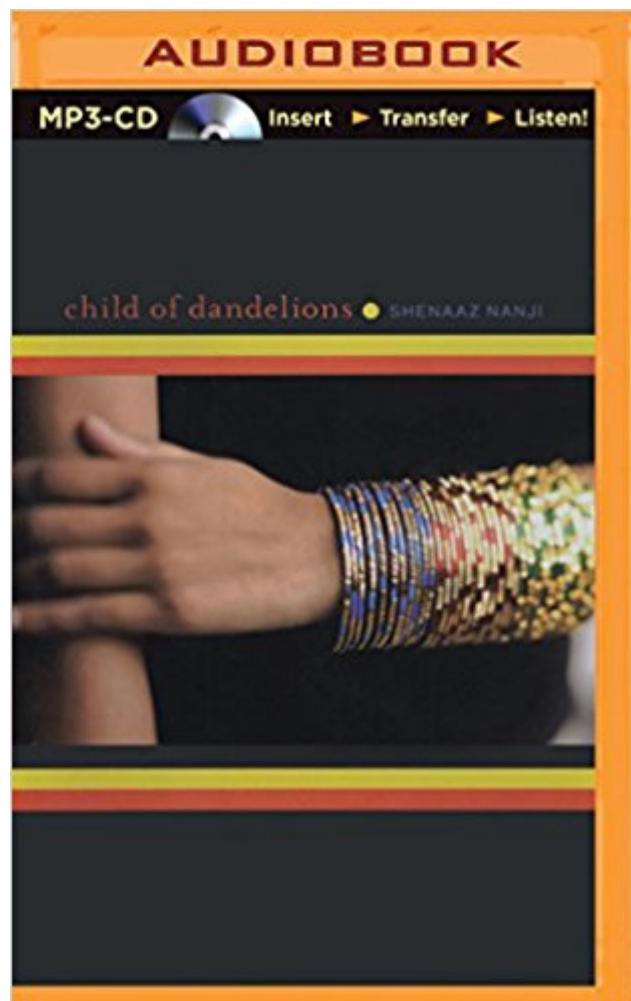


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Child Of Dandelions



Synopsis

“This is a gripping drama about a fascinating fragment of time in history - the expulsion of Indians from Uganda in 1972. Fifteen-year-old Sabine poignantly straddles two worlds - those of the landed Indian gentry and of the native Ugandans amid wrenching turmoil. Quietly and crisply written, all of Nanji’s characters are beautifully realized, morally nuanced and compellingly crafted.” --- Governor General’s Literary Awards - Canada Council for the Arts. In August 1972, President Idi Amin declares that a message from God has come to him in a dream: all foreign Indians must be “weeded out” of Uganda in the next ninety days. Fifteen-year-old Sabine and her father, a successful businessman, are confident that their family will not be affected, since they are Ugandan citizens, but Sabine’s fearful mother is certain that they will have to leave. As the ninety days tick by, the President’s message “œ the “countdown monster,” as Sabine calls it “œ is broadcast every day on the radio, and life becomes more difficult for her family and other Indians in Uganda. Sabine tries to hold on to her optimism, counting on her best friend, Zena, and her grandfather, Bapa, to keep her spirits up, but after her beloved uncle Zulfiqar disappears and Zena turns against her, Sabine begins to share her mother’s fears. When a new law is declared on the radio “œ all Indians must leave “œ Sabine and her family have a hard decision to make. Should they stay and defend their rights, or should they go? And how will they begin a new life in a different land?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6-9 •Fifteen-year-old Sabine lives a life of luxury with her wealthy Indian

family in Kampala, Uganda. Then Idi Amin comes to power and things change quickly. All British Indians are expelled from the country. Sabine's father thinks they will be safe because they are Ugandan citizens, but they soon discover that they are in serious danger. Sabine's beloved uncle disappears, and her friend Zena, who is African, turns against her because Zena's military uncle has convinced her that the Ugandan Indians have exploited the African populace. The book effectively portrays the rising terror and violence in 1972 as Sabine struggles to deal with a world falling apart. Prejudices are clearly delineated, and the thin veneer of civilization crumbles as the chilling background beat of the radio relentlessly counts down the days left before all British Indians must leave the country. Sabine is a mature, intelligent character amid the chaos, and the political situation is well realized through her eyes. Secondary characters add depth to the story, and Sabine's star-crossed crush on Zena's older brother makes her a realistic adolescent. Nail-biting suspense is maintained to the end as Sabine must make the agonizing decision to leave her grandfather behind to save the rest of the family. Excellent historical fiction about a timely yet sadly universal subject.

•Quinby Frank, Green Acres School, Rockville, MD Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Sabine is 15 years old in the summer of 1972, when Ugandan president Idi Amin issues his proclamation that all "foreign Indians" must leave the country within 90 days. Unlike many of the Indians in their Kampala community, Sabine was born in Uganda, and although she is of Indian ancestry, she feels as much a Ugandan as her best friend, Zena, an "ethnic African." As the countdown continues, though, the terrifying street violence reaches into Sabine's home, and she realizes that despite her family's Ugandan citizenship, they aren't immune from the president's decree. Nanji, who grew up in East Africa, exposes a period of shocking, rarely viewed political history in this vivid story that makes the horrors feel both personal and universal. Sabine's close, realistic friendship with Zena, who admires "Dada Amin," mirrors societal warfare over issues of class, race, and nationhood. The story's authentic emotions and relationships balance the detailed cultural and historical explanations and combine in a gripping story of a remarkable teen who helps her family face impossible loss. Grades 7-12. --Gillian Engberg --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

I have been for the last 10-11 years part of a wonderful Book Club. We call ourselves "The Book

Gems". Over the years we have read the finest literature ever. We are a very close knit group of very intelligent, passionate, knowledgable and sensitive ladies. Many times we touched on my history and how my family had ended up in Britain from Uganda. So when it came to my turn I researched and found that there were not many books written about Uganda and the experiences of what the foreign Indians went through at the hand of Dada Idi Amin. This is part of history that not many people around the world know about. I was born in Jinja Uganda in 1966 and just 6 years later President Dada Idi Amin ordered an expulsion of all Foreign Indians and he imposed the 90 day count-down. This is my history and part of my life that has been deeply engraved in my memory. Reading Child of Dandelions really bought back the reality of what had gone on during this period. I loved the book because of that. It finally allowed me to let "The Book Gems". to feel for themselves the actual truth, the fear and sacrifices my family and other indian families had to make. It is a must read for all to find the terror and the truth about Uganda and Dada Ide Amin. I also choose The Shattered Pearl by Sara Armstrong to read along side Child of Dandelions both are easy reads but the knowledge acquired is of any history lecture given on Uganda. I loved both books. Greatly written and a very compelling story.

I enjoyed the book as I had a similar background and was curious about reading someone's experience on the topic. I was younger than her at the time so it was interesting for me to see what it was like for my older cousins during Amin's deportation.

Idi Amin's reign of terror in Uganda included the ethnic cleansing of Uganda's Indian minorities. This book, from the perspective of a young girl, a Ugandan citizen but born to a family of successful Muslim Indian businesspeople, showcases the first tendency of socialists: DIVIDE AND ATTACK. Idi Amin singled out the talented and successful people in Uganda for elimination, gave them fair warning: 90 days until the exterminations begin, but then jumped the gun and started the political killings early. Sabine, the hero of this story, watches as her culture, friendships, and family are swept away by the evil of socialism. Watches as her girlhood friend is turned into a child prostitute for the President. Watches as her family is blamed for their successes and resilience by scummy soldiers motivated by greed. Sabine develops a "blame the victim" mindset: "Aunty, it is our fault. We took advantage of them..." p. 180. Understandable in the character, but false. Parents should be aware that Sabine travels to a cold-storage warehouse where the mutilated bodies of tortured political prisoners wait to be identified and dumped into the crocodile-infested lake for disposal. She sees the maimed corpses, and so does the reader. Various types of torture-killings are described with friendly

names: "helicopter treatment," "hammer treatment," etc. Also, Sabine barely escapes being raped by a soldier as she tries to get her paperwork to flee the regime. Lower age limit of 14, is my recommendation.

I think I had heard somewhere before about the expulsion of Indians from Uganda, but beyond a vague recollection I knew nothing about it. Nanji has done teenagers a service with this novel, which tells the story of an episode in recent African history that's been all but forgotten in the West. Idi Amin came out against the wealthy Indian minority in Uganda and gave the entire population ninety days to get out of the country or die. Sabine's family believes the order doesn't apply to them because they are Ugandan citizens who have been living in Africa for generations, but they quickly learn that such niceties mean little to the dictator and his henchmen. Nanji resists the temptation to turn the characters into stereotypes; there are no all evil or all good people in this novel, but you see shades of gray in each one: Sabine's racist but kind family friend. Sabine's family's loyal African servant, who thinks of her family as his own. Sabine's African best friend who worships Idi Amin and agrees that, for the good of Uganda, the Indians must go. Her friend's uncle who is one of those abusing the Indians but protects Sabine's family at risk to himself. Sabine's grandfather, who's carrying a secret. Occasional phrases in African and Indian languages are sprinkled throughout and add authenticity without being distracting. This story is taut and suspenseful. As the countdown continues and the tensions escalate, readers will keenly feel Sabine's fear and uncertainty. A fine work; I would recommend it, and read this author again.

Child of Dandelions is a heart-rending story of Sabine - a teenager living in Uganda. Nanji's storytelling is pure and Sabine's (mis)adventure is full of the sights and sounds of Uganda in the 1970s when Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of some 80,000 Indians. Nanji - a children's book author has made an impressive debut into the Young Adult genre with her new book!

Vaishali Sharma lends her smooth and evocative voice to Shenaaz Nanji's CHILD OF DANDELIONS, a story of politics and danger about the expulsion of Indians from Uganda in 1972. Here teen Sabine is part of two worlds, and sees both of them wrenched and dying in a moving story.

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