



Panther

Chhimi Tenduf-La

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'I see you. Legs like toothpicks, body and face all ribs and cheekbones. And that hair. Come on, what is it? Like friggin' barbed wire. I see you with a hand-me-down cracked bat creaming a leather ball, in a sock, hanging from the branch of a mango tree.'

Being accepted into an elite international school on a cricket scholarship doesn't mean your life is going to change. Except it does, because hunky Indika - I for Indika, I for Incredible - takes you under his wing, drags you to posh restaurants and shows you pictures from glossy magazines of women who ... well, never mind, that's not the point. The point is: if your best friend snogs your girlfriend, can he still be Incredible? Was he ever? But don't sweat the small stuff. There are cricket matches to win, examinations to pass, a horrifying past to forget, a sinister schoolmaster to avoid ... and, of course, a first kiss to finally experience. Prabu's life is never going to be the same again.

Funny, diamond-sharp and unapologetic, *Panther* is a novel about that familiar, fractured passage to adulthood that can make us magnificent if it does not kill us.

Panther Details

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From Reader Review Panther for online ebook

Rashika says

Beautiful. Touching. Sad. Funny. Thought provoking.

This is definitely an emotional read. It teaches you many things - feelings, love, friendship, racism, war and reality. This book says everything that many Sri Lankans have been trying to say for years - despite our color or culture, we are Sri Lankans. Not all Sinhalese are bad. Not all Tamils are bad either. But why this hatred? Loved it!

Chamendra Wimalasena says

I jumped into bed thinking I'll read a little now.. two hours later, almost midnight on a Sunday I am staring up from a book feeling like I just lived another life. Takes a form of real life and it is easy to be taken into the book. What I enjoyed the most was the feeling of being taken into a different life in a different place back in time. It was a one hell of a journey.

Anushka Jagtiani says

This is a stunning book. Loved it from start to finish. It makes you laugh out loud and get teary eyed all at once. The characters are so real... You want to befriend them (well, except maybe Coach Silva :)) The war scenes- though fictional- are chilling and very beautifully juxtaposed with scenes of regular teenage life in a Sri Lankan high school. I won't give away the story in my review. But rest assured you will grow to love Indika - the most desirable teenager in Colombo, and Prabhu the Panther ... The Tamil child soldier and cricketing prodigy who gets a second chance at life. This book encompasses despair and hope, cruelty and kindness, in a poignant, sensitive and above all humorous manner, without trivializing the war in Sri Lanka between the army and the Tamil separatists, that ended in 2009. The language is refreshing. And it makes you want to pack your bags immediately and travel to that small but diverse Island nation that has witnessed so much suffering but is now rising above it all.

Emma Cripwell says

I really loved Panther, I thought it was brilliant. It had a very different style to The Amazing Racist which leaves me eager to see what Chhimi Tenduf-La's next book is going to be like. The insight into a version of Sri Lankan life is fascinating and the characters are so well described that you feel you really get to know them. Desperate for book three!

Koshi says

This is an extraordinary book. I started reading it, admittedly, because I know and like the author, and because I loved his last book. However, I was sceptical as I lived in Sri Lanka during this time, and it's really difficult subject matter and not for the fainthearted author or reader, for that matter. When I started, I really could not stop. Luckily I had the flu, so I just tore through the book in a day. It's really, really good. Chhimi has a wonderful writing style - it's my favorite kind of writing - skilled, unself-conscious and unobtrusive, drawing the reader into the world he creates, and making you forget that you are reading. His characters are engaging and make you care about them, and the denouements of the villains are satisfactorily graphic.

He's funny and irreverent, but at the same time sensitive, thoughtful and perceptive in his depiction of how isolating being different can be, even when you appear to be accepted.

I refuse to describe or walk through the story - you just need to read it. It's a ripping coming of age story with a major sting in the tale (sorry, I couldn't help myself there) - complete with evil school masters, love, overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, friendship and redemption. Really, really well done! Can't wait for the next one!

Radhik says

Chhimi's first book, The Amazing Racist was (excuse the pun) amazing! He managed to do something quite magical - he rekindled my love for reading. It takes a special author to have you so hooked that you can't put a book down until it's finished. Chhimi did that, but he also made me want to pick up another book after that, and another and another.

With Panther, I was expecting more of the same - laughter, anger, eye-rolling, embarrassment, and I got all of that, but I also got so much more. Like The Amazing Racist, Panther had me hooked from the first page, but by the end of it, I was left stunned. I experienced an even wider range of emotions and for me that is what reading is all about - to be transported to a different world, to feel what the characters feel, to experience what they experience.

I can't wait to see what Chhimi has for us next.....The Amazing Racist and Panther will be two very hard acts to follow!

Archita Mitra says

Chhimi Tenduf-La's latest novel, 'Panther', is a gripping tale set in a hostile environment where communal tensions, bloodlust and vengeance rules. He has set it in Sri Lanka...but honestly speaking, it could be any country: from the war-ravaged East to the civilized West, where they don't speak of it. In the end, it's a tale about human nature and the fight of humanity against evil forces that often may exist in your own mind. It reads like a poem, and reminded me of these lines from 'The Second Coming' by W.B. Yeats:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre,
The falcon cannot hear the falconer:
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

A haunting tale that will inevitably remind you of all your troubles back in high school. The novel traces the journey of Prabhu, a young Tamil boy and a cricket protégé growing up in Sri Lanka, who is admitted to an elite school of rich boys. But Prabhu has a past that his classmates who have lived comfortable lives guarded from all harm cannot imagine: he is a former child soldier and had been once closely associated with the fictional terror group of 'Panthers'. With a past that refuses to be silenced and memories that abruptly gear their ugly heads, Prabhu has to learn to overcome the onerous burdens of high school.

What is noteworthy about the author is his incredible talent to poignantly pen on paper the angst of adolescence, for all boys, rich or poor. Some problems like finding a perfect date, scoring good marks in your examination, gaining popularity among your peer circle, impressing your crush and living up to your parents expectations, or more pertinently, them living up to yours, are universal themes all adolescents can connect with. But at the same time, the novel deals with darker themes like the plight of child soldiers, or simply of children growing up in a war-ravaged nation. Children growing up in an environment where tensions are high, are forced to make impossible choices between right and wrong, good and bad; sometimes with no proper guidance. More often than not, they end up emulating their parents and other elders around, but the real question is: what happens when the elders are prejudiced and misguided? The vicious cycle of hate pervasively present in so many South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Western nations has been pain strikingly taken apart by the author and presented to us in vivid detail.

From paedophiles who rape orphaned boys, to terrorist leaders who brainwash child soldiers to fight wars they don't understand, to army soldiers who shoot and torture even those who surrender, to families forced to sacrifice one child to the 'cause' to save another: this book (some may find it disturbing) expostulates on the worst side of human nature. It talks about everything society would rather push under the rug. Yet, as is atypical of this author, the serious is peppered with moments of hilarity. This extract for instance is one of my personal favourites:

...the letter 'A' pendant cost six thousand rupees, but they had a discount on the letter 'I' pendants. He deliberated for a while. Since Achala's name began with 'A', the 'A' pendant might have been the more appropriate, but he knew he couldn't ask Indika, whose name began with an 'I', for more money. So the 'I' would have to do.

Indika and Prabhu's friendship is one of the most humane bonds of friendship that I have ever read in a novel. The characters of both boys is so well-developed that you would feel you know them personally. In many ways the novel is also a 'coming of age' story, as different characters evolve and grow in different ways as the novel progresses. The concluding chapters especially have a beautiful point of climactic twist in certain protagonists' personalities, but saying more would be giving out spoilers, and for a book as captivating as this, it would be a cardinal sin.

The only minor point of contention for me would be the excessive use of abuses in the text, but I guess it does help set the mood, and my prudish love for 'proper' language would probably be judged by most to be orthodox. We all do have our points of squeamishness, don't we? The style otherwise is unique: the narrator, who is incidentally also the protagonist, shifts from second person, to third person and even to first person narrative. Sometimes it feels like he is narrating a story to us, while at other points the readers are standing next to him, watching an event unfold. The style is such that all passing thoughts and sudden observations are noted down in vivid details, for example a page devoted only to a cockroach on a cricket pitch. Yet the details aren't random or arbitrary. In many ways this book has a firm foundation in psychology and these seemingly random details, in the end reveal a lot more than one could imagine. The language is simple and easy to understand, but hard to gauge. You might just find yourself turning the pages for one more read.

Natasha says

Panther shows us what a versatile writer Chhimi is! Many heart wrenching moments topped with clever humour made this book yet another easy read! Love that the book is left to the writers imagination..

Judy Peter says

My thoughts on this life story of a thin toothpick liked legged, 'Panther' is that once you start reading, you unknowingly get involved with the story of Prabu. Finally, the success of the protagonist in his ever challenging life leaves a reader, like me with a reassured belief in oneself and optimism to receive life with open arms. Full review on <http://wp.me/p1FJBJ-yJ>

Avishek Bhattacharjee says

"Panther" ..is a must read(don't judge it by the cover)and do you know why.. because you have not seen war,because you have not seen minorities tortured under baseless claims,because you have not experienced that feel of being good a midst all odds.Chimmi's book is an eye opener starting from its concept,language to the structure of the novel.Panther is not an ordinary story with normal human beings.Panther is a great second novel. Far more powerful than the first,it is dark,complex and mixed with bitter truth.There is racism,there is dirty politics,bribery and corruption ,war and hatred but the island nation has a pure love for the beautiful game of cricket.The constant hatred between the two groups has been brought in this novel,at the same time the friend-foe relation between Prabhu and Indika surrounding cricket,life and existence- is so real and touchy.

What are the things which will attract you-

Narration-so stylishly maintained though there are different narratives

Character Prabhu- Innocent,a child soldier(first time am reading about child soldier and their training),sports scholarship,a gifted player and his struggle for the acceptance in the mainstream society-still he is the special one-the Jose Mourinho of Panthers.How his life changed when he came across some amazing people like the Jayanettis family and some disgusts like Coach silva and Mathews

Indika-he is a stud,more like a spoiled brat and his friendship with Prabhu(a Sinhale and a Tamil)-is an example to all..it cannot be a fiction.

Though i didn't like the end much,seemed a hurried end,suddenly everything falling into places..but it's peace..war is over.Is the hatred over..question is still there.

Read the book.A good experience!!

Chrishantha Jayasinghe says

First I curse the traffic. Why can't it be more congested?

Then I curse Chhimi Tenduf-La. Why couldn't he have released his new book on Kindle?

Then I curse myself. Why the hell am I writing like him? In short punchy sentences.

I have started reading Panther. The second novel by Chhimi Tenduf-La. Of The amazing racist fame. As usual I can't put it down. Sadly I have to. I have three free hours ahead of me. Three hours I could have spent immersed in this great story. But you can't be seen reading a book at a wedding can you? Even if you don't know anyone else there. It is considered rude. Not acceptable. Unlike staring into your phone. For hours on end. If only his publishers had allowed him to release the kindle version at the same time he released the hard

copy of his book in Sri Lanka.

Life is not fair.

So I leave the wedding early. Tell the driver to take the longest route possible. Pray that there is loads of traffic. Sit back and slip in between the pages.

Panther is a great second novel. Far more powerful than the first. A dark and complex tale. A story line with unexpected twists and turns. And amazing funny bits which has become a trademark of this author. "There is great value in shaving one's legs if one's legs were female."

This much is true. You have heard that. Most nights. Most mornings. Sometimes over lunch or with a cup of tea. Sometimes while in the car.

Amma never listened but Appa let it go. No complaints. Hell, one physical fault was nothing to worry about for a man as chilled as your Appa.

Things they say started to go wrong when your amma found a waffle iron in a bombed out restaurant.

You had no electricity, so Appa tapped into the local army camp's generator. A military policeman caught him. Appa bribed him. With waffles.

But he was running short of ingredients, so he used his van to spy for the army. They paid in him in flour, jaggery, eggs and milk.

The gossips say Amma fell in love with waffles. Thought of waffles first thing in the morning. Dreamt of waffles at night. With this obsession came rapid weight gain.

And once your amma hit one hundred kilos, your Appa could no longer ignore her body hair, so they say. Appa like most men in this parts had needs, and if people in these parts had needs, they visited the hairless wife of the unemployed film critic."

Isn't this irresistible? To me it was. So much so that I copied the entire passage manually. Laboriously typing in one word at a time. . Whilst being jerked around in rush hour traffic. Squinting hard to see my screen against the morning sun.

Chhimi says this book is about terrorism and it's impact. And he has (very wisely) created a fictitious terrorist organisation called The Panthers to do so.

But to me it is also about racism. Not the brown vs white that we read about in his first book. This time it's about the haves against the have-nots. The well educated against the poorly educated. The do-gooders against those who accept their charity. And worse of all Sri Lankan against Sri Lankan.

Lisa Wydeman says

Hook, Line & Sinker.

Once again I have the good luck to receive Chhimi Tenduf-La's latest book as a gift. I turned the first page and I am taken aback. This is a totally different story from The Amazing Racist; his first book...but then I start to read and there it is - the easy style of fluid words that seem to pour forth with ease from this author. Chhimi has a way with words that one could say hooks you and holds you captive to his tale.

'Now I see you sitting in the corner of Grade Three, knees drawn to your chest. You've never been in a sauna, I know that, but this is what it's like. The sun heats up the tin roof above you, so you sweat till your muddy t-shirt is drenched, but still your teeth chatter. You shiver. It's fear, it's sadness, it's anger.'

'Prabu squatted, his backside just half an inch off the sand, his arms hugging his burnt-matchstick-like legs. To his right, a girl, maybe his age, likely Tamil, plaited hair and frisky eyebrows, selling Frangipani flowers to tourists.' - Panther

It seems he is an author capable of adding humour in any situations which is not that easy to do and yet, from the moment you turn the first page you are caught hook, line and sinker. You just can't put the book down. Now there are some books that are good and others that are slower...however Chhimi Tenduf-La writes in such an easy and captivating style that you don't feel like placing a book mark in your book, to read it later. You just feel like you really need one more page and then another and another, until you have read the whole book.

I can only compare this feeling to an addiction of sorts. The feeling one has when they have strange urges, unbearable longings and insatiable desires.

Yes he is a writer that unlike others, totally relaxes your mind as you read. I will be honest and say I would generally not read books that even remotely revolved around our Sri Lankan war memories...yet Panther paints many pictures amidst the facts that tell a tale. This is not just a story but its a story with a morale, a message and flavour...yes ! once again Chhimi Tenduf-La has given us a winner!

Panther has a lot of interesting twists and turns but the subtle twist at the end is the one I liked best.

Ps: Not giving that away...Panther is well worth reading to find that out for yourself.

Jairam Mohan says

Very few authors have the ability to make readers not only sympathize but also empathize with the predicament of their protagonists. Chhimi Tenduf La does this beautifully well in this lovely little 'coming of age' book.

Detailed review put up at <https://mahabore.wordpress.com/catego...>

Sakshi Nanda says

Chhimi Tenduf-La, in the Author's Note to 'Panther', clarifies that the Sri Lanka of his latest novel is highly invented. He says that in reality the students are disciplined, the educational standards are good, the people are peace-loving and most importantly his depiction of war in this otherwise culturally rich country totally 'fictitious'. He insists that 'there are some bad people in this book. Very bad. This is fiction.' We can't question him. But we can ask ourselves...

Why then has he placed his characters in Sri Lanka, in a book where cricket and childhood are so disturbingly married to war and terrorist training camps that every time you stand at ease while reading, you are straightened into attention on the next page? A reader anywhere in the world too is well aware of Sri Lanka's context - its politics and history and cricket – and certainly enough to not swallow this novel's world as pure fiction. Is this 'apologia' then aimed at escaping censure? Or, is this a clever way of shrouding in

fiction a reality which news coverage of wars has yet to show us? He's got us thinking even before we've begun reading!

Some aspects make 'Panther' a strong narrative on wars, any war anywhere in the world, where there are children living through it even long after it is over. It is these which make this book much more powerful than the blurb attempts to reveal. Throughout the book you will find a depiction of young days of gay abandon; days of early adulthood when snogging a girl or finishing a bottle of arrack were the only surest signs of manhood, for instance. Throughout the book you will also find the most dreadful scenes of pain and blood, flies and slush, abuse and violence too. What does war do to children? It plays havoc with their lives, forcing them into roles, messing with their relationships, scaring away their sanity and snatching away their identities, for life.

The whole book uses a lot of fragmented or one-worded sentences to portray innocence, to make a shocking impact, to endear us to a character, to register a point or to simply leave the reader thinking. Chhimi needed a new way of speaking, altogether, to question wars and politics and racism and the telling of history itself.

The end was the only disappointing feature of this book, for me. Did Chhimi need to give his poignant story and powerful story-telling a shocking twist, like the ones short-stories hunger after? Or is this his way of saying that some wars never end? That history is nothing but a past stuck in a present continuous tense?

No one can see this as purely 'fictitious'. No one can say the trauma of war is beyond Chhimi's understanding. A must-read!

Ash Ketchum says

Maybe my opinion is one not popular with typical fans of this novel, but to be blunt this was not one of my favorite books to read. I did really like the writing style and the split narrators of the book, but I could not look past reading all the horrible horrible things that happened to these characters. Maybe I simply need more backbone to read a more depressing book, but I was disappointed when I won the novel assuming the topic would generate around a coming-of-age, pauper meets prince kind of feel when the story really wasn't about that at all.
