

Title: Spin the Dawn

Author: Elizabeth Lim

Reviewed by: Ria Chhabra, 13

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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Twined with Chinese culture and weaved with magic, Spin the Dawn is a stunning fantasy, adventure novel by Elizabeth Lim! Maia Tamarin once lived along the Great Spice Road, learning the art of embroidery and sewing from her father, supported by her loving mother and 3 lively brothers. But that perfect life soon unraveled when her mother passed away and years later Maia's two eldest brothers were killed in the war. Now, Maia manages their tailor shop in Gangnam, her ailing father and unskilled brother unable to work. When an ambassador arrives requesting for her father to compete for the position of the imperial tailor, Maia jumps at the opportunity. She dresses as her brother and travels to the palace where she battles 11 of A'landi's greatest tailors in a series of trials. With the help of a special pair of scissors and the Lord Enchanter, Edan, Maia wins the contest and sets off on a challenging journey to create 3 dresses of the sun, moon and stars.

In contrast to traditional fantasy novels where the main characters are thieves, royals or fighters, I loved how this novel featured Maia who was a craftsperson or a tailor. This offered a fresh adventure where Lim brought Maria's passion for her art to life. Each of the stitches, designs and colours of any clothing were deeply described with stunning, vivid details, where the reader was left in awe at Maia's new creation. Similarly, each part of Maia's journey to create the dresses of the sun, moon and stars were described so well that the reader could almost feel the endless heat of the desert or the icy, drowning waters of the moonlit lake.

Unfortunately, the pace of the story varied greatly throughout the book. At first this novel introduced the setting and Maia and her family at a great pace, but as the competition progressed it seemed to really speed up. Instead of taking the time to describe more about the other tailors and their skills or deepen their relationship with Maia, the tailors were briefly introduced throughout the contest. Although the second part of the book where Maia travels on her journey is told at a lovely pace where I enjoyed reading about Maia's struggles and her relationship with Edan, it is much slower than the previous part. Overall I believe that Spin the Dawn was a refreshing, adventurous read weaved with culture and magic, and I would recommend it for ages 11 +.

Recommended Books:

Serpent & Dove by Shelby Mahurin

The Shadows Between Us by Tricia Levenseller

We Hunt the Flame by Hafsa Faizal

Scavenge the Stars by Tara Sim