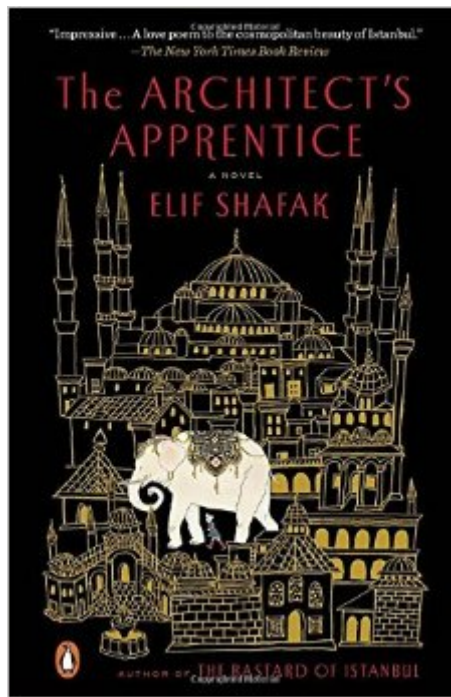


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The Architect's Apprentice: A Novel



Synopsis

From the acclaimed author of *The Bastard of Istanbul*, a colorful, magical tale set during the height of the Ottoman Empire. In her latest novel, Turkey'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 sultan's menagerie, he looks after the exceptionally smart elephant Chota and befriends (and falls for) the sultan's beautiful daughter, Princess Mihrimah. A palace education leads Jahan to Mimar Sinan, the empire's chief architect, who takes Jahan under his wing as they construct (with Chota's help) some of the most magnificent buildings in history. Yet even as they build Sinan's triumphant masterpieces—the incredible Suleymaniye and Selimiye mosques—dangerous undercurrents begin to emerge, with jealousy erupting among Sinan's four apprentices. A memorable story of artistic freedom, creativity, and the clash between science and fundamentalism, Shafak'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.

Book Information

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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 Shafak's *THE ARCHITECT'S APPRENTICE*. In parts, this beautifully written novel is a love letter from the Turkish writer to her country'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 the Magnificent)

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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