



The Well of Sacrifice

By Chris Eboch

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Eveningstar Macaw lives in a glorious Mayan city in the ninth century. When the king falls ill and dies, the city begins to crumble. An evil high priest, Great Skull Zero, orders the sacrifice of those who might become king, including Eveningstar's beloved brother. Suspicious of the High Priest's motives, Eveningstar attempts to save her brother, thus becoming an acknowledged enemy of the High Priest. Condemned to be thrown into the Well of Sacrifice, Eveningstar must find a way not only to save her own life but to rescue her family and her city from the tyrannical grasp of Great Skull Zero. Set against the vivid background of everyday life at the height of the Mayan golden age and illustrated with striking black-and-white paintings, Eveningstar's candid, gripping, and not-for-the-faint-of-heart account of the last days of a great city will have readers at the edge of their seats. Afterword.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

First novelist Eboch accomplishes quite a feat here: he manages to make the bloodletting rituals and human sacrifice practices of the Mayans the central point of this novel, yet creates a character readers will care deeply about: Eveningstar Macaw. Eveningstar, a resourceful and spunky girl, lives in a lavish city of gold near the jungle. Her brother, Smoke Shell, possesses the leadership qualities of a fearless noble who may one day sit on the throne. Her older sister, Feather Dawn, self-absorbed and haughty, has two redeeming virtues: her skill at the loom and her beauty. But when the ailing king dies and his high priest, Great Skull Zero, commands that all possible successors be thrown into the well of sacrifice to drown or be saved by the gods, Eveningstar vows to save her brother and to stop Feather from being married off to the conniving Zero. Eboch cushions a plot of treachery and heroism with lush details of daily life in a ninth-century Mayan city that's beginning to crumble. Here, fathers wear green quetzal feathers; mothers cook tortillas, pumpkin and papaya; and beautiful girls with slanted foreheads wear rings in their noses and heavy jade and gold jewelry that pulls down their earlobes. Readers may blanch at some of the descriptions of ceremonies and sacrifices ("The king pulled the end of the rope through his tongue and dropped it into the bowl.... He danced with blood pouring down his chest"). Watching this unorthodox 12-year-old girl outwit a high priest, escape jail, rescue her sister and more makes for a fast-paced read. An author's note describes the historical context for the tale. Ages 9-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8-Set in a large Mayan city during the ninth century, this well-written story follows the exploits of Eveningstar Macaw, the youngest daughter of a well-to-do merchant family. Rather than pursue the traditional custom of learning domestic arts and managing a household, she prefers to become a healer like her mother. When Eveningstar's brother, Smoke Shell, performs an act of heroism, the family is elevated to noble status. After the death of their popular king, Smoke Shell is considered a likely candidate as a successor, but an ambitious and unscrupulous high priest endangers anyone who is perceived as a competitor for the throne. After making an unsuccessful attempt to save her brother's life, Eveningstar becomes involved in efforts to thwart the plans of the high priest, risking her own safety. The adventures of this tenacious heroine are suspenseful and entertaining, providing readers with an exciting story and a realistic feel for everyday life in and ceremonial practices of the ancient Mayan culture. Well-researched historical fiction and a good read.

Cynthia M. Sturgis, Ledding Library, Milwaukee, OR

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 5⁺-8. Set in ninth-century Guatemala, at the height of the Mayan civilization, this is the story of Eveningstar Macaw, a young girl who finds the fate of her city in her hands. When she discovers enemy soldiers in the jungle while she is hunting medicinal herbs, Eveningstar Macaw tells her older brother, Smoke Shell, who saves the city. But the honor conferred upon Smoke Shell and his family turns out for the worse after the death of the king puts him in line to rule. Harsh, highly placed enemies sacrifice Smoke Shell to the gods; then it is up to Eveningstar Macaw to avenge her brother and eventually save herself. Eboch does a good job of balancing the many details of Mayan life with an electrifying--sometimes gory--story. Eboch does not pull back much as she chronicles both the sacrifices and the ritual bloodletting that were part of the Mayan culture. Of course, shocking events won't deter readers who will already be caught up in the excitement that reaches a high-velocity climax as Eveningstar Macaw struggles to avoid the fate her enemies

have plotted for her. To be illustrated with a few well-placed pictures. *Ilene Cooper*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Price:

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