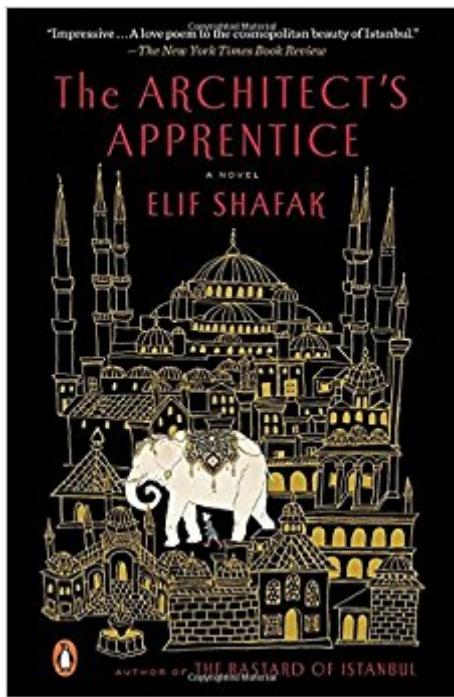


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The Architect's Apprentice: A Novel



Synopsis

From the acclaimed author of *The Bastard of Istanbul*, a colorful, magical tale set during the height of the Ottoman EmpireIn her latest novel, Turkeyâ™s preeminent female writer spins an epic tale spanning nearly a century in the life of the Ottoman Empire. In 1540, twelve-year-old Jahan arrives in Istanbul. As an animal tamer in the sultanâ™s menagerie, he looks after the exceptionally smart elephant Chota andÂbefriends (and falls for) the sultanâ™s beautiful daughter, Princess Mihrimah. A palace education leads Jahan to Mimar Sinan, the empireâ™s chief architect, who takes Jahan under his wing as they construct (with Chotaâ™s help) some of the most magnificent buildings in history. Yet even as theyÂbuild Sinanâ™s triumphant masterpiecesâ"the incredible Suleymaniye and Selimiye mosquesâ"dangerous undercurrents begin to emerge, with jealousy erupting amongÂSinanâ™s four apprentices.A memorable story of artistic freedom, creativity, and the clash between science and fundamentalism, Shafakâ™s intricate novel brims with vibrant characters, intriguing adventure, and the lavish backdrop of the Ottoman court, where love and loyalty are no match for raw power.From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

From the tips of the gilded minaret spires and ornate mosque domes to odiferous slums and one-room shanties, Istanbul stands alone in Elif Shafakâ™s *THE ARCHITECTâ™S APPRENTICE*. In parts, this beautifully written novel is a love letter from the Turkish writer to her countryâ™s capital. At its best, though, it is a sweeping portrait of the Ottoman Empire at its height.In 16th-century Turkey, Sultan Suleiman (known to posterity as Suleiman âœthe

Magnificentâ •) rules with an iron fist. Among the lowliest of his subjects is Jahan, an Indian-born mahout, or elephant rider and tamer, who has taken on the charge of caring for Chota, a rare white elephant. Young Jahan is plunged into the politics and dangers of the sultanâ ™s court from the moment he steps into Istanbul, but just as many opportunities await him as perils. As the novel unfolds, bits and pieces of Jahanâ ™s past are revealed to the reader. As a result, sometimes THE ARCHITECTâ ™S APPRENTICE reads like an overly in-depth guidebook to Renaissance Istanbul; other times, like a compendium of fairy tales. We literally see the city through Jahanâ ™s eyes and learn the ins and outs of the capricious court as he steps lightly around officials and elephants alike. That negatively affects the bookâ ™s pacing in places, as the author focuses on each interaction in such depth that the reader is bursting to turn the page by the time a paragraph is done. Jahan manages to befriend both the lowly (the Romani residents of Istanbul) and the high (the sultanâ ™s daughter and the sultan himself). His relationship with each character is carefully drawn and realistic. As he progresses in his life and career, these bonds grow, weaken and change.

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