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Without A Summer (Glamourist Histories)



Synopsis

Up-and-coming fantasist Mary Robinette Kowal enchanted fans with her novels *Shades of Milk and Honey* and *Glamour in Glass*, which introduced Regency glamourists Jane and David Vincent. In *Without a Summer*, Jane and Vincent take a break from their international travels. But in a world where magic is real, nothing—*not even the domestic sphere*—is quite what it seems. After a dramatic trip to Belgium, Jane and Vincent go to Long Parkmeade to spend time with Jane's family, but quickly turn restless. The spring is unseasonably cold, and no one wants to be outside. Mr. Ellsworth is concerned by the harvest, since a poor one may imperil Melody's dowry. And Melody has concerns of her own, given an inadequate selection of eligible bachelors locally. When Jane and Vincent receive a commission from a prominent London family, they take it, and bring Melody with them. They hope the change of scenery will do her good and her marriage prospects—and mood—will be brighter in London. Talk here frequently turns to increased unemployment of coldmongers and riots in nearby villages by Luddites concerned that their way of life is becoming untenable. With each passing day, it's more difficult to avoid getting embroiled in the intrigue, which does not really help Melody's chances for romance. It doesn't take long for Jane to Vincent realize that in addition to arranging a wedding, they must take on one small task: solving a crisis of national proportions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The setting and the intricate techniques of glamour manipulation continue to intrigue, and the thoughtful portrayal of the difficulties of Jane and Vincent’s affectionately nontraditional partnership is thoroughly engaging.” Publishers Weekly on Glamour in Glass
“Kowal does a startlingly good job of presenting a mindset that is very alien to me.... The language was delightfully in keeping with the time period, while not being needlessly cumbersome and opaque. The story and characterization were lovely, and I enjoyed the world-building, too.” Patrick Rothfuss, bestselling author of *The Wise Man’s Fear*, on Glamour in Glass

MARY ROBINETTE KOWAL was the 2008 recipient of the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer and a Hugo winner for her story "For Want of a Nail." Her short fiction has appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Asimov’s*, and several Year’s Best anthologies. She also writes the Glamourist History series, which began with *Shades of Milk and Honey*. A professional puppeteer and voice actor, she spent five years touring nationally with puppet theaters. She lives in Chicago with her husband Rob and many manual typewriters.

Reader thoughts: I love to read about secrets. I think I dislike reading about rumors. They’re too tenuous, and I can’t properly build my suspicions on anything. Jane spends the whole novel jumping to conclusions and accusing people of treason, impropriety, and digging for sympathy. She knows she has no proof, but she treats the ideas like facts anyway, nearly ruining everything. Gar. My other main qualm is that Jane and Vincent did not do any special glamour in this book. In the other books, they are inventing new glammers and pushing the boundaries of the art as a science. In this book, they just do normal things and talk a lot about the weather (which is, admittedly, very strange). I’m more intrigued by creative new magic ideas than by political marches and concerns about the snow. Also, we lost a reveal point. Several people Jane talks with already know Vincent was an earl’s son. I was looking forward to seeing the artist couple revealed as a noble couple at some point in the series, but apparently most people already know. That’s no fun. It felt murky strange why so many in the high society knew this. And Vincent’s father’s motives were not clear at all. Vincent’s father was called the earl, the earl of Verbury, Verbury, Mr. Hamilton, by his first name, and sometimes just Vincent’s father. This is an example of how many names/titles everyone has, and I couldn’t keep them straight, especially listening to the audiobook. I couldn’t tell if he wanted to reconcile with Vincent or not. MRK wrote him well, because I disliked him. Still, I should have detested him completely, and I didn’t. I hated Melody in the first book more than I disliked Vincent’s

father in this book. The book also lost a star because of what we learned about Vincent's past. I thought Jane handled it well, but I didn't want it in this story. It sullied the fun and gave me a bad taste for the series. So, what did I like? Melody. She acted more maturely than Jane did, and I love that she now wears spectacles. Writer thoughts: It felt like the genre switched again. Book 2 was amazing, with spies and the returning Napoleon and kidnapping and Jane doing all she can to save her husband despite being pregnant. This book went to court and lots of talking and trying to set up her sister with a man. Then Jane tries to stop her sister from liking a man. Then Jane and Vincent meet his rude family. Then Jane talks some more about the weather and feels sorry for cold mongers. Then she follows her sister around to see if she's eloping. Then there's a giant court trial. Why? Why switch, especially to a less interesting plot? Glamour wasn't a part of any of it (except that Jane and Vincent spent some time working on a commission that was later canceled). Why would MRK not use this tool? She's the only one who can put glamour in her books, and she didn't even make it a plot point? Melody's spectacles were more part of the plot than glamour!

I loved *Shades of Milk and Honey* for its innocence & mixture of era & magic. I liked *Glamour in Glass* for its imaginative evolution of glamour. I was less enchanted with this book's seriousness & wondered where had the fun gone? It isn't just that the whole book takes place in extended winter that creates a depressing atmosphere, but the tension of the familial & political atmosphere drips with icy unpleasantness that culminates tumultuously. I wasn't quite prepared to be shivering and gripped with fear. Where book 2 advanced the study & concept of glamour in an intriguing way, the glamour in book 3 takes a back seat to political rioting & uprising. There is a reveal about Vincent's past that ruins any enjoyment you might have been looking forward to. ***spoiler*** Because the reader becomes so entrenched in the Victorian sensibilities of this "world", it is a character destroying shock to find that Vincent has been with a prostitute (in the past). You feel the betrayal as keenly as Jane. The circumstances are well explained for this "Faux pas", but Why could not the author have had it been a nonsexual relationship? That would have been acceptable. Given Vincent's father's penchant for cruelty, it would have worked easily into a plot to discredit Vincent, even though he was innocent. A minor irritation is Vincent's increasingly habitual "whine"...mentioned so frequently that it made him seem less manly & more dog. I was hoping for more of a tea & shortbread with a light shawl sort of read. P.S. who is choosing the jacket art for these books? Someone please give them the "boot"!

Jane and Vincent are back home in England after the defeat of Napoleon. They come home to a

country reeling under multiple threats - the unseasonably cold weather is threatening crop failures, the soldiers who fought Napoleon are being mustered out and are looking for jobs, and technical inventions causing workers to lose jobs that can be done by machine. On the more personal side, Jane is worried that her younger sister Melody doesn't have any matrimonial prospects. When Jane and Vincent get a commission for a glamour from Lord and Lady Stratton in London, they accept and take Melody along in hopes of expanding her pool of potential husbands. Of course, London also throws them back into the arena of Vincent's father Lord Verbury. To say that Vincent and his father don't get along would be a gross understatement. Melody falls for Lord Stratton's son despite the fact that he is Catholic which causes Jane some misgivings as she believes that Alastair O'Brien won't be allowed to marry Melody. Her misgivings increase when she overhears some things that lead her to believe that he is involved in some sort of conspiracy and when she sees him in conversation with Lord Verbury. Mr. O'Brien also does some work with the coldmungers who are being wrongfully blamed for the current weather conditions. Coldmungers are young men and boys whose magical skill is to lower the temperature a few degrees. They are used to keep food safe for longer periods and to provide cool breezes in warm houses. They have only small magics which are dangerous to use. Most die young. They are planning a peaceful march in London. However, Lord Verbury has other plans. He wants to use the coldmunger's march to overthrow a political rival. His twisted plot draws in Jane and Vincent too. This story talks a lot about the various sorts of prejudice in England in 1816. Especially relevant to our hero and heroine is the prejudice against the Irish. But the story also deals with Vincent's family dynamics and gives Jane a much better knowledge of Vincent's background. This was another entertaining and engaging entry into the Glamourist Histories.

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