



## **Bunker 13**

*Aniruddha Bahal*

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## **Bunker 13** Aniruddha Bahal

A brilliant international thriller, set in contemporary Kashmir, about an investigative journalist, espionage, and the temptations of drugs, sex, and corruption in the Indian Army

Our hero, known as MM, is a pleasure-seeking journalist working for an upstart Indian newsweekly. He is also an ex-army cadet with political connections, able to secure exclusive and dangerous assignments in the armed forces with the promise that he'll write about his experiences. But MM has ulterior motives. Over a period of years he has been clandestinely investigating a source of corruption in the guerrilla war on India's frontier: in the midst of skirmishes with the "Mossies" in Kashmir, the sale of arms and drugs--often back to the insurgents they have been seized from--is an ever-renewable source of profit.

MM hits the jackpot when a brutal border-patrol raid on which he is tagging along uncovers an enormous cache of both arms and high-grade heroin; but the goods in hand also provide him with a tempting brokerage opportunity.

Knowing, cynical, highly capable, and deeply motivated, MM is an intriguing new postmodern hero. His action-packed narration of his daredevil, drug- and sex-drenched dangerous life is world-class suspense of an entirely new kind.

## **Bunker 13 Details**

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Author : Aniruddha Bahal

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# From Reader Review Bunker 13 for online ebook

## Lance Charnes says

John Williams' review in the *Guardian* says it all: "Imagine *Catch-22* rewritten by Hunter S. Thompson." Oh, yes.

*Bunker 13* is a box full of crazy. Not only is MM (the antihero protagonist) a corrupt, debauched sociopath, but so is everyone else around him, no matter their station in life. Bahal's take on Indian society -- government, the media, the military, the police, and any other institution you can name -- is breathtakingly cynical and dark, dark, dark. Everything and everyone is for sale and all things can be done with the right grease applied in the right place, especially if (like MM) you're a lunatic. Hunter Thompson comes into the equation with the staggering quantity and variety of pharmaceuticals consumed by most of the characters in numerous atypical ways, such as during a military paradrop.

None of this is to say there's no merit to the story. To the contrary: the shenanigans and the sheer force of MM's personality and his devious schemes pulls you right along from one you-gotta-be-kidding situation to the next with just enough time to catch a breath in between (usually). MM is an unquestionably unique character, with so many layers of deception that anything seems not only possible but likely with him. At times the firehose of prose requires you to simply soak in the words and get the gist when you can.

Ultimately, this is a book to be admired rather than loved. No matter how open-minded you are, you'll find something to offend you or gross you out, or perhaps both. This is *M\*A\*S\*H* on meth, *Catch-22* on a bad acid trip. If that thought appeals to you, dive right into the insanity.

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## Steve Chaput says

Within the first few pages of this unusual novel one is tempted to start the review with something along the lines of "Catch 22 as written by Hunter Thompson." In fact, skimming the 'net I came across several already published reviews that began in just that fashion. I don't begrudge the reviewers for doing it the easy way.

Simply put Bahal tells the story of Minty Mehta (known to everyone as MM) an Indian reporter/investigative journalist covering the Indian military. Told completely in the second-person, the story instantly grabbed me and kept me involved, even during some rather long sections that told me more about the inner workings of the media in modern India than I would ever wish to know. The only other 'second person' narrated novel that immediately comes to mind is *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* by Italo Calvino. Calvino's novel also brings the reader directly into the story as it winds its way to the conclusion.

MM, whose motives for doing what he does remain unclear for much of the book, befriends the maverick Major Rodriguez, a member the Army's Special Forces unit stationed in Kashmir. Rodriguez, like MM, is a man who is more than he appears on the surface. Seemingly a career military man, Rodriguez is involved in any number of illegal smuggling operations. Drugs are only the tip of the iceberg and it becomes evident that MM has something more than profit on his mind as he becomes involved in the black market. Whether it's weapons or drugs MM will do whatever it takes as long as it will allow him access to those with whom Rodriguez works.

Unlike the persona that Hunter Thompson brought into his writings, there is no joy to be had in the drugs that MM uses. The drugs, like the other risk taking in which MM becomes involved, allow Minty to numb his emotions and give him a reason to live. Deeply scarred by the loss of the only woman he ever really loved, MM's indulgence in rough sex, drugs and danger keep him from sinking further into a deepening depression. Rather than Thompson, Bahal's protagonist reminds me more of the characters that peopled the novels of William Burroughs. Men and women who were looking for any immediate rush to fill the void in which they existed.

It is immediately apparent that Bahal knows the shadowy areas of Indian society. Himself an award-winning journalist in his native country, he brings vividly to life a society and culture, which I had never known existed in that country. This isn't the India of Rudyard Kipling, or Paul Scott's Jewel in the Crown, but a society much like our own at least in terms of the values (or lack of them) that are all too apparent in the early years of the twenty-first century. An amazing book, especially from a first time novelist.

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### **Smitha says**

Initially I was bored with all the technical details about the military and the para troopers. But after a few pages it is really hard to put down this one. The ending was amazing and the story is gripping.

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### **Edward says**

Bunker 13 is a deft combination of military action novel and mystery/thriller. The protagonist of the novel is MM, a former military man and undercover reporter who has been trying to break into a case involving Indian Special Forces units in volatile Kashmir. High ranking officers are purportedly seizing captured arms and drugs, selling them to the highest bidder.

MM is an edgy sort of anti-hero with a penchant for drugs and kinky sex. His military skills, cynicism, and habit of mainlining during free-fall parachute jumps gains the admiration of Major Rodriguez, who MM is sure will lead him to the source of the illegal smuggling. His involvement grows deeper, both in the dangerous military underground, and drug-fueled escapades of his new-found accomplices, on the battlefield and in the bedroom. This turns into murder, political corruption, and international double-crossing that dwarfs anything he has seen in his career.

On a top-secret Special Forces operation in Kashmir, a huge bunker containing arms and drugs is uncovered. The plot escalates to an unprecedented level of mayhem which involves guerrilla fighting, espionage, terrorists, Russian mobsters, and nuclear missiles. The reader is never quite sure whose side MM is on, or if he has his own twisted agenda. The action never stops, and the ending is shocking and completely unexpected.

Bunker 13 is written in the second person, which may feel awkward to readers unfamiliar with it. The dialogue is stilted at times, and there are virtually no references to Indian culture that one might expect. But for me these are off-set by the excellent descriptions of the Indian military. Paratrooper training, Special Forces operations, weapons, tactics, and the Indian army command structure are written into the plot in great detail. There are many military action novels which deal with other military forces. Few deal with the Indian armed forces, the fourth largest in the world, so Bunker 13 is a welcome change.

This is not a novel for the fainthearted, but for readers who like offbeat characters, military detail, action, plot twists, and surprising conclusions, I highly recommend Bunker 13.

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### **Manish says**

This book was refreshing for the simple reason that it belongs to a genre that is yet to catch up in India - Espionage thrillers. A corrupt journo colludes with Army officers to hatch a plan to sell confiscated arms, ammo and heroin from Kashmiri militants in the International black market. Delhi's farmhouse parties, history of para trooping, behind the scene action in a weekly etc get adequately covered. Somehow, more importantly, the aura of the army as do-gooders gets broken and hence made it a worthwhile read. The sex scenes and their description justify why Bahal also won the Bad Sex Award for this work. ;)

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### **Orrible Kunt says**

In a way, after you finish the book, a big resounding LoL comes to mind !

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### **Bevan Audstone says**

I really like this book.  
It's the old style, drug filled, triple cross anti - hero.

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### **Vikas says**

One more of the better written books by Indian authors. None of the same love story of Mr. Bahal in fact the story takes many twists and turns and the last part is wonderful.

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### **Karl Lehtinen says**

So much military writing focuses on the US military. Here's a story about the craziness of fighting on the Pakistan/Indian front - with everything from high altitude sky-diving to corrupt platoons running drugs.

There's a lot to like, and it's written well. Some of the plotting gets muddled, to be fair, and the twists and turns stop seeming clever about 75 pages from the end.

Still worth reading, especially if you like any sort of military writing.

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## Abhay Nair says

What a read!!!

A surprise pick. Very macho and eminently readable!

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## Akshat Upadhyay says

My 32nd book of the year. This one, I read back in 2006 when I was a college going kid and has just heard about Aniruddha Bahal because of his links with Tehelka.com. So when buying it, I thought, why not...must be another expose on a political issue, in a fictionalised form. Those were the days of Anuja Chauhan's Battle for Bittora. I was amazed and still am at the irreverence of the content. Its a mindfuck and thats a given.

The anti-hero ie MM or Minty Mehta is a delight to come across. He is someone whom you will not find so overtly in todays society though most of us guys would kill to be like him. He literally has no fucks to give, to anyone. Thank god this book did not come out in todays times with our overindulgence in righteousness or this would have been banned from the word Go. It takes apart the army, the bureaucracy and the fifth estate in ways and means too delicious to reveal. Its a treat to read though may not be for everyone.

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## Pete says

Bahal is a noted renegade journalist in India. This novel takes an obvious nod from Hunter Thompson, but seems contrived and lacks any real momentum. It's interesting in its context of India/Pakistan tensions, but that's about all.

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## Ambar says

Bahal tried to be a cross between Heller, Thompson and Le Carré, and ended up being an affront to all three, and to the literary world as a whole. A well deserved winner of the esteemed bad sex in fiction award, Bunker 13 is spectacularly underwhelming, it's only achievement being revealing the author's fetish for bodily fluids (don't ask). I admire the fact that he tried, but really wish he didn't.

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## n says

First things first: This book is terrible. One of the things I loathe most is poorly written second-person narrative. The *only* way to write a good second-person narrative is to string along a specific path that you want the audience to follow; you, as the author, have to make it so *compelling* for a member of your audience to want to act in the manner in which you describe that they can't imagine the character making another choice. You have to actually set things up *so well* that the overwhelming majority of people, in the case of this book, would have to override their natural instincts. (Unless, of course, the primary audience for this book are all awful men who drug women without their knowledge and engage in shady drug deals and military runs as a Rogue Journalist.) This book doesn't do this in any capacity. At no point would I *ever* act

like MM because MM has absolutely no redeeming qualities, and there are absolutely no *compelling* reasons to make me rationalise a situation the way the author presumes his audience should.

Second: This book is not written in a way that intends for any women to ever read it. That's fine, write it from a male perspective. That isn't the problem. We're used to reading books in that manner and can easily relate. But honestly, this book actively seeks to make women *not* want to continue with it because of its treatment of every female character (nearly 100% of them are there for sex props). This leads me to...

Third: The sex scenes are atrocious. Here are a few pages for examples. It deserves an award with more emphasis than the 'Bad Sex in Fiction'. The scenes are unimaginable. They are so *completely* rubbish that I cannot even *picture* them in my mind at all. And the *phrasing*. I swear, if you want to write bad porn/erotica, write bad porn/erotica. Just stop pretending you're writing a Serious Book.

Fourth: You could take almost every single non-sex chapter and swap them around and have almost no change in the story. That's a *bad sign*.

I don't remember where or who gave this to me, but I just know that whoever said this is 'like Catch-22' has done Heller a disservice. This book is an atrocity.

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### **Pankaj Mullick says**

Works as long it stays a satire but dissolves in to a semi-farce as it attempt a foray in to thriller territory. Still, readable. Deserves the worst 'sex in fiction' award it got.

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