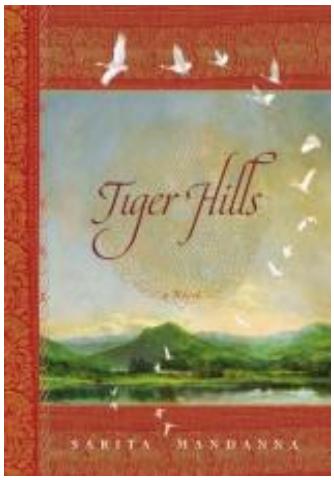
Tiger Hills

by Sarita Mandanna



About the Book

In 1878, Coorg in Southern India is lush with jungles and coffee plantations. It is idyllic, and on the brink of change.

Even before Devi was born, her family knew she was special. Not only is she the first girl to be born to the Nachimandas in more than sixty years, she soon proves to be strikingly beautiful. Confident and carefree, Devi draws the attention of Devanna, a quiet boy whose young life is already touched by tragedy. Rarely apart, the children grow up ?like two eggs in a nest.? For Devanna, there is no one else but Devi.

When the two attend a tiger wedding, a celebration of a successful hunt, Devi meets Machu, the handsome tiger killer. That night she vows to marry him when she is older. Soon after, Devanna leaves to study medicine, dreaming of one day returning to marry Devi.

Devi grows into an alluring young woman, and soon she and Machu are lovers, waiting for the right time to marry. But before they can publicly declare their love, Devanna comes home from medical school having endured a term of extreme bullying and a horrific assault. The reunion of these two childhood friends leads to devastating consequences that are both immediate and lasting.

Devi marries Devanna reluctantly and together they raise Nanju, who looks and behaves so much like his father and grows up sensing his mother?s indifference. Machu, not knowing the full story, is hurt that Devi didn?t wait for him, and so he marries and also bears a son, Appu. The tragedy deepens when Machu dies. Determined to do right by her lover, Devi convinces Machu?s wife to let her have Appu, whom she raises as her own.

The two boys grow up in a confusing, increasingly unfamiliar India, but harder to navigate is their family dynamics.

Devi showers Appu with attention and opportunities, as Nanju is continually ignored. It is only when Nanju seems lost forever does Devi realize she was not the only victim of heartache.

Beautifully written and magnificent in scope, *Tiger Hills* is a stunning meditation on the power of love and the repercussions our choices have on our lives as well as the lives of those around us. Debut novelist Sarita Mandanna has crafted an extraordinary tale that has critics all over the world applauding the emergence of this ?major new talent? and ?powerful new voice? to the international literary scene.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the symbolism of the herons.

2. Devanna becomes devoted to the study of medicine. How does Devanna's love of science benefit him and his loved ones? How does it hurt them?

3. People pay their respects to Goddess Kaveri, whose free spirit is embodied by the Kaveri River. They are duty-bound and devoted to something that represents freedom. Discuss other ways in this story in which the land frees characters and restrains them.

4. Just when Devi seems about to give up on life, she is inspired by the phrase "One must fight for happiness." How did Devi interpret this statement? Do you agree with her interpretation?

5. Machu wonders "Who truly is the hunter and who the hunted?" Discuss the ways each character is both hunter and hunted.

6. What do you think of the Reverend's relationship with Devanna?

7. How does Devi's differing attitudes towards her sons affect them?

8. Baby feels out of place with Appu's contemporaries and would rather stay home than attend the soirees at the Club. How does Baby and Appu's relationship mirror India's changing political and cultural landscape?

9. After years of searching, the rare bamboo flower is discovered, but Devanna decides not to claim it, realizing, "Some things were better left unspoiled." What does he mean?

10. It took Devi a lifetime to forgive. Do you think she should have done so earlier? Why or why not? How did this impact her life?

Author Bio

Sarita Mandanna is from Coorg, the stunning setting of Tiger Hills. She has an MBA from the Wharton School of Business, a PGDM from the Indian Institute of Management, and was most recently a private equity professional in New York City. Tiger Hills is her debut novel.

Critical Praise

Set in Southern India at the end of the nineteenth century, Mandanna's magnificent debut follows the fortunes of two childhood friends throughout their lives...Once the story gets going, it is impossible to stop reading Mandanna's spellbinding epic.

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