and thus has to be dissected to determine the root of the problem.
2. It was amazeballs, but in a way that confounded me, b/c SO MUCH CLEVER.

This was a #2 situation. Fyi.

And even though it's been over a month, I'm still kind of at odds about what to say.

Firstly, it is a fact universally acknowledged that I am a character-driven reader.

BUT.

I was not more than mildly invested in these characters until I was more than halfway through it.

Secondly, it is a fact universally acknowledged that ROMANCE, I love it.

Yet there was very little romance in this book.

SO. We have:

1. Characters I didn't immediately connect with.
2. Little to no swoons.

And still . . . I LOVED it.

Do you see why I needed time to traverse the dark and twisty paths of my mind? But ultimately, it comes down to this:

Victoria Schwab is a bloodydamn genius.

No really. She is.

She created a world so vastly different from others I've encountered, with hinted at conundrums for a later date, and characters who are . . . oblivious yet discerning, adventurous and daring, scared but determined, arrogant yet realistic, but above all else they are *compelling*. They are also broken. In remarkably similar ways despite the disparity of their situations.

Kell is a member of the royal family. A prince. Brother to the heir.

Except he isn't. And he knows it, they know it, *everyone* knows it. B/c Kell . . . is a young man with a rare and remarkable ability, and was therefore removed whence he came to become an adjunct extension of a pre-existing family.

But everyone pretends.

Just like Kell pretends not to be consumed with questions about what came *before*.

Lila . . . *shakes head at Lila*

Lila is a young woman who refuses to be confined by the restrictions of both her gender and her station. She is astonishingly intelligent. She is independent. If she had a middle name, it would almost certainly be Hubris.

And yet, she is bitterly fragile.

She wants nothing from no one, and accepts nothing she cannot immediately repay, negating any debt she feels is owed.

She's painful to watch.

But I had to watch. Had to. If for no other reason, then to see what she would say/think next:

The rich strutted around, assuming they'd be safe, so long as they stayed in the good parts of town. But Lila knew there were no good parts. Only smart parts and stupid parts, and she was quick enough to know which one to play.

DO YOU SEE WHAT SHE DID THERE?! *head explodes b/c can't contain the awesome*

That kind of brilliance is around every corner. That kind of brilliance is why, for the first time ever, I neither DNF-ed a book b/c characters I didn't connect with or lamented my decision to stick with it after the fact. And honestly, I have no idea what my problem was. I've already said that, yes, eventually, they began to tug my heartstrings, but why it took so long . . . ? It shall remain a mystery.

But things like this:

"I'm not going to die," she said. "Not till I've seen it."
"Seen what?"
Her smile widened. "Everything."

were the turning point.

Plot-wise, I'm not going to say anything, b/c the less you know, the better.

As for world-building, take the things you think you know about magic systems and toss them out the window.

When I first learned that one of the rulers of Red London had a special talent for controlling the will of others, I was like, "Well, that sucks," and when Kell walked up the fortress steps that were guarded by ten soldiers who were indeed controlled, I thought, "That is *such* a waste of power. How many people could this guy possibly control at once, and how could he have any power left over to defend against a direct magical attack?"

But I had made an incorrect assumption. Just b/c that's the way magic typically works, doesn't mean that's the way it works according to Schwab.

Arthos can control *as many people as he wants*. All he has to do is brand them with his particular kind of magic. And that, my friends, is terrifying.

And all of that is why A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC will be near the top of my Best Books of 2015 list. You will laugh at drunk men stumbling groggily on stairs (HA!), you will nod your head thoughtfully as Kell and Lila reveal the intricacies of what makes them tick, you will gasp in shock and horror when you find yourself walking across the bones of defeated enemies, and you will not regret reading this book for yourself. Highly recommended.

My other reviews for this series:

A Gathering of Shadows (Shades of Magic, #2)

A Conjuring of Light (Shades of Magic, #3)

Regan says

4.5 solid

Katerina says

“As Travars,” he said. Travel.

And oh boy, I did travel. I was covered in smoke, I tasted metal, I smelled roses, I wore a bizarre coat and I dreamed under a pale sky. But unfortunately, **I did not feel.**

A Darker Shade of Magic had **great potential**. The world V.E. Schwab created is **fascinating**, full of **magic and blood**. There is Kell, an Antari, a blood magician who can travel between parallel universes, and Lila, a street thief who wants to become a pirate and experience great adventures, and when their fates intertwine, they are the only ones who can save all three Londons from the tainted magic that destroyed the forth. I mean, it sounds pretty amazing, doesn't it?

“I'd rather die on an adventure than live standing still.”

I can't say that the execution failed me, because I was all too eager to read Kell and Lila's story, to turn the pages and fight and travel and discover the mysteries of the powerful obsidian stone and uncover conspiracies and secrets. **But in the end I was unsatisfied.** I expected something more and my expectations were not met because **I couldn't connect with the characters.** They were superficial and I was **detached**. I didn't care about their fates, I didn't find in them the depth I wanted and the pang of enthusiasm I usually feel when I start a new series. I was just a silent observer, witnessing their story unfold without finding the spark of magic that would make me an active participant and cheer for them, worry for them and eventually love them.

Lila annoyed me a couple of times with her imprudence and her recklessness but there is no doubt she was a badass and strong female lead. I liked Kell a little more and I waited for the signs that I was falling for him, but they never came. I'm still intrigued about his magic and his past though and I'm curious about the way his relationship with Lila will develop.

“Some people steal to stay alive, and some steal to feel alive. Simple as that.”

I can't help but shake the feeling that V.E. Schwab had raised her wand, ready to cast the spell that would bewitch me but the words never left her lips. Her plotline was like Red London, vivid and full of possibilities. Her characters like White London, dangerous yet somehow pale and faded. And me, well, I'm Grey London, magicless in the surface but waiting for the magic I know it exists to ignite. I don't know how to rate a A Darker Shade of Magic. Four stars are too much, three not enough, and I'll have to settle with **3.5 and a hope that A Gathering of Shadows will actually be the one that will disperse the shadows the debut of this trilogy cast.**

