School of Charm

Aylea Stephens

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Title: School of Charm
Author: Lisa Ann Scott
Reviewer: Aylea Stephens
Publisher: Katherine Tegen Books
Publication Year: 2014
ISBN: 9780062207586
Number of Pages: 304
Interest Level: Intermediate
Rating: Excellent

Review

After Chips’s daddy dies, she and her Mama and sisters move to Mount Airy, Carolina, to live with her grandmother. All her sisters, mother, and grandmother care about is competing in pageants, but Chip is a tomboy and would rather be playing outside in mud than dressing up. One day when she is outside exploring, she sees a sign for Miss Vernie’s School of Charm. The charm school is supposed to teach her lessons on pageants and life. After spending some time at the school, Chip decides to enter the pageant to become more like the rest of her family. Getting ready for the pageant helps her deal with her father’s death and learn how to be herself even when she wants to fit in.

School of Charm takes readers to the South in the 70’s. It deals with the racism at the time with one character’s growth in attending the school. It also deals with Chip’s healing process when she loses her father and leaves everything she knows to move to a place she has never been. The grandmother is very harsh, and how the family treats Chip is unpleasant to read. There is a touch of magical realism, and the whole book feels like a mix between historical fiction and a light fantasy in spite of the difficult subjects of racism, self-acceptance, and dealing with grief.Younger readers who are also trying to find themselves, fit in, and learn what their place in the world is will relate to and enjoy this book full of Southern charm and valuable lessons.