

Reign the Earth

A.C. Gaughen

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Each new twist is a captivating welcome in this first title of an inspiring new series.

Reign the Earth will lead to both gasps and sighs as its heroine, Shalia, navigates her way in a foreign court with few allies.

In order to establish peace between her people, who are desert nomads who take great pride in their clans, and the people of Trifectate, a powerful kingdom with a consuming religion, Shalia agrees to marry a foreign king. In turn, the Trifectate will search Shalia's beloved desert, and the clanspeople will not stop them.

Shalia is understandably nervous as she goes to meet her betrothed, Calix, and begin their life together. She knows that he was instrumental in wiping out the Elementae, who have the power to control the elements: earth, water, air, and fire. Shalia's best friend, who is like a sister to her, possesses the ability to control water, and must hide from those who believe that the Elementae have all been extinguished.

Shalia's path seems to take her toward an inescapable event. The plot often veers in new directions, but A.C. Gaughen lays the groundwork well: each twist is surprising, but is also guided by careful details.

With an arranged marriage as its central point, *Reign the Earth* touches on more adult themes than other young adult books, including topics like marital abuse. Shalia's relationship is much more mature than those typical of her age group. Tough subjects are handled well; there is no condescension to inexperienced readers.

Shalia's story unfolds slowly, smoldering before it rages into an enormous fire. It builds in a powerful way, drawing the reader into a larger plot than they ever expected. Each new twist is a captivating welcome. The first in a series, *Reign the Earth* is sure to inspire a dedicated fan base eager for the next tale.

HANNAH HOHMAN (January/February 2018)

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