

Rebel Skies by Ann Sei Lin: Paper Magic and an Epic Expedition

We all think turtles are lovely and cute – of course they are. But what if a giant one was right outside your window?

Rebel Skies by Ann Sei Lin is an incredible book set in an alternate world with floating cities, steampunk technology, and shikigami – huge paper beings controlled by crafters. Kurara lives with her friend Haru on a huge floating ship called the Midori, a resting place for soldiers and travellers where they receive food, drink, entertainment and rest. Kurara is a crafter. This means she is one of the very few special people who can control paper and bring it to life, as well as being able to control living paper creatures called shikigami, but crafters are feared by most people due to their powers.

However, after their masters have died, many of these shikigami become loyal to no one, causing them to become wild and dangerous and they start to attack people. This has caused the empire to fall into turmoil, with battles in the sky and on the ground. When one of these shikigami destroys Kurara's home and almost kills Haru, she joins the crew of the sky ship Orihime, along with Himura, a fellow crafter, to develop her crafter powers and help hunt down these beasts.

But are these shikigami really just mindless slaves? Or are they beings with their own souls? And can one teenage girl give them back their minds, and save an entire empire?

Rebel Skies is an incredible story about friendship, self-discovery, corruption, magic, and amazing world building. It has a riveting story full of shocking plot twists, so it's a gripping read the whole way through. The mystery of Kurara's origin had me eagerly turning the pages, wanting to know more. I really enjoyed this book, as it had a great mix of adventure and action, combined with a unique Japanese steampunk setting. It also does a great job of combining magic and technology, two very different things that don't often work together.

There are many great characters such as Himura, Sayo and Princess Tsukimi, each with their own lives and motives. This character creation is done so well that even the main antagonist of the story is still an interesting person compared to many other books where there is just a completely evil 'bad guy.'

This book is also more than just a fun story. After reading, it really made me think about what makes us all human, our differences, and even things such as animal rights or how power should be regulated in society.

I really loved this book and would recommend it to anyone who is interested in magic, technology and adventure. There is also a sequel to this book that has been released, called *Rebel Fire*, and I would highly recommend that book as well.

So come and read *Rebel Skies*, a book full of shock, mystery and laugh-tear!

Mark, Dulwich College