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LionBoy

by Zizou Corder

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Summary



Charlie Ashanti, a young boy in the near future, lives in London with his mum and dad. Both parents are professors and working on a top secret project for the government. London has banned cars because of terrible pollution that caused an asthma epidemic fifteen years earlier.

One day Charlie comes home from school to find his house empty, his mother's laboratory door open, and his mother missing. An alley cat informs him that his mother is gone. Amazingly Charlie understands what the cat is saying because Charlie can talk to cats

The ability to understand cat is of vital importance to Charlie as he searches for his parents, whom he knows have been kidnapped. Charlie and the cats begin a

fantastic journey through back alleys, around the watery wharfs until they come to the Circe, a boat which carries The Most Magnificent Show on Earth: Thibaudet's Royal Floating Circus and Equestrian Philharmonic Academy. The ship is on its way to Paris complete with a cargo of magnificent lions and other big cats.

Charlie's adventures while searching for his parents include helping lions escape from the circus and meeting King Boris of Bulgaria. Stay tuned to find out the answers to the following: Will Charlie find his parents? Will he discover who the kidnappers are? Will he find out who The Chief Executive is, and what the Corporacy is? And most of all, WHY do the kidnappers want his parents and what evil have they planned?

Courtesy: <http://www.onebooktwovillages.org/kidsummary.php?bookid=52518992>



About the Author



Louisa Young was a freelance journalist for many years, writing for national newspapers, motorcycle magazines and women's magazines. She studied history at Trinity College Cambridge, and has of course worked as a street performer, a motorcycle messenger, a cocktail waitress, a singer, and so on. Her first book, *A great task of happiness: the life of Kathleen Scott*, was a biography of her grandmother, the sculptress widow of Scott of the Antarctic. She is also the author of a romantic adventure trilogy for adults and *The book of the Heart*, a cultural history of our most symbolic organ. *LionBoy*, co-written with her daughter Isabel is her first children's novel. She lives in London with her daughter, their lizard Zizou, several spiders and a dead tortoise.

Zizou Corder is Louisa Young and Isabel Adomakoh Young, whose names are too long to fit on the cover of a book. Louisa is an adult and has written five adult books and far too many newspaper and magazine articles; Isabel is a kid and has written mostly schoolwork. The original Zizou is Isabel's Lizard. This is its first novel. They all live in London. Only one goes to school.

Courtesy <http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-corder-zizou.asp>



Book Review

It's a brilliant premise: a boy who can talk to cats (and lions!), a floating circus, and later the Orient Express, for settings, a child out to rescue both lions and his parents, an adventure, with a touch of fantasy, spanning the width of Europe. This should have worked. And it does start to work -- about three quarters of the way through.

The authors (Zizou Corder is a pseudonym for a mother-daughter team) take 194 pages to get the adventure moving. Before that we have 130 pages of the journey of the circus ship to Paris, followed by a 24 page description of the circus itself. Each piece has its fascinations, to be sure, but it gives the whole thing the pacing of a fly in honey -- lots of buzzing, but not getting much of anywhere. Even all that might have worked if Charlie had some personality or voice or humor, but he's pretty much a cipher -- Our Hero Who Speaks to Cats. Those children who make it to the end will be rewarded by a very exciting last section and a cliffhanger ending, and will want the sequel immediately. But many kids won't get that far.

Common Sense Review Reviewed By: [Matt Berman](#)

Mysteriously missing parents, a boy who speaks Cat, an extraordinary floating circus, and a handsome hoodlum villain...get ready for one of the most spectacular adventure stories around! When young Charlie Ashanti returns home one day to find an empty house, he launches immediately into the journey of a lifetime. Sleazy Rafi, a teenage boy who can usually be found lurking around the playground, shows up, claiming that Charlie's parents have gone on a trip. Our hero plays dumb and quickly escapes Rafi's clutches only to find himself stowed away on the most remarkable ship the Thames River has ever kept afloat. Taking advantage of his astonishing ability to speak the language of cats, Charlie sets in motion a chain of communication from London to Paris via scruffy alley toms, fluffy lap kitties, and even a ferocious lion or two. Along the way, the clever boy manages to stay one step ahead of the rogues pursuing him, but unfortunately always one step behind his parents!

Penned by a mother/daughter team who call themselves Zizou Corder, *Lion Boy* is the first in a trilogy that is bound to become a classic. Readers will shriek when they read the evil yet tantalizing words at the conclusion--"To Be Continued..."--and won't rest until they get their hands on all three breathtaking, funny, well-written titles.

Amazon.com Emilie Coulter



Discussion Questions

Warning! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Although *Lionboy* takes place not far in the future, the world has changed drastically from the one we live in today. What types of changes have taken place? Do you think these kinds of things could happen? How would your life be different if the world became more like Charlie's?
2. What kind of relationship does Charlie have with his parents? How does this relationship help him in his journey? What other relationships does Charlie have and how do they help or hinder him as he moves along?
3. Charlie's mom has recently shaved an Adrinka symbol of two crocodiles sharing one belly into Charlie's hair. The symbol is "...about how, though we all eat with different mouths, we have only one belly between us." What do you think this means? Do you think the symbol has significance to the story?
4. What are some of the qualities that Charlie has that help him through his journey?
5. Charlie must pack quickly when Rafi comes to get him. He packs some practical things like extra socks and food, and he packs comforting things, like his stuffed tiger. What kind of things would you pack if you had to leave quickly on an unknown journey?
6. Charlie's parents have chosen not to tell him about the important work that they are doing because they feel it will protect him. Do you think Charlie would be better off in his search to find them if he knew what they had been working on?
7. Charlie often wishes that he didn't have the responsibility of finding his parents or helping the lions but he continues to move forward with his plans. Have you ever had to do something that you didn't want to do? How did you keep yourself motivated to continue?

8. Charlie's ability to speak with the lions gives them a human like quality and even Charlie seems to forget that they are really animals. How does the author remind us that the lions are animals?
9. Why do you think the Corporacy felt it was necessary to "steal" Magdalen and Aneba if they only wanted to hire them to work there?
10. What kind of place is the Corporacy? Why do you think everyone seems so happy there?
11. Why do you think the author chose to use cats as the animal that Charlie can speak to? How do you think the story would change if Charlie had the ability to speak to a different animal?



Author Interview

Kidsreads.com Founder Carol Fitzgerald and her 9-year-old son Cory interviewed the mother-daughter writing team of Louisa Young and Isabel Adomakoh Young --- together known as Zizou Corder --- about *LionBoy*, their first children's novel. Louisa and Isabel talk about the process of writing the book, reveal who their favorite characters are and offer readers a preview of the next two installments in this spellbinding trilogy.

KRC: What made you decide to write a book together?

ZC: Isabel asked me to --- we had been telling bedtime stories together and it grew out of that.

KRC: How did you work together on the story concept and the writing? Do you write an outline or just talk the story through?

ZC: We just talk, and then write, and talk some more, and see what develops. It's quite haphazard really. We do it in the bath, or on the bus.

KRC: What was the most difficult part of collaborating on a book?

ZC: It hasn't been difficult at all. It's a natural part of how we are together.

KRC: The most rewarding?

ZC: The whole thing --- having a project that we do together, so wherever we are we have it to play with. It's like following the same team, or loving the same pop star.

KRC: Isabel, was it difficult to balance writing the book with your schoolwork and your extracurricular activities?

ZC: No, because Mum does the actual writing and what we do together is stuff we'd just do anyway.

KRC: Louisa, you had previously written books for adults as well as newspaper and magazine articles. What made you decide to write a book for younger readers?

ZC: Isabel asked me to, and came up with all these lovely ideas that just got me going.

KRC: We have read that you both are allergic to cats. Why did you choose them to be the animals that you wrapped your story around?

ZC: There's this idea that writers choose what they're going to write about, but actually it doesn't work that way at all. You write what comes, and you write what you can. Also, you don't 'wrap a story round' a character. The story comes out of who the character is. They are very profoundly connected.

KRC: Since Charlie's parents are looking for a cure for asthma, we have to ask, do either of you have asthma?

ZC: Yes, Isabel is asthmatic, has been for years.

KRC: Many times in the book you talk about prejudice and bigotry. Is this a message you want readers to think about in their everyday lives?

ZC: Do we talk about it? Certainly it comes up in the story, as it comes up in life. Readers no doubt deal with it in their own way when they come across it. It's probably not our job to tell them what to think about --- though we are very much in favor of thinking in general.

KRC: From reading LIONBOY you seem to like the circus. Are we right? If so, what is your favorite circus act? And do you have a favorite circus troupe that you enjoy watching?

ZC: Actually, we prefer imaginary circuses because then you don't have to deal with things like real animals being kept in unsuitable captivity and being made to do tricks to amuse human beings. We saw some lions and tigers recently in a lorry in a really cold car park, in the middle of a city. They were part of a circus. They were all sulking, or pacing to and fro repetitively, which is a sign of animal distress. It just made us feel a bit ill. We love acrobats though --- trapeze, high wire, all that. Love it.

KRC: As you are both women it surprises us that your lead character is a plucky little boy. Is there a reason you wrote him as a boy instead of a girl?

ZC: Because he was a boy. Some people are.

KRC: Do each of you have a favorite character you created in *Lionboy*? If so, why is that particular character your favorite?

ZC: We love them all! Especially King Boris and Sergei --- they're a gas to write; the Lions, because they're not like human beings; and Rafi, because he's so horrible. But Charlie is really our most favorite because he is us. He is every kid.

KRC: We love it when you call Rafi "Rude Slimy Thug." By calling him that readers see exactly who he is, in a second. In real life, do you make up nicknames for people you like --- and those you do not?

ZC: Funnily enough, in the UK edition he's called Fancy Slimy Git, which is a bit different, though we don't know quite what it would mean to Americans. 'Git' is a common insult over here, even though literally it means female

camel (in Arabic), which you wouldn't have thought would take off as a general term of abuse, would you?

Our composer, Robert Lockhart, who wrote the tunes (they're on CD as well --- www.fabermusic.com), is really good with nicknames, but they're often very rude. I'm 'the Flat-Chested Brunette' (because I'm blonde and not at all flat-chested) and Isabel is 'Madame La Trompeteuse' because she blows her nose while she's asleep. We call him Anatole, after Bertie Wooster's aunt's chef, in the PG Wodehouse books, because he's a good cook. Or Anatolia, if he's cooking Turkish food. Or Hanato, if he's doing Japanese. Yes, it's all very silly.

KRC: Isabel, have your friends read the book? If so, what are they saying about it?

ZC: We gave a copy to everyone in my class at school, and they were all really pleased. But now our teacher is making us write essays about it and do storyboards, and he's reading it aloud really boringly even though most of them finished reading it months ago --- so we're all getting a bit fed up with it.

KRC: What is your advice for other children who want to write books?

ZC: Write! And read. Do stuff so you get loads of ideas. And don't get stuck rewriting the same thing over and over. Start new things.

KRC: Isabel, after writing a book, do you read books differently trying to figure out what the writer is trying to do? Or can you just still read for fun?

ZC: I read for fun, of course. You do notice mistakes more, though: spelling or grammar, or bits where the plot doesn't work.

KRC: How many books are in the series? What can you tell us about the next book? And when will it be out?

ZC: There are three books altogether. The second one is coming out next winter and is called *The Chase*. Charlie and the Lions get to Venice, and become involved in a revolution there. King Boris helps them, and the Venetians think that Charlie is an angel and that the mysterious creature is sent by God to save them. Then they run away on another boat to Morocco and get shipwrecked. There's a really good chameleon called Ninu, who you meet in book two; he's big in book three, as well. In book three they end up in the Caribbean ... we're writing it now. It's called *The Truth*.



Further Reading

If you liked LIONBOY by Zizou Corder,
you might like to read the following books, too!

The cat who wished to be a man by Lloyd Alexander
Whittington by Alan W. Armstrong
Socks by Beverly Cleary
The cat who went to heaven by Elizabeth Jane Coatsworth
The trouble with cats, by Martha Freeman
Pioneer cat by William H. Hooks
Bunnicula by James and Deborah Howe
Don't tell anyone by Peg Kehret
The nine lives of Aristotle by Dick King-Smith
Catwings by Ursula K Le Guin
It's like this, Cat by Emily Cheney Neville
The four ugly cats in apartment 3D by Marilyn Sachs
Varjak Paw by S. F. Said
The wolves of Willoughby Chase by Joan Aiken
Windcatcher by Avi
They never came home by Lois Duncan
Among the hidden by Margaret Peterson Haddix
Running out of time by Margaret Peterson Haddix
Nightmare Mountain by Peg Kehret
Terror at the zoo by Peg Kehret
Chasing the Falconers by Gordon Korman
Megan's island by Willo Davis Roberts
Brainboy and the Deathmaster by Tor Seidler