



## Murder, Magic, and What We Wore

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## **Murder, Magic, and What We Wore** Kelly Jones

The year is 1818, the city is London, and our heroine, 16-year-old Annis Whitworth, has just learned that her father is dead and all his money is missing. And so, of course, she decides to become a spy.

Annis always suspected that her father was a spy, so following in his footsteps to unmask his killer makes perfect sense. Alas, it does not make sense to England's current spymasters—not even when Annis reveals that she has the rare magical ability to sew glamours: garments that can disguise the wearer completely.

Well, if the spies are too pigheaded to take on a young woman of quality, then Annis will take *them* on.

She'll follow the clues her father left behind and discover what befell him.

She'll *prove* she can sew an impenetrable disguise.

She'll earn a living without stooping to become a—*shudder*—governess.

It can't be any harder than navigating the London social season, can it?

## **Murder, Magic, and What We Wore Details**

Date : Published September 19th 2017 by Knopf Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9780553535204

Author : Kelly Jones

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Mystery, Regency, Magic

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## From Reader Review Murder, Magic, and What We Wore for online ebook

### Olga Godim says

Funny and sweet. Maybe even a little bit farcical, not serious at all, but very, very charming. It made me smile. This YA historical hovers on the edge between a spy thriller and a dressmaking romp, with lots of humor.

I enjoyed it.

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### Amy says

[ ganging up in a ballroom to punch a man - even a horrible one? (hide spoiler)]

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### QNPoohBear says

#### Category: Regency set but not a romance

SQUEE!!! Georgette Heyer's Regency world +Magic is one of my favorite things to read. I absolutely loved Sorcery & Cecelia: or The Enchanted Chocolate Pot. That was my gateway to a whole new genre I never imagined loving. This book is no exception and it's made better by references to characters from the above mentioned novel as well as Bloody Jack, Keeping the Castle, La Petite Four, Wrapped, Kat, Incorrigible and many other young adult and middle grades Regency set novels. I have to reread all those old favorites and try some of the others.

On to the review....

The murder mystery grabbed me from the very start. It's perfectly obvious that Annis's father was a spy and killed for what he knew. By whom and why is the mystery Annis is determined to figure out. Her journey is so much fun! The plot is a romp through Regency society from grand ballrooms to an out of the way village dress shop. The magic just so happens to be a part of this world as it is in other books of this genre.

Like in Shades of Milk and Honey glamour can be used to create art, however, here it is used in a different way. Annis and Millie's glamour talent is unique to this story. I won't spoil how it works but just to say that this story is a take on Cinderella, where the heroine plays Cinderella and the fairy godmother - with nary a prince in sight! woohoo!

In this alternate world, women are intelligent and many ladies seem to know self-defense. Could they be spies? The War Office seems to ignore women's brains, as they did in the real world, but women COULD have done many of the things that happen in this novel and that's what makes it so appealing to me, a non-fantasy lover. I love the alternate history presented here. One person, one decision, one spy could have changed history and it's up to Annis and Millie to stop that person. I only rated this 4 out of 5 stars because the villain's identity was plainly obvious once the vital clue was dropped. Mille would have figured it out right away if she had been given the clue. The final twist was pretty easy to figure out too but Cassia's behavior came out of left field and didn't make sense for her character.

Annis is a character readers will either love or hate. She's young, naive and silly at times but she means well. I like how she TRIES her best and even when she makes mistakes and fails, she tries again without resorting to whining or tears. She's very brave and intelligent in her own way. She can't help being sheltered so she has to figure out everything on her own. She only sort of longs for the attention and affection of her father but since she hardly knew him, she barely misses him. I love her relationship with her Aunt Cassia, an intelligent and mathematically inclined lady who is my favorite character in the novel. Hurrah for intelligent spinster aunts! I also love Annis and Millie's friendship and how Annis has no interest in marriage.

Millie is intelligent, intrepid, brave and resourceful. I was surprised by her hidden talent. I thought this would be your typical upstairs/downstairs friendship but it goes beyond that. Millie is really a co-heroine though the story is told from Annis's point of view. Millie is awesome.

I can't say too much more without ruining the plot, but I highly recommend this book to those who love Regency + Magic Young Adult novels. I couldn't put it down. I hope for a sequel soon!!

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## Eilonwy says

3-1/2 stars, rounded up because this was just so charming

When Annis Whitworth's father dies during one of his many travels, Annis and her aunt Cassia find themselves destitute, forced out of their comfortable London home and into a cottage in a small town. Cassia is determined to push Annis into respectable work for a young lady, either as a governess or as a widow's companion. Annis wants none of that. She's just become aware of her ability to sew glammers, and insists on setting up shop (in disguise, of course, since making dresses is not respectable work). She's also discovered that her father was a spy, and sets out to follow in his footsteps.

I really enjoyed this book. On the one hand, I'm not sure the spying plot *quite* holds up, and one plot "twist" was glaringly obvious through the whole book. But on the other hand, I loved Annis's madcap, rollicking approach to life, and the light and funny tone the story maintains. (Think *Sorcery & Cecilia: Or the Enchanted Chocolate Pot* if you've read that one.)

I especially loved the magic in this story. There are various sorts, but most of them aren't particularly wild or flashy. Annis's magic consists of convincing dresses to become flattering to their wearers. It takes time (actual sewing) and energy, and doesn't always turn out the way she planned. I appreciated that the magic felt like work, and wasn't too easy. I could feel Annis's work in my own fingers as she described it, which I thought was really well done.

I also really liked that Cassia is a feminist, and it's not just there as an anachronistic touch. She reads Mary Wollstonecraft and quotes her to Annis; she also corresponds with a group of mathematically-inclined women. She seems perfectly happy being a spinster. She can also be quite pesky, as she likes to push pragmatic advice on younger women, whether they wish to hear it or not. She's a well-developed and very enjoyable character.

This book was just plain fun, despite the "murder" aspect of the story. I'm pleased to see that while this isn't marked as a start to a series, the ending does leave it open to a sequel or two. I would definitely read more books about Annis and Cassia.

I have to give a shout-out to Genna's review, which left me watching for this book very eagerly! It lived up to exactly what I was hoping from it.

## Ashley (Bound to Love YA) says

While this book didn't knock my socks off, it was a fun little regency romp. I can never pass up a title that promises historical fiction with a splash of magic. This is a title for anyone who enjoyed *Love, Lies, and Spies*, but, in my opinion, it didn't quite live up to the *Sorcery and Celia* touted in the blurb.

### Here's what I liked:

- There were three strong, intriguing women who formed positive, supportive relationships
- The narrator wasn't a special snowflake - in fact, she had a lot to learn and, even with hard work, she often had to turn to those smarter and more talented than her for help. In a YA world where it seems like our leading ladies always have the perfect blend of looks-humility-strength-mystery-innocence-experience-brains-leadership skills-and-archery prowess, it is rather refreshing to meet a character that just isn't very good at some things. Period.

### Things that I wasn't so wild about:

- The romance was almost non-existent. While it wasn't NECESSARY to the story, I do think it would have been a lot more fun if the handsome, mysterious fellow and our protagonist had a bit more interaction - especially since she doesn't trust him...What's more fun than a showdown of Jane Austen-esque wits in the middle of a ball between two characters that are intrigued by each other, but also might be enemies???? WHAT IS MORE FUN??!?!?!?!?
- Overall, I thought the male characters could have been a little more fleshed-out. I realize they were side characters - but they fell into very predictable archetypes and I would have appreciated a little more nuance.
- Finally, I just didn't feel the plot MOVED. I often found myself stuck in pages of why miss-so-and-so shouldn't wear that color or why mrs.-such-and-such should let her daughter wear pleats instead of ruffles...I just....didn't care. I wanted MORE spying, MORE threats surfacing, MORE double crossing, MORE magical hijinks, MORE than just clothes and the day to day worries of being broke.

I will say, in the end, the pace really picked up and I feel the next book will (hopefully) be more plot-driven than the first. I enjoyed these characters and will definitely check out the next one when it gets here.

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## Jacob Proffitt says

This was charming while I was reading it. But I made the mistake of putting it down and can't bring myself to bother picking it back up again. I find that the heroine doesn't survive reflection very well and the brashness and inconsistencies added up enough to prevent going further. For someone supposedly smart, she makes a lot of dumb assumptions and rash promises and I'm a little tired of the bumbling. Also, it'd help if the bad guys weren't so unrelentingly (and openly) appalling.

Anyway, I'm releasing this "without prejudice" (so no rating) because I did enjoy it while reading and I'm simply not bothering to continue. Also, this lets me pick it up again later if I find myself in the right mood (and close to my library as the prices for this one are egregious).

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## Meigan says

Magical and mysterious, *Murder, Magic, and What We Wore* was such a fun tale that kept me glued to the pages until the very last word.

The story begins with Annis Whitworth receiving some very crushing news - her father is dead, killed in his line of work that takes him here there and everywhere. While Annis and her father were never particularly close, being that he spent the majority of his time away on business, his death still leaves her in a deep state of mourning. Now she and her aunt Cassia are forced with the reality that the comfortable lives they've become accustomed to will soon be a thing of the past. Her father had money, but his money mysteriously disappeared. Forced with the prospect of finding jobs or facing the debtors' prison, Annis knows that being a spy will both provide for them and give them a way to erase their debt. Problem is, the War Office doesn't want Annis among their ranks. With that dream up in smoke, Annis and her aunt move to the country in hopes of Annis trying her hand at dressmaking. Annis knows she has a particular way of choosing gowns that highlight the wearer, surely that should crossover into making dresses.

The world in this book was so incredibly fun! Set during the Regency period, Jones' version of England is also filled with magic in the form of glamours, and I really wish that the magical elements were explored a bit further. There were only a handful of characters who displayed their abilities and I was left wanting a bit more detail. But the highlight of this book was definitely the spies, so I can kind of see why the magic was more in the background rather than front and center. Speaking of spies, there were many, many spies running amok and Jones did a fantastic job disguising them and making me guess who was, who wasn't, who could have been, who definitely wasn't a spy, and I will say that I didn't guess one single one correctly.

All in all, *Murder, Magic, and What We Wore* was such a unique and delightful read and I can only hope that this is to become a series. It appears to be simply a standalone, which is perfectly fine, but I certainly won't have any complaints if Jones ever decides to write more books with these characters and this world.

\*eARC received via NetGalley in exchange for my honest opinion.

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### **Brittney Andrews (beabookworm) says**

*Murder, Magic, and What We Wore* is a bewitching tale replete with lies, spies, and untrustworthy allies.

*"Give a girl an education and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without further expense to anybody."*  
? Jane Austen

### **Most agreeable aspects of this tale:**

- ? famous quotes at the beginning of every chapter
- ? the magical realism element
- ? set in the Regency era (my fav!)
- ? a suspenseful murder mystery
- ? Jane Austen vibes
- ? strong-willed female heroine (she can solve any crime by dinner time)

### **Final thoughts:**

My admiration for this book is comparable to Mr. Darcy's for Ms. Bennet:

“I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun.”

Although this book doesn't necessitate a sequel, I am wholeheartedly invested in these characters and I would love to see a little romance sewn into Annis' future as well. So I highly anticipate (and pray) that Ms. Jones will be kind enough to expand this enthralling story into a series.

*Many thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for providing me with an ARC.?*

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### **Lauren Stoolfire says**

**I received a free eARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.**

Annis Whitworth had always suspected that her father was a spy. When she learns of her father's sudden death and that all of his money has gone missing, she decides to follow in his footsteps as a spy and uncover the mystery of his murder. It makes perfect sense to her, but it doesn't make sense to England's top spymasters even though Annis has the rare ability to sew glammers - garments that can completely disguise the wearer. Annis has to create a double life for herself - Annis will live the quiet life with her respectable aunt and in disguise she'd become "Madame Martine", a London-based glamour artist with a magical dressmaking shop. That way she'll still be able to maintain her social standing, earn her own living, and follow the clues that her father left behind to solve his murder. It can't be much harder than successfully making it through the London social season, can it?

I've always enjoyed historical fantasy and Kelly Jones's Regency Era set mystery is no exception. I wasn't terribly blown away by the mystery element, but it has so much else going for it. I, for one, loved the getting to know our cast, the wonderful female friendship, the magical elements, and clever wit. I particularly liked that Annis, although clever and determined, still has a lot to learn about herself, her abilities, and the wider world. As much as I liked her, though, I really liked Millie, Annis's servant. Let's just say she's quite resourceful and has a lot of hidden depths. Plus, their friendship is empowering, supportive, and is totally goals worthy. I also have to admit, I liked the reveal about Annis's aunt - very cool. Finally, I was also hooked on what we got about Annis's magic. The glamour sewing scenes were some of my favorites. I really only wish we got to know more about the state of magic in the wider world of Regency England.

Overall, *Murder, Magic, and What We Wore* by Kelly Jones is a fun fantasy spy caper through Regency Era London. If you're a fan of historical fantasy such as *These Vicious Masks* by Kelly Zekas and Tarun Shanker, *A Shadow Bright and Burning* by Jessica Cluess, *The Dark Days Club* by Alison Goodman, and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, I have a feeling you'll also enjoy Kelly Jones's new release. I'm definitely looking forward to more from this author in the future.

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## Brandy Painter says

Originally posted here at Random Musings of a Bibliophile.

Regency Era. Spy Games. Magic. Fashion. If the title and cover of *Murder, Magic, and What We Wore* by Kelly Jones were not enough to snare me, those words would seal the deal. As soon as I found out this book existed (which was later than I'm comfortable with), I wanted to read it. It isn't a perfect book, and I have some quibbles, but the bottom line is this book is just delightful.

Annis discovers her father is dead and that she and her aunt are nearly penniless. They must seek genteel employment, but Annis does not wish to be a lady's companion or governess. When she discovers that her talent with alterations is more than a talent with needle and thread, but the magical ability to sew glammers, Annis decides she will make their fortune selling glamoured gowns. With her maid Millie at her side, Annis sets out to convince her Aunt Cassia she is capable of succeeding. Cassia reluctantly agrees to give her a chance. Annis is relieved because she needs to prove herself to more than just her aunt. Annis knows her father was murdered because he was a spy for the British in France. When she stumbles on to incriminating documents he left behind, Annis works to convince the War Office to take her on as well. They are less than impressed with her, but that doesn't stop Annis from continuing to try. Soon Annis has her hands full making gowns, masquerading as a French dressmaker, dodging dangerous operatives, and managing a social life. Fortunately she has all the help she could want from Millie. Both girls soon discover the power they have when they work together, and the rest of the world had better watch out.

*Murder, Magic, and What We Wore* is told in first person from Annis's point of view. Annis is smart and competent, but also naive and rash. She does several reckless, thoughtless things, but she has a determination and spark for life that make her irresistible as a heroine. All of the things she does that appear reckless and thoughtless can be explained by her age and generally sheltered life. Annis's determination and backbone are her greatest strengths. Her Aunt Cassia is no wilting flower, easily manipulated, or turned from her purpose without a great deal of effort. Annis has learned her strength from her aunt and earned her steel through years of dealing with her. When the time comes for Annis to decide what she wants from life, nothing is going to stand in her way. If she has to make it happen through sheer force of will, that's what she will do. She makes mistakes and missteps, learns from them, and moves on to the next challenge. Her voice is full of wit and sarcasm, but is also vulnerable in many ways. Annis can't get where she needs to alone though. Millie is the perfect foil for Annis. Calm, collected, practical, and with more world experience. She is the most newly hired maid in the household and the one who stays to stand with Annis and Cassia as they lose almost everything. Not that she has much of a choice, but she makes the best of her situation. She sees great potential in Annis and together the girls work to make their visions of the future a reality. They are a true team, and Millie is as much the heroine of the story as Annis is. I love books that celebrate and hold up female friendships. This one does a beautiful job with that. Annis and Millie are incredibly different and from separate worlds, but they are bonded by their purpose, experiences, and sympathies for each other. There is a cast of other great female secondary characters as well (including Aunt Cassia who is AMAZING and should have a whole book written about just her).

The world of the novel is Regency England but with magic. There are people who can sew glammers, sing enchantments, paint illusions, etc. It is post Napoleonic Wars, and Napoleon is in his exile on St. Helena. The plot revolves around this fact, a possible traitor, French plots, and sunken ships. Annis is attempting to investigate all this while starting her dress shop. Unfortunately being as young and inexperienced as she is, she is found out rather quickly and finds herself in a race against the murder she is trying to unmask. Her and Millie have to decide who to trust and who to tell what. Can Annis trust her father's man of business Mr. Harrington? How much can Aunt Cassia know? Who among the other members of society can Annis turn to? The plot moves quickly. The mystery is interesting, if easy to figure out. (Nothing about the reveals in this novel surprised me, but that didn't make it any less fun for me to read.)

My favorite thing was definitely how much this book celebrated women and their friendships. There is no romance (though there is a small hint for a potential one in Annis's future). I know teens who are looking for fantasy adventures, but are a little tired of the focus on romance. This is the perfect book for them.

I was hoping to discover that this is the first in a series, because I would love to read more. I haven't found any indication that it is, but I will live in hope.

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### **Stephanie says**

I devoured my ARC of this book in one day and sent this blurb to Kelly's editor: "A deliciously enchanting adventure full of magic, mystery and delight."

It was just so much fun! Regency girl spies, magical sewing, disguises, and strong female friendships. Perfect!

Also, on a completely personal level, I \*loved\* the fact that my own Kat Stephenson's family is mentioned twice in this novel, as background characters in the world. (Kelly wrote to me last year asking for permission and quoting her incredibly charming & funny lines about them, and I wrote back "OMG YES PLEASE!" How cool is that, to see Kat and her family living on in the literary world of Regency fantasy???? I loved coming across those lines in the book, even though it's totally background level.)

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### **Kathy Martin says**

I like historical mysteries, the Regency time period, and magic which made this book a no-brainer choice for me. The story begins when 16-year-old Annis Whitworth learns that her father has died in France. When her father's man of business arrives to tell Annis and her Aunt Cassia about the death, he also tells them that her father died penniless. Annis and Aunt Cassia are looking at a major life change!

Her aunt is determined that the two look for work as governesses or companions but Annis has a different plan: she wants to be a spy for England. After all, she has figured out that her father was one and she has deciphered some clues that were in his effects that the War Office needs to know. However, the War Office doesn't need a teenage lady to work for them.

Annis falls back on her plan two. While remaking ready-made mourning clothes for herself and her aunt, she discovers that she is a glamour mage who is able to change the appearance of things by sewing them. Besides making clothing more fashionable and flattering, she can also make clothes that disguise the wearer as someone else. She is certain that that skill will be useful to the War Office but she is rebuffed again.

She and her aunt, along with their new maid Millicent O'Leary, move to a small town where Annis disguises herself as a French widow Madame Martine who is an extraordinary fashionable dressmaker. Annis is determined to earn enough for them all to resume their fashionable and upper class lives.

Annis and Millicent face a number of dangers. There are the men wearing navy boots who are pursuing them. There is the upper class villain who attempted to rape Millicent and whose sister took his side losing Millicent her job.

This was an engaging story. I liked Annis despite the fact that she was more than a little naive. She had

plenty of determination. Fans of historical mysteries with some magic will enjoy this story.

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### **Tara (Spinatale Reviews) says**

Murder, Magic, and What We Wore is an addictively adorable story full of magic, mysteries, and misconceptions. It's going up on my shelf of light and fun historical fiction novels that I save for whenever I need something that will make me smile. If you enjoyed The Stranje House series, this series opener is definitely for you.

Following the death of her father, Annis Whitworth and her aunt find that they are in dire financial straights and unable to keep up the genteel lifestyle to which they have been accustomed. After a fortuitous discovery of her glamour sewing ability, Annis convinces her aunt to move with her to a small town and open a couture boutique. Add in Annis trying to join the secret spy network her father belonged to, some political intrigue regarded Napoleon, and high society and you've got the recipe for a wonderfully entertaining read.

I instantly connected with Annis. She was very determined and resourceful, although sometimes those qualities got her into sticky situations. I loved how this book turned the idea of the role of women in high society on its head, particularly in the latter half of the book. There was just a hint of romance, which actually worked perfectly in context. Perhaps we'll see more in book two?

The plot was sometimes slightly confusing as it jumped from spy intrigue to society balls but not overly so. I was able to keep up with the various plot-lines and I admired how well they were interwoven. There were times in this book that I laughed out loud. I thought that the magic itself was unique and interesting. However, I do wish that the magic system in this world had been explained a bit better.

I absolutely adored Murder, Magic, and What We Wore. I'll definitely be purchasing a copy when it's released as well as continuing on with the series. Perfect if you're looking for a light, fun historical fiction novel!

\*Disclaimer: I received this book for free from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

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### **Genna says**

I received an ARC from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

It's 1818 London and 16-year-old Annis is leading the life of a typical society girl. However, when her father dies mysteriously and his accounts drained of money, her suspicions about him being a spy are confirmed. Left alone with her aunt and nearly destitute, the desperate pair, along with their maid Millie, move out of London to lead a quiet life in the country. Annis, however, is determined to make a living as a businesswoman, despite her aunt's misgivings. In disguise to protect her reputation and equipped with her recently discovered affinity for magic, Annis hopes to recover her family's fortune sewing glammers for society ladies, all the while hunting for her father's killer. But dangerous men are in hot pursuit of coded messages Annis is in possession of and becoming a spy is not nearly as straightforward as she thought.

A delightful regency romp with magic, mystery, and no shortage of wit. I was thoroughly charmed by the clever Annis and her resilient and resourceful maid Millie. The glamour sewing scenes were captivating, the

genuine female friendship representation just what I like to see in young adult lit, and the action saucy enough to keep this story moving. Jones even cleverly includes a smorgasbord of literary and historical/mythical allusions for those who may be familiar (and a useful guide at the back for those who may not be). The ending felt rather abrupt, but didn't prevent me from loving Murder, Magic, and What We Wore. Enchanting, adventurous, and with the perfect amount of grit to save the plot from getting syrupy.

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### **Sylvie Bower says**

Author - Regency romp.

Me - you have my attention.

Author - Spies.

Me - YES.

Author - "magicked garments that disguise the wearer."

Me - IMMA GIVE YOU ALL MY MONEY!!!

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