

FISHBONE CINDERELLA

A NOVEL

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *A FORGERY OF FATE*

**ELIZABETH
LIM**

BOOK CLUB KIT



Dearest Reader,

There is a folktale called Yeh Shen (or Ye Xian, 葉限) that's often described as the Chinese Cinderella. The plot is similar, except instead of a fairy godmother, Yeh Shen has a magical fish spirit sent by her deceased mother to keep her company. One day, her stepmother catches the fish and cruelly devours it for lunch, leaving only its bones. On the evening of the Spring Festival, Yeh Shen prays to the fish's bones and is given a beautiful gown and golden shoes to wear, and her elegance mesmerizes all who behold her. In the end, like Cinderella, she marries a wealthy king, though whether she lives happily ever after is open to interpretation.

I grew up loving both the Western and Chinese versions of Cinderella, but I also became familiar with a third iteration: my grandmother's. While growing up in Guangdong province, her father took a concubine and moved to Hong Kong. After the Second World War, my grandmother was sent to live with her "second mother," who mistreated and neglected her in favor of her own children.

"The stories I could tell you," my grandmother used to say, shaking her head. "They would make for a book!" So one day, a few years ago, I sat with her and said, "Tell me. I'll write that book."

At last, dear reader, you have it. Fishbone Cinderella is my most personal novel yet, infused with countless details from my family's history and tradition, and a shimmer of magic.

I consider it a fairytale, but maybe not the sort with a prince and princess riding off into their happily ever after. Rather, it's about a girl named Yut Ying who, while the Japanese are invading her hometown, discovers she can turn invisible. Set amidst the trials of war and immigration, it's a multigenerational story of sacrifice and resilience, of forbidden romances and betrayal, and at its core, an homage to the imperfect love between mothers and daughters.

One of my favorite early reviews said Fishbone Cinderella will hurt you in the "most loving and gentle way." I hope it moves you, and stays with you long after you've read it.

All my best,

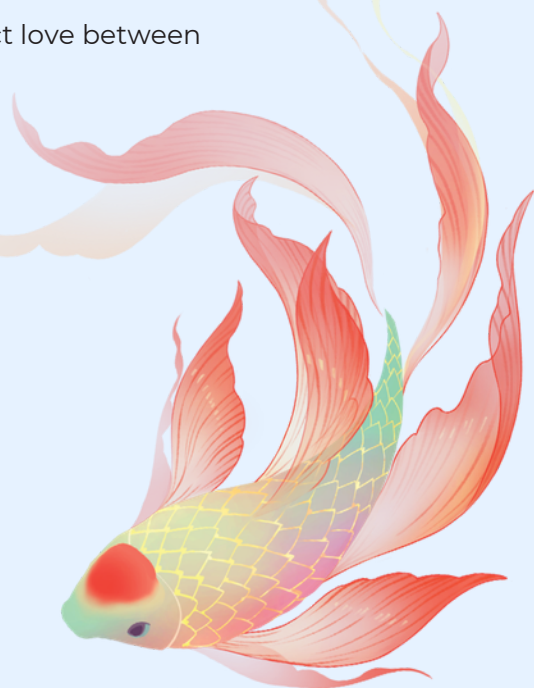
A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

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FAMILY PHOTOS



discussion questions

1. The book is told from two different points of view: a mother and a daughter. What similarities did you notice between the two women's experiences? What made their experiences different?
2. Which character did you find yourself sympathizing with the most and why? What commonalities did you feel between your own experience and the characters?
3. Both Marigold and Helen have a secret supernatural power. How do you think these powers relate to their emotional situations? How did these powers bring them together or pull them apart?
4. Helen is an immigrant and Marigold is a first-generation American. How did these different experiences bring these characters together, and how did it create conflict and tension between them?
5. Both Helen and Marigold are deeply affected by their experience with first love. Do you think each character made the right choice?
6. The title *Fishbone Cinderella* refers to both the Western Cinderella story and Chinese folk tales with similar themes. Discuss the similarities and differences between the versions of the story, and what role folklore and storytelling play in the book.
7. The book takes place in multiple settings: Hong Kong, San Francisco, Kansas. How did the settings contribute to the feelings and atmosphere of the story? Which setting interested you the most and why?
8. The book has lyrical writing and a rich symbolic tapestry. What are some recurring images or symbols you noticed throughout the story, and what's your interpretation of these symbols?
9. Stories often make us think about our own lives and personal journeys. Which scenes or moments in the book resonated with your own experience?
10. What did you think of the book's ending? Was there anything that surprised you? Would you characterize it as happy, bittersweet, or something in between?
11. If you had a chance to ask the author one question about the book or her creation of it, what would your question be?

Iced Egg Tart Latte

Whether you've stayed up reading all night or need a pick-me-up before your book club, this sweet latte inspired by Helen's egg tarts will give you just the boost you need.

Latte

- Double shot espresso
- 1 pasteurized egg
- 1 tbsp sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
- 1 tsp condensed milk
- 8 oz of soy milk (or milk of choice)
- Gold sprinkles

Foam Top

- 3 tbsp heavy whipping cream
- 1 tbsp soy milk (or milk of choice)
- 1 tbsp sweetened condensed milk
- Splash of vanilla extract

Directions

Mix the sugar, vanilla extract, and condensed milk in a cup. Separate the egg yolk from the whites, and add the yolk to the cup. Whisk together using a milk frother (a fork will also work), until mixture becomes pale, thick, and velvety.

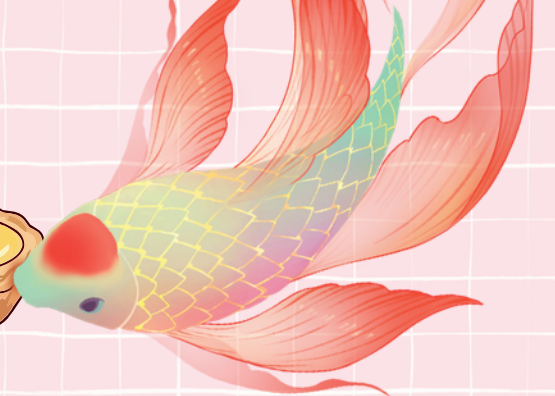
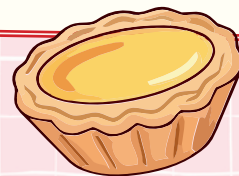
Brew two shots of espresso and slowly pour the espresso over the egg yolk foam. Add a pinch of salt to help cut any bitterness from the espresso.

Add milk of choice and let sit for about 1 minutes or until cooled.

While the coffee is cooling, whip the cold foam. Combine whipping cream, soy milk, condensed milk, and vanilla extract into a bowl and use a milk frother or whisk to blend the mixture until it becomes airy and thick, but still pourable.

Once the drink has cooled, add your favorite type of ice and gently pour the cold foam over the top.

Garnish with gold sprinkles to add a touch of magic, and enjoy!



playlist



1. Promise
Laufey
2. Be My Baby
The Ronettes
3. **夕陽之歌**
Ami Mui
4. Stayin Alive
Bee Gees
5. **陋巷之春**
周璇
6. Let You Break My Heart
Again
Laufey, Philharmonia
Orchestra
7. The Visitor
SIENNA SPIRO
8. **姑娘十八朵花**
Tom Liu
9. She Rises and She Glows
Linhy
10. Superstition
Stevie Wonder
11. **忘記他**
Teresa Teng
12. We've Only Just Begun
Carpenters
13. **偏偏喜歡你**
Danny Chan, Rico Fung
and David at Studio A,
Tom Brown
14. We Belong Together
Ritchie Valens
15. So This Is Love
Sneha, ConTejas
16. Before spring ends
(**在春天消失之前**)
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李天貴