



Panther

David Owen

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Life isn't going terribly well for Derrick; he's become severely overweight, his only friend has turned on him, he's hopelessly in love with a girl way out of his league, and it's all because of his sister. Her depression, and its grip on his family, is tearing his life apart. When rumours start to circulate that a panther is roaming wild in his south London suburb, Derrick resolves to try and capture it. Surely if he can find a way to tame this beast, he'll be able to stop everything at home from spiraling towards disaster?

Panther is a bold and emotionally powerful novel that deals candidly with the effects of depression on those who suffer from it, and those who suffer alongside them.

Panther Details

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Author : David Owen

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From Reader Review Panther for online ebook

Michelle (Fluttering Butterflies) says

Very emotional and, in parts, painful to read. I'm finding it difficult to find the right words for how I felt about this story.

Panther by David Owen wasn't an easy book to read. It's a pretty short book and I sat down to read it thinking I'd whiz through it in a couple of hours. And that didn't happen. In fact, it took me almost three days to read the entirety its (roughly) 230 pages. And that is because this is a slim book packed full of issues and circumstances that are emotional and sometimes difficult and uncomfortable reading. And I just felt like, though this book also includes humour and light-heartedness, that this book was one that needed long breaks in between chapters.

And maybe I'm not selling this book very well right now, but I felt like those breaks from reading were necessary because I was connecting with this story on an emotional level and I felt like a lot of it felt very realistic and that it captured some really intense things in a really great way.

Panther's main character is this overweight teenage boy called Derrick. At the beginning of this novel, Derrick is in his garden late at night, eating junk food out of the rubbish bin. It's a very hard scene to jump into this story with, but very indicative of what's to come, I felt. Because Panther is the story about Derrick and his family and how him and his mother are coping with the depression and suicide attempt of Derrick's older sister, Charlotte.

Derrick is also dealing with bullies at school, the fall-out in the friendship with his old best friend, Tamoor, and his unrequited feelings for one of his sister's friends, Hadley. So, things aren't going so great for Derrick. Which, I think, is probably why he turns to disordered eating in order to have some control over one aspect of his life. Derrick also has this misguided belief that if he somehow manages to capture and prove the existence of a rumoured panther in the area that things will become better for Charlotte and his whole family and he really throws himself into this task.

I felt like Derrick and his mother both fall into the same sort of mindset. The one that says 'things will be different when...' and for Derrick, he believes this will be when he captures the panther and for Derrick's mom, it seems to be when Charlotte goes off to university and faces this bright future that Charlotte had ahead of her. These sort of thoughts are so common but can also be really damaging as it doesn't address the problems at hand.

I think one of the things that I think Panther did very well is to illustrate both how much the rest of a family is affected by one person's depression and the ways things change because of it and also paints a really great and complicated relationship between siblings. Charlotte's depression has very clear effect on the rest of her family. Through Derrick and Charlotte's mother you can see a lot of fear and worry and I felt like Derrick became very uncertain of everything.

It isn't a perfect story. At times, I really didn't like Derrick as a character and the ending isn't my favourite. But I also think that this book was really interesting and had thought-provoking things to say about depression and families and about how who we are and things we do plays an important part in the people around us.

Taneika says

Almost every review I've seen has been praising this book to the skies, saying how amazing it is and how it represents depression in such an incredible way. I personally couldn't see it, like, I get what the author was trying to do, however it was just TOO metaphorical for me (if that makes sense m) and I could NOT get past the fact that the main character was such a creep and that was just supposed to be accepted by the reader??? Idk. The main character made me feel uncomfortable.

While I took this as a metaphorical novel, others may interpret it very different to how I have so may enjoy it more. I just found it too difficult to read

Joanne says

Originally posted on Once Upon a Bookcase.

Panther by David Owen, a book focusing on the experience of living with someone with depression, had me gripped from the very first page. An amazing, realistic portrayal.

Derrick's older sister, Charlotte, has depression, and it's affecting everyone. To Derrick, home is no longer a place of comfort, but a place of walking on eggshells around Charlotte, so as not to upset. Three months ago, Charlotte attempted to commit suicide, and his life has gone from bad to worse. His best friend has ditched him, he stands no chance of ending up with the girl he fancies, Hadley, and he's put on a huge amount of weight - and it's all Charlotte's fault. When there are rumours of a panther roaming his town, Derrick puts two and two together; the panther appeared around the same time as Charlotte's incident, and is sure this can't be a coincidence. If he can catch the panther, everything will be ok - Charlotte will get better, and his life will go back to normal. But how do you go about catching a panther?

This is a really fantastic story of living with someone who has depression. There are quite a few books out with protagonists suffering with depression, but they focus mainly on the central character. However, depression affects more than just the person who is suffering with it, but also those around them, and with Panther, David Owen brilliantly shows just what this can be like.

Derrick is having a really hard time dealing with Charlotte's depression. He blames for everything that's going wrong in his life, and is just so angry with her. And also guilty, that he can't seem to be able to help her. As someone who has been in Derrick's position of living with someone with depression, I found his anger really callous. He doesn't really understand what depression is, but for most of the story. As far as he's concerned, if you're having a crap time, you don't throw huge crying and screaming fits and throw things about the room like a child having a tantrum, you just get on with it like everyone else. He's so angry and so frustrated, and can't stand being in that house. He doesn't seem to try to understand, either. He's too busy blaming Charlotte for everything - not just everything that's changed, but his bad decisions and the consequences of them, too. *It's all her fault.* Despite my personal reactions to how Derrick handles things, none of this is a criticism of the story. Derrick doesn't get it, and his reaction is pretty realistic of a young guy who's a little selfish, and just wants his life back. Saying all this, he does genuinely care about his sister and wants her to get better, wants to help her, he just doesn't know how. Which is where hunting the panther comes in. He gets it into his head that this is something he can do, something that will fix everything, and he

fixates on it.

Derrick has his own issues, too. The book opens with Derrick in an alley, rooting through bin bags for cookies. He's put on a lot of weight because he binges. His need to binge is a physical pain in his stomach, a need he has to fill. He knows it's a bad idea, he hates the way it's changing his body, but it's a compulsion he struggles to fight. With everything that's going wrong around him being out of his control, bingeing, even though it's bad for him, is a bad thing that *he* has control over. His bingeing is happening because he has made a choice, because he puts the food in his mouth. He's punishing himself for not being able to fix anything else, but temporarily feels better for having some kind of control over something. It's really upsetting to read, and I just felt so sorry for him. He also makes some bad choices and does things that are also worrying and disturbing; Derrick is quite clearly not a guy who is coping well. It would have been nice to have seen him get some kind of help, to have someone to talk to maybe. However, if he did, we would have a completely different story, and I think it's important to see why help might be needed in the first place.

The panther. This was a really interesting part of the story. There is a panther roaming in Derrick's town; everyone's talking about it and it's in the news. However, for most of the book, I was never entirely sure whether Derrick ever actually saw the panther, or whether he was imagining things. Derrick's mind definitely played tricks on him whenever these confrontations took place, emphasising further just how bad Derrick is getting, but whether the panther was ever actually there, I'm not sure. It's possible that it might be a complete coincidence, but I like the idea that Charlotte was suffering with depression, which can be known as the black dog, and Derrick is out trying to catch a black cat to make it all right again. For Derrick, the panther did become intrinsically linked with Charlotte's depression, and was almost a physical representation of it - trap the panther, and depression can no longer trap them. I really like this extra layer to the story, even if it's just my interpretation of it.

Though at times a difficult read, Panther is a really incredible, important and powerful story; moving and very real. A brilliant debut I highly recommend.

Thank you to Corsair for the proof.

Nuzaifa - Word Contessa says

THE REVIEW

Every once in a while you come across a book that takes you by surprise. A sucker punch to the heart. Deceptively simple but astonishingly powerful.

All you can do is grip the book and let the tide of raw emotions wash over you.

Panther follows the story of friendless, severely overweight outcast Derrick who is obsessed with a girl who does not reciprocate his feelings. His sister, Charlotte is fighting depression but she is not the only one struggling.

Depression has torn Derrick's family apart and has drastically changed his life. When news spreads that there is a panther on the loose, Derrick makes it his mission to capture it. He somehow believes that in trapping the beast he would finally be able to fix his family and prevent his life from falling apart. The hunt consumes his thoughts and every time he fails to capture the beast, he feels powerless and out of control. As everything

spins out of control, Derrick grapples for control. He tries to achieve control by eating believing that this time, it he who controls the terrible things that are happening to him.

Owen's portrayal of depression and eating disorders was raw and unflinchingly honest. Every emotion came to life within the pages and I felt as powerless and hopeless as Derrick did as he was swept into chaos. Mental illnesses has an effect not just on its victims but on the people around the victim too. Panther explores these struggles in a realistic way and doesn't shy away from the painful truth about depression.

I adored the way Owen had portrayed the beast as the depression and all the other terrible things in Derrick's life. His obsession with capturing the panther stems from his belief that capturing the beast means that he will finally be able to the defeat the monster that is depression. As Derrick's obsession grows reality and fantasy soon become indistinguishable.

Panther brilliantly captures the struggle that people when grappling for control when everything else is madness. Owen's compelling writing depicts the chaos of depression and the fragile balance between hope and hopelessness in an authentic manner.

There is so much stigma associated with mental illnesses so it was absolute wonderful to see Owen tackle this subject with both the honesty and sensitivity that it requires.

THE RATING

4 and half Stars

QUOTE-WORTHY

Eating was the only thing left in his life that he could control. No one held any power over it but himself.

Every single time he did this, he thought the junk food - the punishment - would make him feel better. And it always did. For a little while at least. Until it came to dealing with the consequences. At least they were consequences that he'd caused himself.

FINAL VERDICT:

David Owen's wonderful Young Adult debut, Panther snuck up on me and wrecked my heart and soul. It is the kind of book that stays with you even after you turn the final page. Not to be missed.

Kirsty says

Actual rating: 2.5

I didn't really enjoy this book it took me a very long time to get into. The story follows the main character who is struggling with depression and an eating disorder. Derrick becomes obsessed with finding a panther that has been seen recently. The panther is used as a metaphor for depression.

What I liked about this book is that the main character is male and that the author has chosen to show that depression and eating disorders are not just suffered by females. I feel as if the majority of books that I read that cover mental health illnesses have female main characters and it is important to show male characters, as well as this, is often not discussed as much as it should be. I also liked that we got to see the impact that it had on the whole family, not just the main character. I also thought it was good how the author highlighted how depression affects people differently which I think is important as it isn't necessarily just one type of behaviour or feeling that can be caused by it.

I personally was not too keen on the metaphor of the book. I understood why the panther was being used however something about it did not quite work for me. I also didn't really like the main character.

Overall this book wasn't really for me but I do appreciate the topic that the author highlighted in this book. I prefer *The Fallen Children* which is the author's most current release and I am looking forward to his next book *All the Lonely People*.

Steph says

I love the idea of this book but in reality it's probably a bit too metaphoric for me. And definitely will be for the majority of my students. This is a shame really because it gives a very realistic depiction of living with depression, and not just for the person who has it.

Wren says

22978674

Amazon / Goodreads

Life isn't going terribly well for Derrick; he's become severely overweight, his only friend has turned on him, he's hopelessly in love with a girl way out of his league, and it's all because of his sister. Her depression, and its grip on his family, is tearing his life apart. When rumours start to circulate that a panther is roaming wild in his south London suburb, Derrick resolves to try and capture it. Surely if he can find a way to tame this beast, he'll be able to stop everything at home from spiraling towards disaster?

Panther is a bold and emotionally powerful novel that deals candidly with the effects of depression on those who suffer from it, and those who suffer alongside them.

Note: This book really affected me. And I'll reveal more about myself than I ever have before. I hope my truth doesn't deter you, dear readers. Thank you for reading.

Derrick is someone I related to. I am someone who is conscious of everything I do. My weight is always with me. I can't stand my weight. (The fact is that I'm at a perfectly normal weight.) I preach the importance of not judging yourself. I'm such a hypocrite. I had a certain connection with Derrick. There are things we have in common. If I let go and forgot my restrictions, I would wear a XXL. Why? I can't help but eat at times. This is similar to what Derrick goes through. He controls the uncontrollable by eating. It's the only way he can control his life. Which is quite fascinating. Control is only in your mind. Control isn't actually

there. Unless we're talking about controlling other organisms. It's the thought of control. The thought that you MIGHT have control.

With the shit happening in his life, there is a reason Derrick needs control. I can see that.

And as he spirals downwards, you feel the madness attacking you. You feel it crawling on your skin. The thoughts of the Beast. The obsession with his 'love'. (That was actually really creepy.) He was obsessed. I feel that this reflects his inner demons and their war on his mind. It definitely shows something is wrong. I hate to agree with Tamoor...but it did look like Derrick was going crazy. I'm not sure why. Stress? Ridicule? I don't know. But I know you can't always explain everything.

Derrick is fascinating. We don't see much of his life from before everything happened. I know this, though. He was very different. Physically. Mentally. Things really spiraled downwards for him.

And the metaphor with the Beast. Gah. That was beautiful. Truly.

I loved it. It really gave tangible form to depression. You could swallow it easier.

The Beast is a hunter. It pounces on its next victim. It consumes your mind. You have to catch it, throw it out. It is the perfect metaphor. Not just for depression. For the madness within oneself. For the craziness. For the inner turmoil. I loved that. It was amazing.

Things like depression are hard to understand. They're intangible unlike a tumor. You can't touch it.

Medicine doesn't always work. Surgery won't help. (Don't dare suggest lobotomy. That makes things worse.)

You don't know how it is unlike it's affected someone you care for or if you have it. It's like a virus floating along. (Gah. Bad simile...) David Owen gave depression a body. A host. Something people could have and hate or want to get rid of in Derrick's case. And it also gives Derrick a chance to become obsessed. (With ridding it/depression from his family.)

Such a wonderful metaphor.

The plot...not bad. The beginning is a bit dull, but as the story progresses, you see how much drama this book contains.

The beginning. A bit boring. It sets the stage. A depressed sister who tried to end her life. A tired mother. A father who left. An overweight main character. All set somewhere in England. (London? I think it's London.) It's near the end of the school year. Summer is coming. We have Derrick who is trying to be in control. And we have him skipping class after an embarrassing recording. (Wow. What was that about? What was he doing? I'm not sure.) We have the scene being set. Not the most interesting thing of all.

The middle of the book reveals so much more. Derrick starts to spiral. He starts the hunt. He skips even more! The middle is dramatic. But not as dramatic as the end. (That ending...) We see Derrick spiral. It's so sad that he spirals further.

I was surprised by the ending. Really. I didn't expect it. Wow. Who knew? The story seemed to hint at Derrick NOT gaining self understanding. And that's what I thought. I thought, 'Okay... Not going to end on a high note? Alright. Screw happy endings.' While it would be wrong to say this had a happy ending, I won't say that it was the worst-case scenario.

And how dramatic was this ending? On a scale of one to ten with one being the lowest and ten being the highest, this ending was a fifteen. I've read drama before. Indeed. That's what happens with most contemporary. (Because you can't have too much action in real life.) I was thrown. Everything of importance happens in the ending. Wow. Just wow. I was breathless reading it. Not the good or bad kind of breathless. Just breathless.

David Owen. Thank you for writing about this. This isn't just how depression affects the person with it. This is about his or her family. Friends. Teachers. Classmates. It shows how depression affects everyone.

And the way you wrote it... The way you portrayed depression seemed to echo reality. It was practically real. I feel like this is amazing. Correctly representing something shares the truth. Just writing about it is one

thing. Correct representation is another entirely.

Thank you for writing this.

Weather:

Sunny with a few clouds

4.5/5

Anne says

David Owen is clever. His story is clever and his use of the Panther is very very clever.

There have been sighting in residential London streets of a Panther, and Derrick is determined that he will track it down and catch it. As far as Derrick is concerned, his family troubles began when the Panther was spotted. If he can get rid of it, he can make his family happy again.

Derrick also knows that when he has caught the Panther he won't feel the need to gorge himself on junk food any more. He won't have to make secret trips to the supermarket, or rummage around in dustbins to find his fix. He won't have to buy size XXXL t shirts from the charity shop and he will be able to find a pair of jeans that fit him.

When the Panther has been caught, Derrick's sister will stop crying. There won't be any more 'incidents'. The scars on her arms will fade and his Mum will be able to put the kitchen knives back into the drawers instead of hiding them in her bedroom.

Maybe, just maybe, when the Panther has been caught, Derrick's Mum and Dad will start getting on again, and maybe Dad will move back in.

There are scenes in this novel that so emotionally difficult, the words vividly show the anguish and despair of this teenage boy whose family has imploded. Using the Panther as a metaphor for the depressive illness that has torn the family apart is genius; the snarling, the ripping apart, the devastation and the fear caused by something that nobody can see, but everyone knows is there.

I haven't told you what the story is, I don't intend to. What I hope to have done is to make sure that you are so curious that you go out and buy a copy of this book immediately. I promise you that you won't be disappointed. You may feel a little emotionally battered by it, but you will feel a sense of awe. It really is that good.

I am certain that Panther is going to be a huge success for David Owen. He is a very exciting new talent, certainly a name to watch out for.

Rapunzel says

A bit disappointd in this one. I had high hopes for it, seeing how well it did in other reviews, and also because it seemed like a pretty whole hearted attempt to depict mental illness.

But the story feels disjointed and poorly thought out, and the middle 40% of the book is essentially the same plot points repeated for emphasis. Personally I found it a tiring read, one that I couldn't wait to be over with. I didn't like any of the characters — legitimately, not a single one.

It was a good portrayal of depression, but not a great story.

Christina Owen says

I sat and read this book in one go. I genuinely could not put it down. I had to know if Derrick could catch the Panther and save his family. I desperately wanted him to, and I rooted for all the characters as if they were old friends, or members of my own family. It's powerful and heartbreaking, funny at times and always completely genuine. If you've ever been young, or depressed, or part of a family (which is all of us) then you'll recognise yourself somewhere in this novel. It's for young adults but actually it's for everybody.

Abigail Ainley says

I read this book in one sitting! In all honesty, I think this book has a lot of novelty whilst still touching on a subject that many people have tried and failed to portray previously.

Panther gifts a story of depression from the perspective of the sufferer's brother, Derrick. Throughout the story, Derrick loses himself deeper and deeper inside an eternal pit of madness. Although written in the style of a middle grade novel, Derrick's madness is a very emotional journey and is often quite disturbing. I'd recommend this book to absolutely anyone. This book has no specific audience and could best be described as being a must-read for anyone who, well, reads!

Kate says

This is an extract from the full review at [If These Books Could Talk](#)

Derrick's life is miserable; due to severe comfort eating he's become incredibly overweight, he's friendless – a victim of vicious bullying at school, and the girl he's adored has only ever been a platonic friend. The cause of Derrick's misery? His sister Charlotte's depression. Since her attempted suicide, nothing has been the same for the family, from his mum obsessively removing all the knives to frantically stock-piling supplies for Charlotte to take to University – clinging desperately to the hope that she'll be 'well' enough to pass her exams and be accepted. So it's no surprise that Derrick takes solace in a local obsession.

I read a *lot* of first-time novelists, but only occasionally do I find one who so expertly gets their message across so succinctly and with such powerful imagery. Owen clearly understands the impact of words not only for descriptive purposes, but also through conversations. When Derrick and his sister talk, there's the perfect combination of love and contempt that only siblings share, mixed with genuine fear from both parties when confronted with Charlotte's illness. Owen portrays a mother's anguish and guilt with realism and heart allowing us to deeply empathise with her situation.

Although billed as 'funny', 'Panther' is not an easy read, and rarely 'laugh-out-loud' humorous. The depictions of depression's victims are at times shocking and unexpected, with often nothing to soften the

blows, but this lack of sugar-coating is a welcome respite from some of the more 'sicklier' YA novels out there.

Powerful, moving, and emotional, Derrick's is a story that will resonate for many, hopefully for a very long time.

Vicky says

I keep saying this – and I'm sure I'll say it again – but depression and mental illness are not easy subjects to tackle. It's not an easy thing to digest as a reader, but it's even more difficult to write about these issues in a genuine and original way. However, David Owen did a fantastic job with his debut and *Panther* is just as brilliant and thought-provoking as I hoped it would be.

The story starts in a dark alleyway behind Derrick's house where he's eating stale, days old cookies out of a dustbin. Two paragraphs in, and I'm already hooked. It's a bold yet perfectly eye-opening start, and you cannot help but wonder how things got this bad and what on earth drove Derrick to eat sodden cookies out of a bin for the past few months.

The rest of the story is just as captivating as the beginning and I'm not exaggerating when I say I read it in one sitting. In the following 22 chapters, we get a glimpse of how his sister's depression affects Derrick's family and everyone around them, how helpless and out of control they feel, and how each of them cope – or rather fail to cope – with Charlotte's illness. I loved the fact that we heard the story from Derrick's perspective rather than Charlotte's, as I felt it made the story even more unique (and even more heartbreaking, if that's possible).

Read more >>

Hannah says

Striking, tender and beautifully written, 'Panther' is a remarkable debut novel that will leave you gasping for breath. It explores the impact depression has on those surrounding the sufferer, and the desperate need to control when all around is chaos. Derrick is an endearing, funny and flawed character who will no doubt appeal to the vulnerable adolescent inside of you. Read it and be prepared to laugh, cry, and tingle.

And remember, beware of the Beast.

Stevie Finegan (SableCaught) says

To watch my video review follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R18Cj...>

Or simply read the script for my review below.

You know, I received this book, read this book, carried it around for days in the doing so, and still, it was only yesterday, only when showing it's ruddy cover to a friend, that I finally noticed the boy's silhouette within the big cat's grasp. Might have to take 'observant' off the cv.

-Intro-

Derrick's life has been falling apart; his only friend has abandoned him, his weight has rapidly spiraled out of control, and his sister wants to die. A few months ago she attempted suicide and ever since a stifling black cloud has sat over their house, over their family, suffocating every element of their lives.

And now Derrick is obsessed with the panther. Reports have been flooding in of a beast roaming the allotments, the woods, the gardens of their local neighbourhood. Nothing has been confirmed, a great many people don't believe the panther exists at all, but Derrick knows it does. It's stalking his house, preying on his family, and Derrick is sure that if he catches the beast everything will be ok again.

So reading this book I loved it and I hated it. It made me angry and it made cry and wail and gnash my teeth. And, what more serious an accolades can I award a novel? It was able to move me, to make me think, and care, and question, and feel.

The characters it shows - Charlotte consumed by her illness, her mother determined to just get her into university, and Derrick stuffing himself with food until he is sick and obsessing over the capture of a possibly fictional panther - they are all, in their individual ways, flawed. But all their flaws serve to show the reader the depths and snares of mental illness. The distortion on those it directly affects, the aftershocks heaped upon those who come into contact with them and care for them, and the tired and narrow rivulets of depression's discourse, that allow everyone only slightly differing misunderstandings of the thing.

This book, I would argue, for all its dabbling in the fantastical, makes for a very realistic portrayal of living with depression. The unrelenting, the chaotic, the fear and knife-edge thin, precarious balance between hope and despair. That's what we want, isn't it? We want to represent the truth and complexity of a situation, even though that truth and complexity, when finally confronted, when read in a book like this, can be painful. I cannot disguise that this book, in its unflinching reality, can be hard to read, but that doesn't mean it isn't vital to read.

It's definitely one to pick up if you were rocked and roused by Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places*, or if you liked the portrayal of character through beast that was done in Stephanie Kuehn's *Charm and Strange*. I guess since Churchill's *Black Dogs* we'll never be able to escape this animification of illness. But David Owen's *Panther*, like other dark beasts before it, yes, stalks and hounds, but it is also a canvas upon which people's lack of understanding comes forth, it's a foible about which survivors can find one another. Derrick is convinced thinks he must hunt and trap the panther alone, but often, during some of the worst times, the closest catches, there are others with him, trying, even through their ineptitude, to help.

This book doesn't give a simple, packaged answer, no book can really. As Douglas Adams would, I'm sure, point out, we still haven't even figured out the question yet. But *Panther* does present, between its pages, a critically truthful fragment of reality. Next week is the UK's mental health awareness week, and if you want a book which will dispel myths and instead spell intricacies and complexities, *Panther* can bring that for you.

So tell me what you think of the sound of it in the comments down below. I'm also always looking for good books on mental health so do recommend me some of the best you know and I will get a'readin'. Other than that I will see you in my next video, bye guys.

