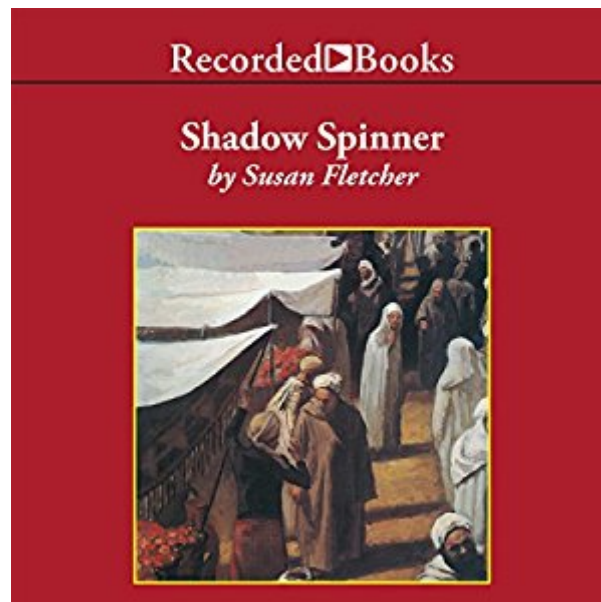


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Shadow Spinner



Synopsis

Marjan is a poor, crippled orphan girl, but she is happy living with her aunt and uncle in the sultan's city. Her hero is the beautiful Shahrazad, who has bewitched the sultan with her nightly tales and thus keeps him from killing other wives. Marjan wonders what Shahrazad's life is like in the silken rooms of the palace. She will soon find out. Taken to the palace to help Shahrazad find new tales, Marjan realizes that the lovely woman is a prisoner of the cycle of stories. To save her hero, Marjan must not only dodge the dangerous intrigues of the court but also begin a new chapter of her own life. Popular author Susan Fletcher's fascination with storytelling shines from her version of Arabian Nights. Listeners of all ages will love this fresh approach to the ancient collection of fabulous tales, made even more lyrical with Suzanne Toren's musical narration.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In Arabian Nights, Shahrazad is background, and the implications of her condition are never considered. In Shadow Spinner, Fletcher has done a marvelous job of fleshing out the legendary storyteller and her situation. Shadow Spinner starts 989 days after Shahrazad stopped the Sultan's murder of wife after wife by volunteering to marry him, then telling him stories so gripping, with cliffhangers so huge, that each one buys her another day of life. At this point, Shahrazad has given the sultan three sons and is growing desperate - she's running out of tales to tell, for one thing. Enter Marjan, who comes to the harem with her Aunt Chava, to sell things to the women. Marjan worships Shahrazad, and has collected tales all her life; she knows one that Shahrazad doesn't

know, and gets caught up in the intrigue of the sultan's harem as well as Shahrazad's own story. Marjan is a likeable character, and her experiences are great adventure. Still, the true center of the tale is Shahrazad, and the unexpected strength of the book is its villains. Unlike most YA and children's fantasy, the villains of this book are not all bad; Marjan in time comes to understand the reasons behind the actions of the sultan, his mother, and even her own mother, who hurt her badly years before. This is a fun story on the surface, with a lot of food for thought swimming just underneath. It's a good read especially for young girls, and it should also appeal to adult fans of fantasy or children's lit. A winner.

The story of Shahrazad has always puzzled me. This King kills his wives day after day and his people just let it happen? They didn't revolt? Monarchies have been tumbled for much less! Yet this slip of a girl manages to stand up to this King and save her people. She has never gotten her proper due in my opinion. Fletcher's book however is a decent step in that direction. Though about Marjan, we see what it must be like for Shahrazad. Night after night for years, constantly frightened and stressed that at any moment the wrong word, the word turn of phrase will get her family killed. Marjan is just as brave and clever as Shahrazad, which is both a blessing and curse for women in those days. A muslim hired out to a Jewish man and his wife, her life isn't easy, but they care for her like a daughter and she is happy at least. It's not that Marjan does reckless things--impetuous perhaps, but not reckless. She emphasizes with Shahrazad and reveres her like a hero, willing to do anything (including putting her life at risk) to save hers. The outside 'force' in the story, that of the Sultan's greedy, waspish, over indulgent mother Khatun, is necessary. Her actions are just this side of evil, but they are covered with 'I need to protect my sons!'. Just as in life, in *Shadow Spinner* things do not end 'perfectly'. A measure of happiness for most, but no real 'justice' is given to Khatun's actions and Marjan is forced to flee the city, never seeing her Aunt and Uncle, or friends at the palace again. I could almost wish for a sequel, to make sure that Marjan's life hereafter isn't a let down after this adventure, but sometimes a story needs an ending.

Every day, when night comes, the king kills his wife and marries a new one. When he marries Sharhazad, she tells him a story every night, and the king lets her live another day to continue the story. But, as she runs out of stories, Marjan, a young teenage girl with a maimed foot, comes to find stories near and far. She soon discovers herself in her own story. I first got this book after meeting Fletcher. I was not quite sure whether to rate this book two stars or three. But, actually, I'd now rate it three and a half. The story was quite interesting at the beginning, and started to get a

little slower. The quality of the writing is a positive five stars, but the story strayed a little from Marjan finding the stories. Though it was quite slow, the story did have a great topic and was well written. I must say the ending was very compelling and mysterious. You felt as if you were there with Marjan. The ending was definitely the best part of the book, which is partially why I rated it higher. I recommend this book for anyone who's looking for a good tale. -Gina Bertaina, age eleven

My daughter (age 9) wasn't much of a reader until Harry Potter came along. Although we'll be forever grateful to JK Rowling for getting her hooked on reading, we've had a difficult time since then finding books that stood up to the comparison (at least in her mind). This is one of the few that have. It is absorbing and suspenseful--we read it aloud, and anyone in the family that is old enough to read was caught at least once sneaking a look ahead (strictly against the rules in our family!). And since I've always been interested in the story of Shahrazad, it was fascinating to see it fleshed out. It had never occurred to me what a heavy burden it would have been for her to save not only her own life but those of hundreds of other women by telling stories night after night. Anyway--this is a great book, especially for reading aloud. It doesn't have quite the pizzazz or made-for-the-movies aura that Harry Potter has, but in my opinion, that's a good thing. And it finally got my daughter out of re-reading Harry for the umpteenth time and trying some new books.

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