



## Child of Dandelions

*Shenaaz Nanji*

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A breathtaking account of one girl's determination to triumph over a devastating historical event. In Uganda in 1972, President Idi Amin, also known as the Last King of Scotland, announces that foreign Indians must be "weeded" out of Uganda in ninety days. Fifteen-year-old Sabine's life is changed forever. The president's message, broadcast on the radio every day, becomes Sabine's "countdown monster," and it follows her through days of terror. Sabine's father is convinced that, as Ugandan citizens, their family will be unaffected, but her mother insists it's too dangerous to stay. When her beloved uncle disappears and her best friend abandons her, Sabine begins to understand her mother's fears. She becomes desperate to leave, but Bapa, her grandfather, refuses to accompany her. How can she leave him, and where will her family go to begin a new life?

## Child of Dandelions Details

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## From Reader Review Child of Dandelions for online ebook

### Katherine says

Review below comparing Child of Dandelions with the story "Dhilkusha" by Judith Clarke was written for a college course in 2008.

Dr. Patricia Bloem, Professor of English at Grand Valley State University, recommended that I read the book Child of Dandelions after I expressed my love of Judith Clarke's story "Dhilkusha." Both texts focus on the plight of current and soon-to-be refugees from Idi Amin's Uganda.

In 1972, President Idi Amin of Uganda announced that all Asian people who were not Ugandan citizens, including a large population of people of Indian descent, were required to leave Uganda within 90 days. While many Indians left early on their own terms, many remained behind, believing that their status as Ugandan citizens would protect them from ethnic discrimination. However, soon it became clear that the Ugandan government was hostile to all Asian people, regardless of their citizenship status, as people began disappearing without a trace and violence against them was witnessed in the streets.

"Dhilkusha" is one of a series of stories in the book *Wolf on the Fold*. The story follows two boys as they remember their lives in Kampala, Uganda, and realize the need to remember those who they left behind and forgive those who mistreated them. Likewise, *Child of Dandelions* deals with the expulsion of Indians from Uganda through the eyes of sixteen year-old Sabine. When President Idi Amin declares that all Indians must leave Uganda, Sabine begins to see that she is ignorant to the politics of injustice that have surrounded her entire life. At first she does not worry about her safety because she considers herself a Ugandan citizen, not a British Indian, but she soon realizes that it is not her nationality that will force her to flee the country, but rather the color of her skin and the privilege it provides her.

Absolutely striking and intriguing imagery abound in both works. Especially poignant in "Dhilkusha" is the symbolic use of the color red, used to connect the tragic death of baby Rekha and her two brothers' subconscious memory of her in everyday life. The contrast of beautiful and frightening imagery in *Child of Dandelions* transports the reader from a state of comfort to precariousness, just as Idi Amin's new rules forced the Indian people of Uganda from a life of unquestioned pleasure to a state of fear and worry.

Both stories show how outsiders are completely ignorant to the horror potential refugees are facing and how outsiders either never act, or only act at the last minute, when it is too late to save those already lost. Refugees are forced from their homes and sent to countries where they are unwanted and mistreated by many. In "Dhilkusha," the young brother's teacher considers him a troubled student and a "fibber," but does not make any effort to understand the source of his problems. In *Child of Dandelions* the British impose a quota on refugees, as do many other countries, making it difficult for the Indians to leave when it is imperative that they do.

These two works make perfect companions. "Dhilkusha" is a beautifully written introduction to the difficulties of being a refugee in a new place where you are unwanted, while *Child of Dandelions* shows what beauty and comfort are left behind and what horrors they faced as they struggled to leave the place they called "home."

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### **Iza Alcorn says**

The story is about a 15 year old girl Indian girl named Sabine who was born in Uganda. The president of East Africa Uganda named Idi Amin, sent out a message exporting and to get rid of all foreign Indians and has 90 days to do so. However, president Idi Amin promises to protect Sabine's family because they have their citizenship. The only thing that is on her mind is when the 90 days are up and what could happen. When the countdown begins it is made clear to Sabine that all South Asians are being forced to leave. Throughout this period Sabine experiences loss, panic, questioning or relationships as well as heartbreak. In a classroom I would use this as part of a history unit, I would use this book as a way to explain what happened in this time period, and how the Indians and Pakistanis were treated. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and I loved how emotionally connected I felt with Sabine.

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### **Susan says**

Hmmm... I really wanted to like this book more than I did. But, I disliked Sabine, and the story is essentially hers which made it difficult to enjoy the story. Sabine is entitled and selfish and immature, and overall just fell flat as a character.

I found too the plot fell flat. This was a time and place with anxiety and fear and anger but I felt none of that reading the book. The writing felt 'talking at' rather than 'talking to' the reader and, as another reviewer has pointed out, more about telling than showing the unfolding of events and relationships between Sabine and the other characters.

I really did want to like this book more than I did. But, I rounded up to two stars so at least tried.

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### **Kylee Wiyrick says**

This story follows the life of a young Indian girl, Sabine, and her family who were citizens of Uganda. Due to the fact that a majority of the population in Uganda was African American, Sabine and her family got treated like minorities. At one point in the book, citizens of Uganda were screaming "Indian go home," although Sabine thought she would be safe since she was a Ugandan citizen herself. My heart broke when I read that President Idi Amin made an announcement that all Indians must be weeded out of Uganda within the following 90 days. This made me think of how I would feel if I was suddenly told to pack up my life as I knew it and move to a completely new area. Upon reading further, I also questioned what it would be like to have soldiers rush into my home with the intent to forcibly remove my family from underneath our own roof. Although this book was an emotional roller-coaster, I loved the room for reflection and analysis that came along with it.

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### **Kendra Perkins says**

I just finished listening to this. It's historical fiction based on true events (probably not specific people, but about what was going on generally in that country at that time). It was very interesting, and I found myself wondering why I had never heard about this in my World History class in high school. Obviously there's

only so much they can fit in trying to cover the entire history of the world in one year (pretty sure World History was just one year). I was not alive yet when this was happening (1972), but it seems like something I should have heard about. The audiobook is narrated by Vaishali Sharma. The narrator was born and raised in India, and I think she was a good choice.

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### **Ash says**

Excellent book. Great historical fiction about a relatively unknown event in history.

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### **Arzoe says**

2.8?

Just glad I finished, thought this moment would never arrive!  
Sad historical story, but it just did not make my boat float. I just never agreed to the story and may have been against it? (please dont take it seriously)

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### **Traci Haley says**

This eloquent historical novel coupled two of my major interests: Indian culture, and African history. This was a part of Africa's history that I wasn't knowledgeable about -- while I knew of Idi Amin and the horrible acts he committed during his reign, I hadn't realized that so much of it was aimed at Indians. The character of Sabina in this book was perfect for narrator, and the reader of the audiobook was absolutely amazing! I also appreciate that the author ended the book on a note of hope... it must've been hard to do when writing about such a sad subject. I highly recommend this novel!

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### **Kelly Allen says**

This is a story of an Indian girl, born and live in Uganda during Idi Amin reign. One day, Sabine found out all Indian were no longer welcome in the country, her world was turn upside down.

A good quick and easy read.

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### **Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says**

I really had no idea. I don't remember learning about the political situation in Uganda when I was in high school, although I do remember mention of Idi Amin and his cruelty. I didn't know that, amongst all his other acts, he expelled the Indians from the country.

This story focuses on a Muslim Indian girl and her African friend, and the politics that ultimately come between them. The author of this novel created such a buildup of tension that I almost didn't finish the story,

afraid that it would end tragically. I kept asking myself, why can't people learn to get along and accept each other's differences? A sad story pointing out the heartbreaking plight of refugees, and the only children's book that I know of dealing with Uganda during this time period. Highly recommended!

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### **Jamie says**

A unique tale of the Indian diaspora to East Africa. I felt it was rather fast paced, but I also felt it was a bit "purposeful."

Also, not the fault of this book, but I am tired of plucky teenage girls standing up to evil dictators/soldiers/whatever and getting away with it and saving their whole family. This book was just where I realized it.

Beautiful cover!!!

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### **Lauryn G says**

Child of Dandelions is about a 15-year-old Indian girl who was born in Uganda named Sabine. The president sent a message to the entire nation of East Africa Uganda. He wanted to get rid of foreign Indians and gave them 90 days to leave the country. Sabine's father ensures that Sabine's family is protected because of their citizenship but Sabine is skeptical. Sabine goes through a series of disappointments, questions of friendship, loss, heartbreaks, and terror as all of this takes place. I loved to get her perspective on things especially since she was so young. You also learn a lot about the way that the Indian people were treated based off of what you learn about the way Sabine's family was treated throughout the book.

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### **Maddelyn Skeen says**

Child of Dandelions is about a 15-year-old Indian girl who was born in Uganda named Sabine. The president sent a message to the entire nation of East Africa Uganda. He wanted to get rid of foreign Indians and allowed 90 days for them to all be gone. Sabine's father ensures that Sabine's family is protected because of their citizenship. Sabine does not forget the 90 day countdown. Sabine goes through a series of disappointments, questions of friendship, loss, heartbreaks, and terror as all of this takes place. I loved the way this book was written because you can see the world at this time through the 15 year olds life and get her perspective on things. You also learn a lot about the way that the Indian people were treated based off of what you learn about the way Sabine's family was treated throughout the book.

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### **Erin Reilly-Sanders says**

I thought this book had a good perspective on conditions in Uganda in 1972 particularly for the Indians of the main character's heritage but also other ethnic groups in the area that are divided by Idi Amin's strife-filled regime. These characters are represented by servants, friends, and neighbors with the interactions

between them changing as the fortunes rise or fall according to some irrational overarching design. I think that in the end the main character's family was more understanding of the feelings behind the horrible actions taking place than people there in that place and time could have been without the safety of hindsight, but their explanation to Sabine is helpful for the reader to head off bitterness which could stunt a full evaluation of the situation. The author's note at the end was helpful as well. While the story is brutal and somewhat scary, the angst is restrained by the little moments of humanity present in Sabine's family interactions, particularly with her brother who has Down Syndrome.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

This was a really quick read, and it makes more sense now that I realize it was intended for a YA audience. Other than the main character being in her teens, it isn't immediately apparent. I had read several books set in Uganda but focusing on white non-Ugandan characters, and this book was an attempt to remedy that.

*"We have to clear our land. The weeds must be uprooted. ... You are the child of dandelions."*

Sabine is Ugandan because she was born there, and her parents and grandparents have lived there running a successful coffee plantation. But it is 1972 and Idi Amin has ordered all Indians out of the country in 90 days. The family spends much of that 90 days assuming it does not apply to them, but it becomes clear that no matter their ties to the place, or the fact that Sabine has never known another country as home, they will be forced out.

Very true to historical experiences although I'm not sure a teenager would have been able to get away with the defiance that Sabine shows (this is probably the most YA element of the novel.)

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