One Flew Over the Banyan Tree

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A narrative that unravels in the fictitious setting of Victoria Island is rich in eccentricities, from quirky and colourful characters to lively dialect. Peppering his tale with gentle humour, the author draws on his own childhood to paint a vivid and absorbing picture of a time gone by.

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One Flew Over the Banyan Tree tells the story of Rohan, an impressionable 11-year-old transplanted to the home of his crotchety and imperious grandmother following the family's abandonment by his father. The lad's adventures with a diverse cast of characters in the British colonial setting of Victoria Island were inspired by debut author Alan Jansen's own childhood in Sri Lanka. Educated at St. Joseph's College in Colombo, Jansen moved to Sweden in 1976 and has lived there ever since.

The personalities Rohan encounters at the illegal breakfast joint near his grandmother's house may not be quite as madcap as those found in the Ken Kesey

novel whose title this book plays on, but their shenanigans are just as humorous and entertaining. These ‘breakfast-eaters’, as well as Rohan’s overbearing grandmother, paint a vivid picture of life in British colonial Sri Lanka.

The idiosyncratic quality of the story is further heightened with a philosophizing canine by the name of Strangefellow. The world’s only tree climbing dog, Strangefellow spends his time at Nameless (as everyone calls the shanty restaurant at the heart of the action), ruminating on the lives of the ‘two legs’ that surround him, offering insights into the dramas of society’s underclass. The chatter of the breakfast-eaters, meanwhile, functions as a Greek chorus commenting on the main plotline of the novel, the two narratives weaving together to create a tapestry both lighthearted and engaging.

Jansen, who built a career in Sweden as a telecommunications engineer and only came to writing after retirement, credits the tone of his debut novel to influences including P G Wodehouse, Roald Dahl and O Henry. Further evidence of the author’s love of literature can be found in the short verses that introduce and set the tone for each of the book’s eight chapters, which range from nursery rhymes to poetry by the 12th-century Persian philosopher Omar Khayyam.

One Flew Over the Banyan Tree, which is print-on-demand, is available online via websites including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and the self-publishing company iUniverse. The author is currently residing in Stockholm, where he has lived for the past 15 years. He is engaged in a second career in writing following early retirement and has two other unpublished works to his name, in the supernatural and science fiction genres respectively.

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