

Title: *We Set the Dark on Fire*
Author: Tehlor Kay Mejia
Genre: Fantasy/Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Prisha S. 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: September 2, 2020

We Set the Dark on Fire is a realistic story with fantastical elements set in a fictional island named Medio. It takes place in an old-fashioned time. We learn in the Prologue of the origins of Medio's culture and beliefs to preface some fictitious aspects of the story. The Sun and Salt Gods of the peoples' belief had a discrepancy many years ago which caused the separation of the inner and outer islands of Medio. The Sun God also married the Salt God's wife, now having two wives, Constancia and the Moon Goddess, with different roles. These two occurrences led to two important aspects of Media life: the socioeconomic differences between the poor outer-islanders and rich inner-islanders, separated by a physical wall, and the tradition of rich men of the inner island marrying two wives. The first wife is called a Primera who embraces the role of managing social life, having skills, and keeping track of workers within the house. The second wife, a Segunda, represents beauty and bears the husband's children.

Daniela Vargas is a student at Medio School for Girls where teenagers learn to become Primeras and Segundas. Dani will become a Primera through her hard work and valedictorian position in her class. However, Dani was raised in the poor outer islander. She lacked proper resources and lived in a haphazard shelter with her parents. They wished for a better life for Dani, so her parents illegally sent Dani to the other side of the wall to work to become a wife of a rich man who would pay her dowry.

After graduating, Dani is sent as the Primera for Mateo Luis Gonzalez Garcia, a rich politician of Medio. However, his chosen Segunda is Carmen Santos, Dani's enemy from school. She is a beautiful, curvaceous girl, which Dani is jealous of, and Carmen constantly talks down to her. Throughout her marriage, Dani must deal with Mateo's superiority complex and Carmen's ridicule, as well as saving herself from being taken away from this new, luxurious lifestyle since she illegally came from the outer island.

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, the plot was changing and provided insights into Dani's past to preface the storylines. I didn't find it easy to follow that Dani was not narrating; the story had a third-person narration.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was slow and dragging in some areas, but mainly moving at a good pace.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is appropriate for grades 9-12.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to a reader who enjoys fantasy.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

This book is about the persistence of a young woman who tries to accept a patriarchal system even when she is oppressed by many people and finds little support. The book also contains some Hispanic culture which could appeal to Hispanic readers.

Rating : 3 stars: It was okay; I had hoped for better

This book was slow at times and slightly difficult to follow. Also, I am not a fan of most books that are realistic fiction with some fantasy