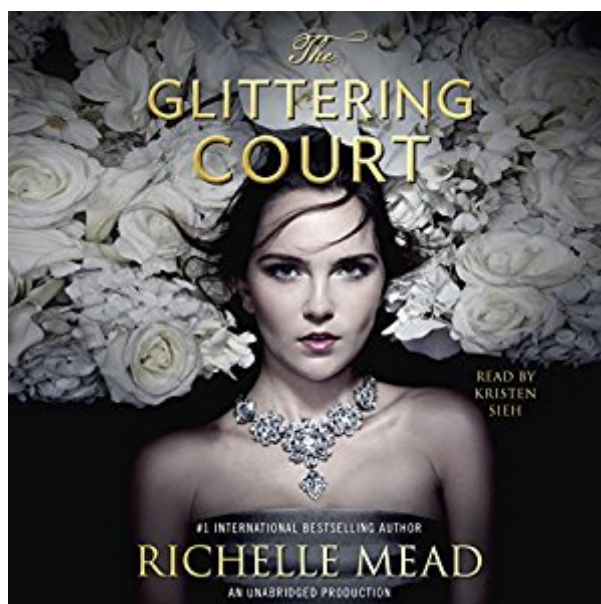


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The Glittering Court: The Glittering Court, Book 1



Synopsis

A dazzling, romantic new fantasy series set in a mix of Elizabethan and frontier worlds from Richelle Mead, number-one internationally best-selling author of Vampire Academy. Big and sweeping, spanning the refined palaces of Osfrid to the gold dust and untamed forests of Adoria, The Glittering Court tells the story of Adelaide, an Osfridian countess who poses as her servant to escape an arranged marriage and start a new life in Adoria, the New World. But to do that, she must join the Glittering Court. Both a school and a business venture, the Glittering Court is designed to transform impoverished girls into upper-class ladies who appear destined for powerful and wealthy marriages in the New World. Adelaide naturally excels in her training and even makes a few friends: the fiery former laundress Tamsin and the beautiful Sirminican refugee Mira. She manages to keep her true identity hidden from all but one: the intriguing Cedric Thorn, son of the wealthy proprietor of the Glittering Court. When Adelaide discovers that Cedric is hiding a dangerous secret of his own, together they hatch a scheme to make the best of Adelaide's deception. Complications soon arise - first as they cross the treacherous seas from Osfrid to Adoria, and later when Adelaide catches the attention of a powerful governor. But no complication will prove quite as daunting as the potent attraction simmering between Adelaide and Cedric. An attraction that, if acted on, would scandalize the Glittering Court and make them both outcasts in wild, vastly uncharted lands....

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm really struggling to come up with the proper rating for this one. Granted, I'm not exactly the target audience but I do know a good book when I see it as well as a well-intentioned

one that has fallen short of the mark. The positives: At the surface, this is a nicely told romantic story of a young woman of royalty who, rather than accept her own idealized future with a husband through an arranged marriage, decides to take control of her own future by taking on the identity of her own servant, Adelaide, and seeking a new life in the New World. We've certainly seen that set up for a book or movie before but the author takes the plot in several new directions.

Adelaide travels to the New World in order to take part in the "Glittering Court" a sort of year-long finishing school that prepares girls of lesser circumstances to become adept at the finer points of civilized society such as how to dress, eat, and play hostess at fine functions. Gentlemen of the New World will then bid for the girls in hopes of gaining a wife that will enhance his prospects in business or government circles. Adelaide and her two roommates quickly become the best of friends. But Adelaide is not the only one with a secret and so the plot perks along at a nice clip with the main characters dipping into and out of mischief throughout. There is mishap and mayhem, backstabbing rogues, glamorous parties, frontier gold mining adventure, and even pirates.

Practically something for everyone. But at its heart, this novel is a romance, pure and simple. The negatives: The novel never attempts to go any deeper than the surface. I do so enjoy a good young adult novel that does not dumb down the situation and is not afraid to go deeper but this ain't it. Why go to the effort to introduce such serious themes as the objectification of women or religious persecution but not deal with it at all other than to imply that it isn't fair. It's as if the author does not have enough faith in her readership to do any more than gloss over what is happening in the society that she created. We skim along enjoying the romantic adventure and hope that true love will win out in the end but that's it. There is even an attempted rape scene but the consequences to both villain and victim are absent. Adelaide herself is adamant about the unfairness of an arranged marriage but is perfectly willing to go along with the concept of being trained to be a proper hostess in order to further the business dealings of her future husband. She does take action, finally, to go after the feelings of her heart but that is forced by circumstances much more than by her own thoughts of what she should do. She never connects the dots about the accepted norms of the society and whether or not that is right or wrong. One more example: when her beau reveals himself to her to be a practitioner of a forbidden religion, (he would even be executed if found out) Adelaide worries for his safety but simply thinks him foolish for practicing such a religion in the first place. No thoughts enter her head about why a particular religion is shunned. And both of them together think nothing of committing crimes themselves in order to "get ahead" including art forgery and duping an innocent purchaser in order to pay off their own debt. One side note: I have no problems with reading a book

wherein the protagonist and major characters have dubious morals or are in-your-face criminals or even just naive. That's not what I am talking about here. The two main characters in this novel are simply inconsistent. Not because of a personality flaw but because of poor writing. One chapter will depict huge self-sacrifice by one or both of them while the next glosses over one shallow action or another. The biggest negative though is the ending. The two main characters have gotten themselves into so much trouble from so many angles that a previously unknown character has to save the day by coming up with a loophole that allows them off the hook. I've rarely seen a better example of a Deus ex Machina ending. Sigh. This book is billed as the first in a fantasy series but there is no fantasy here. There is no world building per se other than using our own European and New World frontier history and changing the names of the places and religions. It suggests the author is in too much of a hurry to get another one out there to please her fan base rather than put effort into creating an original world system. And a note about the cover: some people like real models for the covers and some people hate that. I am indifferent but at least use a model that resembles the character(s) in the book. This one doesn't even have the hair color right, assuming it is supposed to be Adelaide and so I am left to wonder who is depicted there. Sorry to make this review so long but it touched a nerve in me somewhere. But despite all of the negative points I've droned on about, this isn't a terrible book. Most of the plot was decent and I did care about what happened to the major characters (most of the time). The story of Adelaide seems to have been wrapped up in this one volume so I suspect future books in the series will have different POV characters, most likely Adelaide's two roommates who had closely guarded secrets of their own throughout the novel and still yet to be revealed.

I started out a huge Richelle Mead fan. I have all of the Vampire Academy books and enjoyed her Succubus series as well. Unfortunately, I just can't seem to connect with her work since then and the Glittering Court is no exception. In an attempt to escape an arranged marriage to someone she finds generally distasteful, a countess steals her servant's identity to join the Glittering Court. The women who join the Court are taken voluntarily from all over Osfrid, schooled in all things cultured that would make them a good wife, then sold off to the highest bidder in the new colony of Adoria. In her new identity, Adelaide, must be careful not to give herself away but also make a solid match so she can't be dragged back to Osfrid. Complication arises in the form of Cedric Thorn, the son of one of the Court's owners and the only person who knows Adelaide's true identity. As expected, much goes wrong and Adelaide ends up with a future very different than what she envisioned when joining the Court. I simply never got into this book. With all of the endless talk of proper behavior for

the women, their dresses, hair and the competition for the best match, it reminds me too much of *The Selection* by Kiera Cass. There wasn't anything new or interesting about the Court. Also, the world building here was a bit odd. It's historical England and the Frontier mixed together plus the Icori which seem to be a version of Highland Scots. It's quite the mishmash of culture and ideas trying to seem new. Adelaide herself was interesting enough but I honestly found myself more curious about Tamsin and Mira. They're both clearly hiding their own secrets and yet we never get a glimpse into where they've been and what they're up to. Even at the end when clearly there's a big story with the two of them, we really don't get anything of substance. That's also how I felt about Cedric. He's charming enough but I didn't feel the chemistry between them and never understood why he covered for Adelaide in the first place. I know this is YA but their relationship is also pretty tame and uninspiring. All in all, this just didn't do it for me. There are elements that could have been interesting but the world and characters simply didn't draw me in. I sincerely doubt I would read a follow up to this one as well.

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