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The Girl Who Stole an Elephant

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

Set in the lush landscape of the ancient Sri Lankan land of Serendib, Chaya is a Robin Hood for her times, stealing from the rich to alleviate the misfortunes of the poor. She is outspoken, and staunch in her beliefs about standing up for what's right, but goes a step too far by stealing the queen's jewels. When her friend Neel is arrested as the culprit, Chaya must not only break him out of the King's prison, but run for her life through the jungle, and hope that she can find them both a happy ending.

Farook excels at creating a setting brimming with colour and life. From the elephant Chaya inadvertently uses to escape, through to a jungle encounter with a leopard, the feel of leeches on the skin, and the sanctuary of water when needed, the jungle feels vivid and vibrant. Farook also draws a clear picture of the King's palace and temple, with briefly captured descriptions that work well as the plot forges forwards with pace.

Chaya is accompanied on her journey by her friend Neel, and also acquaintance Nour, and the conversations between the three, particularly the two girls, serve not only as a reminder of their child status with an authenticity to their banter and bickering, but also remind the reader of the true meaning of friendship - there is wisdom and warmth here.

Having a main character so forthright and adventurous means that readers are not only swept along in her wake, but can also debate the rights and wrongs of her impetuous actions. Frequently coming across danger, Chaya makes immediate decisions, often with severe consequences, and the book succeeds at making the reader empathise with not only Chaya, but her friends too.

The language is simple and the chapters short and pacy, making it a swift read for the age group, but this pace means that the plot is slightly let down by a simplicity in motivation and a lack of moral nuance. Arguments are easily resolved and forgotten, and despite the good twist, the book feels rather too quickly concluded.

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