

A Review: *The Wrath and the Dawn* by Renee Ahdieh

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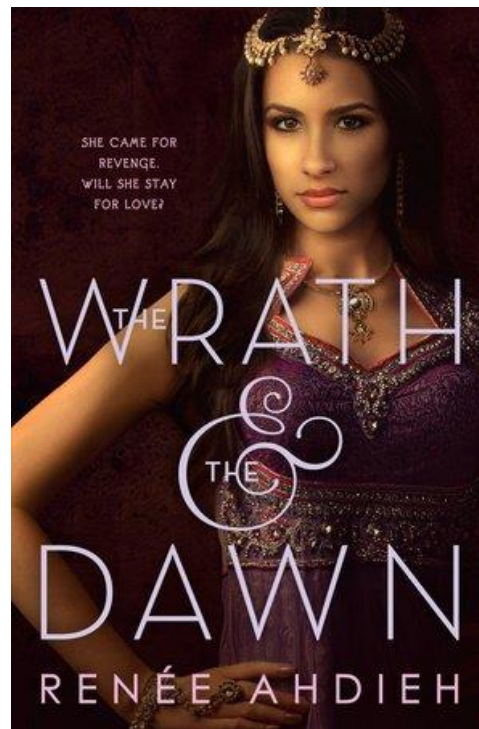
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Lately the Young Adult Fiction market has seen an increase in popularity in the love for retelling classic tales such as *Arabian Nights* and the classic fairy tale and fables such as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel and Snow White as seen in Marissa Meyer's science fiction/dystopian series *Lunar Chronicles*. *The Wrath and the Dawn* by



Renee Ahdieh is one such retelling and finds its inspiration in Sir Richard Burton's translation of *Arabian Nights*, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*. Both *Arabian Nights* and *The Wrath and the Dawn* are based on the premise that a young Caliph takes a bride every day and by the end of the night that bride is executed. When Shahrzad becomes the Caliph's new bride, she devises a plan to stay alive until such time she has the opportunity to kill the Caliph; she does this by telling him stories and never finishing the stories on the night she begins them, thus forcing the

Caliph to keep her alive for another day. The hype surrounding this particular novel within the YA book community was rather overwhelming about a year ago, and with the release of the sequel *The Rose and the Dagger*, the hype escalated once again, thus urging me to finally read it.

It was unsurprising that I enjoyed the novel as I do enjoy fantasy inspired by middle-eastern mythology. I can definitely understand the appeal of the novel. Ahdieh's prose is beautiful and elegant and her world building quite detailed. I was particularly fond of the fact that Ahdieh did not completely abandon the elements that make *Arabian Nights* a well-loved classic. It was suspenseful, mysterious and romantic; the characters were likeable for the most part and I quite enjoyed the portrayal of a strong female protagonist. However, it was not without its weaknesses.

As much as I enjoyed the novel, there were a couple of things that bothered and frustrated me, and honestly, interrupted my reading experience. The more I read, the more I realised that Ahdieh did not use more than two types of characters. If we consider the three female characters within the novel, you will notice that all three of these characters possess the same three dominant traits. They are strong-willed young women who are stubborn beyond reason, extremely intelligent and all fall in love with men that they cannot be with or shouldn't be with. Regarding the male characters, we see a similar pattern, once again they are strong-willed men who are impressively skilled in particular weaponry, intelligent beyond wit and extremely broody. While the banter between these characters, who often clashed in their opinions, made for interesting and rather witty dialogue, after a while it became a little annoying. This is the kind of thing that literary critics tend to latch onto. While there might be a lack of diversity in the

characters used within *The Wrath and the Dawn* it should be noted that this is not the common case in YA, in fact the genre tends to have extremely diverse and complex characters across all its subgenres. The fact that this particular novel does not, is exactly why I find it frustrating because I expect the cast of characters to be more diverse in terms of characteristics.

There were also inconsistencies with particular characters and I found it rather strange that a character like Shahrzad, who is portrayed as strong-willed and stubborn, would give up on her revenge plan so easily. There were also scenes in which Shazi would make an important decision and, only pages later, something would happen that would cause her to react in the complete opposite way to the decision she had just made a few pages ago. This happens more than once throughout the novel and can become increasingly frustrating.

Despite the few problems I had with the novel, I did enjoy this retelling and I applaud Renee Ahdieh on her debut novel. I would recommend this to anyone who particularly loves romances novels with a light magical element. I would also recommend this novel to any who loves novel set and inspired by Middle-Eastern mythology. You can order this novel online at razu.co.za for R135 or place a special order for the novel from Reader's Warehouse and Exclusive Books.

Reviewer: Abdeah Davis