

Threatened Study Guide

Threatened by Eliot Schrefer

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Plot Summary

Threatened is a young adult/adventure novel about an orphan named Luc who has lost everyone close to him but gains a new and unexpected family as he sets off on a journey into the jungles of Gabon.

Forced to lie and steal to pay off his debts to his guardian, Monsieur Tatagani, Luc is taken by surprise when he is noticed by Professor Abdul Mohammad (or "Prof"). Prof takes Luc under his wing and hires him on as a research assistant to help him in his studies of the chimpanzees deep in the Gabonese jungles. Luc was always warned by his mother about the chimps or "mock men" who would steal boys away at night and vows to run away the first chance he gets. However, once in the jungle, Luc begins to bond with the mysterious Prof and his pet monkey Omar. They soon encounter a family of chimpanzees named Beggar, Drummer, and Mango, who have been run off from their group of chimps and are being hunted down by both humans and apes. Despite being frightened of Drummer, Luc finds himself drawn to the chimps and invested in their survival.

When the chimps' mother, Beggar, is killed and Drummer is badly injured, Luc attempts to help the baby, Mango, stay alive. Then Prof falls ill and is killed, presumably by Drummer. Luc wants to kill Drummer in revenge but knows he must keep him alive for Mango's sake. Luc debates going back to civilization but ultimately decides to stay behind and help Drummer and Mango rejoin the other chimps. He helps Drummer learn how to use noise to become the dominant chimp in his tribe. To his surprise, Luc bonds with Drummer in the process, and the two learn to live as equals and protect each other. Luc learns that it was a leopard who killed Prof, not Drummer, and begins to understand more of the chimps' violent but loyal ways.

Just when Luc is starting to adjust to his new life in the jungle, Monsieur Tatagani tracks him down, angry that Prof used fake money to pay off Luc's debts. The chimps, who have now accepted Luc as part of their group, attack and kill Monsieur Tatagani and chase off his hired goons, who return to civilization and tell the tale of the boy who lives in the jungle with the apes. They attract the attention of a National Geographic journalist, who tracks Luc down and offers to bring him back to society. Luc has grown too attached to his new family, however, and ultimately decides to stay behind with them in the jungle.



Section 1, Chapters 1-3

Summary

Threatened by Eliot Schrefer is the story of an unlikely family forming between three orphans--teenager Luc and chimpanzees Drummer and Beggar. Though Luc initially fears the chimps, after he is left alone in the jungles of Gabon, he soon learns to depend on them as much as they depend on him.

The story begins with Luc remembering as a boy how he used to hear the chimps or "mock men" screaming at night, and how his mother would warn him to always be home before dark or they would snatch him away. Now Luc works at the Café de la Gare in Franceville, Gabon, earning what little money he can to keep from starving, though he is always hungry. One busy night, Luc meets the Professor (or Prof) for the first time, noting by his clothes and skin-color that he is a foreigner (an Arab). Luc overhears Prof describing how the National Geographic Society has sent him to study chimps in the jungles of Gabon. Prof travels with his pet monkey, Omar, and a metal suitcase, which looks like it holds something valuable. Luc schemes on how he can steal it away so he can use it to pay off Monsieur Tatagani, a bill collector who takes in orphans after their parents die and forces them to work off their debts.

Prof offers Luc a franc to help him carry his luggage to the hotel. At the hotel, while Prof is distracted with checking in, Luc runs off with the metal case. Luc hides it in a tree, then returns to Monsieur Tatagani's. Monsieur Tatagani schemes for Luc to go back in the morning and get more money out of the traveling foreigner. Luc goes to his room, where there are several boys crowded into the small space, including a younger boy named Pierre whom Luke has taken under his wing. As the others sleep, Luc looks through his possessions, remembering his life with his family: his mother, father, and baby sister. After his mother got sick and his father abandoned them, Luc had to beg for food for the family. Eventually both his mother and sister died and his father was never heard from again. Luc dreams about using Prof's money to pay off his debt and buy some land for himself and Pierre, and hopes that his father will return once he hears about that so he can have a family again.

Luc wakes to find Omar the monkey looking through the window. Realizing Prof has found him, Luc tries to sneak out with his things but is caught by Prof and Monsieur Tatagani. Luc worries about being turned in to the police and losing his hands, the punishment for boys who steal. To his surprise, Prof helps Luc come up with a story about a chimpanzee stealing the briefcase, and how Luc tracked it down for the Professor and stole it back. Prof wants Luc to travel with him and be his assistant, but Monsieur Tatagani protests that he's already cost him too much money. Luc retrieves Prof's case for him, which is filled with money. Prof writes a check to Monsieur Tatagani for the 19,000 francs Luc owes him.



Luc says goodbye to the other boys and gathers his things. He tries to say goodbye to Monsieur Tatagani, but the older man drives him out before he can. Luc returns to Prof, who takes him shopping for the clothes he'll need in the jungle. The store attendant is beautiful but rude to them, so Luc steals some rubbing alcohol from her.

Luc thinks about running away but realizes he owes a debt to Prof. They hitch a ride out of Franceville on the back of a truck. Luc asks Prof where he got all the money but Prof quickly changes the subject. He explains that he will need Luc to help him conduct his research for the National Geographic Society. Luc asks why Prof chose him. Prof admits that he recognized Monsieur Tatagani was a bad man, which is why he gave him forged checks. Prof admits much of his money is fake, but it's all in the name of science. Luc worries that Monsieur Tatagani will come after them once he discovers the truth.

Analysis

The first three chapters include quite a bit of foreshadowing of events that will occur down the road, including the eventual confrontation that will take place with Monsieur Tatagani once he realizes that Prof has given him fake money.

Most notably, the first few chapters also foreshadow the emotional journey that will take place over the course of the book for Luc. It begins with him recalling warnings from his mother about being stolen away by the mock men; at the end of chapter one, Luc hears the chimps calling in the trees, taunting him that they were once just like him. At the end of chapter two, he expresses a longing to have a family again. At the end of chapter three, he realizes that Prof has chosen him as a traveling companion because they are alike. All of these realizations hint toward the end of the novel, in which Luc, too, becomes obsessed with the chimpanzees' way of life and ultimately decides to form a new family with them--in essence, to be "stolen away" and become "just like them"--instead of returning to civilization.

Luc's desire for a family is both stated outright and implied. Readers understand this from his frequent memories of his mother, his longing for the father who abandoned him, and in the way his first instinct is still to care for his baby sister Carrine, who has been dead for quite some time. When he leaves Monsieur Tatagani's place, he makes sure to gather his possessions, which include the basin which he once used to carry his sister. This basin is an important symbol, as it will later be used by him to help form his new family.

Prof is introduced as a character who is kind, resourceful, and mysterious. His use of fake money establishes that he may be underhanded in his dealings, though his kindness to Luc and his genuine passion for the chimpanzees make him still seem trustworthy despite this. Luc seems embarrassed by his own lack of education; he had to leave school early once his father abandoned the family and his mother became sick. Because of this, he is drawn to Prof's intelligence and charisma, but still recognizes that he is deceitful. This is also the quality that makes him think Prof chose him because he is like him: they are both clever, and they are both dishonest.



Prof references renowned chimp expert Jane Goodall, though having never heard of her before, Luc humorously mishears her name as "janegoodall." This is one way the author clues us into Luc's lack of formal education, though his street smarts and ability to read people are made clear in his interactions with Prof, the attendant in the store, and Monsieur Tatagani.

This section also establishes an idea that will be returned to many times in the rest of the book: the Outside, which is where humans live and work, and the Inside, which is the jungle, where humans are not supposed to go. This also foreshadows Luc's journey as he goes from someone who lives on the Outside to someone who lives on the Inside.

Discussion Question 1

What is significant about knowing that Luc had to drop out of school and that he can no longer remember his age? Does this change your opinion about what he does to survive--stealing, lying, etc.?

Discussion Question 2

Contrast the adults that Luc has encountered in his life thus far: Monsieur Tatagani, the Professor, and his mother and father. How can you see the influences that all have had in Luc's behavior and the way he sees the world?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the idea of the term "mock men" used to describe the chimpanzees and the stories told about them stealing children off into the night. How does this blur the line between humans and animals? What are other examples in the first three chapters of humans behaving more like wild creatures?

Vocabulary

taqiyah, valise, exertion, conspirators, excrement, haggling, gnarled, tattered, frayed, dregs, coax, sludge, housedress, crafty, toddled, transaction, rigid, formality, intricate, swaggered, whim, awestruck, trekking, christening, splayed, filched, reeling, crucial, hurtling, forgery, hulking



Section 2, Chapters 4-6

Summary

Luc, Prof, and Omar continue to travel with loggers deep into the forest. Prof learns that Luc's family died from the worm. Luc learns some of Prof's strange habits, including only bathing on Fridays. As they travel further and further, they see less of civilization. Luc continues to worry about Monsieur Tatagani catching up to them.

Prof, Luc, and Omar leave the loggers at a small village and attempt to gain more information about finding the chimpanzees. Prof arranges with the chief of the village for Luc to return each month to pick up fresh supplies. Luc plots to run away during one of these supply trips. He also discovers what might be the combination to the metal case, which will come in handy if he needs to leave and take Prof's money. The chief of the village warns Prof that there's nothing in the jungle for them, but Prof won't be talked out of his mission. A hunter sells them his canoe to use on the river, but Prof refuses his offer of help in venturing into the jungle, afraid he will hunt the chimpanzees they encounter.

Luc, Prof, and Omar continue their journey down the river where no one will be able to find them. They begin to hear drumming in the forest, along with shouting, and know that they are getting closer to finding the chimpanzees. They make camp the first night and Luc makes himself useful discovering what plants and animals will be edible. At first, Luc is overwhelmed by the noise of the jungle, but soon grows accustomed to it and falls asleep. He and Omar begin to form a bond, and he realizes that the monkey reminds him of Pierre, the boy he used to watch over back at Monsieur Tatagani's.

Prof teaches Luc some geography, as well as some history of Franceville, and shows him his book called Baedeker's Guide to Civilized Life in the Jungle. Luc begins to have second thoughts about abandoning the professor. Prof scouts out a location for their permanent camp. While Prof sleeps, Luc tries to break into his metal case but cannot, and is strangely relieved.

The next day, Prof offers to teach Luc how to read. He changes the subject when Luc asks him about the National Geographic society, explaining instead that chimps are humans' closest relatives, which is why humans should study and protect them. After he leaves to explore, Luc prepares their campsite to make it livable. While exploring the jungle, he gets caught in a hunter's snare. Luc realizes that there are other humans nearby, and that the chimps are being hunted.

Luc tells Prof about the snare and they return to find the skeleton of a dead chimp. Prof explains that the hunter set the trap and forgot about it, so the chimpanzee died a slow, painful death. Even though Luc is still afraid of the creatures, he sympathizes. Prof worries that the hunters have taught the chimps not to trust humans. Luc sets out some mangoes to lure in the chimpanzees and they spot their first chimp--a young male,



whom Luc calls Drummer because of his ability to make loud, booming noises. They also see Drummer's mother, whom Luc names Beggar, and his little sister, Mango.

Luc and Prof watch them for a long time until Prof begins to tire and goes back to camp to rest. Luc agrees to stay behind and observe what they do. After Prof leaves, Drummer notices Luc and charges him. Luc runs back to the campsite, and Drummer follows him.

Analysis

Luc is originally impressed that foreigners would come from so far away just to get trees from Gabon. He wishes the whole country could become rich off their resources so that fathers would not have to go so far away to work. This reflects Luc's longing for his absent father, but also indicates a character arc that will take place in Luc between this point and the end of the novel. Eventually, once he comes to consider the chimpanzees his family, he is horrified by the thought of people coming to take their resources and decides to stay in the jungle to keep this from happening.

The chief of the small village they stop in offers Prof banana beer, which makes Luc nervous, since it reminds him of when Monsieur Tatagani would go on one of his drinking binges. He indicates relief that they will not be taking any of it into the jungle with them. So far, all of the adults in Luc's life have let him down in some way: by dying, leaving, or being cruel. Though Luc continues to scheme to run away from the Professor, this moment indicates that at least some part of him still hopes things will be different this time with Prof. This is echoed later when Luc works with the Professor and is reminded of time spent with his father, and also when he imagines Prof teaching him how to read.

There are some more instances of foreshadowing, such as when Prof refuses the Hunter's help in taking his things into the jungle. Prof fears that the Hunter will attempt to hunt the chimpanzees, regardless of their endangered species status. As he worries about this, Luc also worries about Monsieur Tatagani, foreshadowing later events when Tatagani and the Hunter join forces to track them down in the jungle. Another moment of foreshadowing occurs when Luc sees Prof being bitten by mosquitos but assumes he is safe because he must have already had malaria, which proves not to be the case.

Luc encounters the chimpanzee family for the first time: a mother, Beggar, her teenaged son, Drummer, and the baby, Mango. In this section, Prof explains to Luc that chimpanzees are our closest genetic relatives. While observing the chimps, Luc also begins to notice resemblances in their looks and their mannerisms. The parallels to Luc's own family are hard to miss: a mother, a teenage boy, and a baby girl. Drummer doesn't attack the professor but goes after Luc, indicating that they are most equally matched to each other, though Luc has not yet recognized this.



In this section, readers also see the beginnings of a family forming between Prof, Luc, and Omar, which establishes that families can be formed as well as born, an idea that will continue as Luc eventually forms another family unit with the chimpanzees.

Discussion Question 1

Prof calls himself African at one point, but Luc argues that he is actually Arab. Does this distinction matter? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Throughout the section, readers are reminded of how human-like chimps are: Prof explains they are our closest genetic relatives, Luc notes that Drummer's foot looks like a human's, and many of Drummer's mannerisms seem similar to a human being's. How does knowing that chimps are like us affect Luc's opinion of them? How does it affect your opinion?

Discussion Question 3

Luc has many mixed feelings toward Prof. Prof is kind to him, but he also keeps secrets. Luc trusts him, but he also knows he's lying to him. Is it possible to be both good and bad? Does Luc do things that are both good and bad as well?

Vocabulary

Koran, galabia, bedroll, horizon, timber, moneylender, safari, mismatched, corrugated, Pygmies, discarded, pinworms, passport, wheezed, endangered, prow, thatch, camouflaged, starburst, waterline, katydid, inventory, gore, canister, kindling, undergrowth, wilderness, smoldering, malaria, scold, canopy, populated, chancellor, chortled, ilk, squalid, exposed, vivid, portion, homeland, Tanzania, empathy, undertaken, sliver, trough, fertile, gullies, saplings, snare, intact, corpse, shirttail, indicate, awestruck, pivoted, coordination, foraged, fury



Section 3, Chapters 7-9

Summary

When Prof goes out to observe the chimps again, Luc stays behind and sees the hunter who sold him and Prof the canoe, poking around their campsite. He leaves, and Luc goes to find Prof when he comes across a pack of male chimpanzees hunting Beggar, Mango, and Drummer. Luc nicknames one of these chimps Silver Stripes because he is older and has patches of gray fur. Drummer and Silver Stripes fight each other and disappear into the jungle with the other males. Mango is bleeding and come to Luc for help. He realizes that Beggar has been wounded by a hunter. Drummer returns and attacks Luc. He and Beggar try to steal Omar from Luc, badly injuring him in the process. Beggar joins in and tries to help.

Prof arrives and uses loud noises to scare the chimps at bay. They retreat, and Prof sets Omar's arms back in their sockets. Luc is angry at the danger moving in on them. He tells Prof about the hunter. Luc wants to kill the chimpanzees but Prof reminds him that chimps are endangered. Soon they will all be killed off if the leaders of Gabon sell off their land to loggers, who will hunt the chimps and destroy their habitat. Prof explains why Beggar, Drummer, and Mango are being hunted by the other chimps: when a chimp group grows too large, they split in half, and both sides go to war until the other is gone. Luc schemes ways to keep the camp safe, like setting up snares and traps.

Prof and Luc go back to observe the chimps the next day. Prof thinks it strange that Mango is outside the nest without her mother. Luc climbs up to the nest and sees that Beggar is dying. Prof is sympathetic but understands that there is nothing they can do: creatures live and die.

Prof is excited at signs that the chimps are losing their fear about coming into the camp, though Luc is less than thrilled. Prof promises that they will protect one another. They return to the chimps' camp and find Beggar has been attacked and killed. Luc picks Mango up to comfort her, even though Prof warns him not to. Drummer returns and is about to attack them when a leopard emerges from the nest, and they realize this was what killed Beggar. Drummer and the leopard fight, and Drummer manages to chase the cat off, though he is injured in the process. Luc worries what will happen to Drummer and Mango, but Prof persuades him to go back to the camp where they will be safe.

Luc drags Beggar's body back to camp so it won't attract scavengers to Drummer's and Mango's camp. Prof catches the hunter in a snare and threatens him not to return. The man flees and Prof is triumphant, but Luc worries that he will seek revenge. Prof makes a deal with Luc that if he will stay with him for a year and help him, Prof will give him enough money to buy his own home. Luc daydreams about this idea and how he would go back for the other orphans.



Luc keeps watch over Drummer and Mango while Prof studies the other chimps. Luc leaves out food for Mango and Drummer to make sure they're still eating, but hides this from Prof, knowing he won't approve. Mango follows him back to camp and Luc feeds her, but chases Drummer off when he approaches, still afraid of him. Prof takes Luke to observe the other chimps, and Luc sees Mango trying to nurse from some of the females, though they push her away. Luc worries about her ability to survive on her own. He also notices that Prof seems to be growing weaker.

Analysis

Although many of Luc's encounters with the chimps are still violent, he is beginning to recognize that they are beings with families and hopes and feelings. This doesn't mean that they aren't still capable of barbaric acts--like Silver Stripes and the other chimps hunting down Mango, Drummer, and Beggar to kill them off--but this is also contrasted against the hunter, who is human but still hunts illegally and in ways that are deeply inhumane.

This empathy toward the chimps extends to Luc mourning for Beggar's death, which reminds him a great deal of his mother's death. Luc's conversation with Prof about being powerless to stop creatures from living and dying is particularly poignant since Luc has already experienced so much loss in his life. It also foreshadows the losses to come, where Luc will also have to overcome his grief to survive.

This section shows the first appearance of the leopard, which will play a larger role later on. From this first appearance, readers understand that the leopard attacks creatures when they are sick or wounded, foreshadowing Prof's eventual death. The leopard's fight with Drummer and his subsequent injury also sets up the need for Luc to choose between staying with Prof or saving Mango (who is defenseless without the help of her brother) in later chapters. Readers also see the beginning of Luc choosing to help Mango even against Prof's wishes.

When Prof offers Luc the option of staying to work for him and earning enough money to buy a home, Luc is relieved that he won't have to steal from Prof or betray him. This shows his growing closeness to Prof, but also indicates a shift in Luc's mindset. Now that he is no longer forced to steal to survive and has examples other than Monsieur Tatagani to guide him, he can begin to explore what it truly means to be a man. Luc's daydreaming about having a home for himself and the other orphans shows his longing for a family unit, and also indicates his desire to be a protector, which will be a strong driving force in his interactions with the chimps.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it so important to Prof to study the chimps and preserve their land? Do readers have a responsibility to protect the land and the creatures that live off its resources?



Discussion Question 2

Why is it so important to Luc that Beggar doesn't die on her own?

Discussion Question 3

Do you agree with Prof that there are limits to what humans should do to survive, or with Luc that there are no limits? Are there circumstances that can change these rules?

Vocabulary

ritual, accumulating, torso, reinforce, gnarled, ascended, gnashing, scuffle, toddled, coordination, grooming, flair, ailing, clotted, dredged, gurgled, pivoted, submissive, leer, defiance, infuriated, rummaged, guffawed, primates, taboos, drab, hoisted, exertion



Section 4, Chapters 10-12

Summary

Prof continues to get sicker and sicker. Luc catches Drummer in the camp. Luc uses the noise of a cooking pot and the suitcase to scare him off. While trying to wash in the river, Prof collapses. Luc takes him back to the tent and cares for him. He recognizes Prof as having a similar disease to his mother. Luc accuses Prof of bringing him to the jungle to die. Prof asks Luc not to leave him while he's sick and Luc agrees. Prof tells Luc the combination to the suitcase, just in case. He also gives Luc suggestions on how to use the money once he gets back to civilization. Luc is frightened by this conversation, so Prof offers to watch over him while he sleeps.

Luc is woken in the night by Mango crying nearby. Knowing that she will be eaten by predators, Luc debates between going out to rescue her or staying behind to watch over Prof. He finally goes after Mango, only to hear Omar screeching. When he returns, Prof is gone, and there are signs of a struggle.

Luc assumes that Drummer was the one to take Prof and protects himself with a knife, going after them. It is too dark for him to find anything. He curses himself for taking mercy on Drummer when he could have killed him when he was injured. Luc begins to pack up camp, intending to go back to civilization with Prof's money, then decides he cannot abandon Prof and waits a few days to see if he will come back. Luc tries to find Mango but can't, so he goes back to the tent with Omar. That night, he hears a strange noise outside the tent. The next day when Prof hasn't come back, Luc is forced to acknowledge he's dead. He finds the trail of something being dragged in the jungle and follows it, hoping to find Prof, but instead finds Drummer.

Analysis

When Prof collapses in the river, his taqiyah floats away but Luc is able to get it back for him. This is significant because it reminds the reader of Prof's distinctive headware, which will come into play later when Luc uses the taqiyah to identify Prof's skull in the leopard's den. This also parallels how Luc is able to get the taqiyah back from the leopard and use it to remember the Professor.

Though Luc is aware that Prof is sick and needs his rest, he jumps on the chance to have Prof watch over him while he sleeps, telling readers it is the thing he most wanted. This is reflective of Luc's desire to have someone to watch over him. He is on the cusp of manhood, but is still a child in many ways, and has had to rely on himself for too long. Even more than financial security, Luc wants the security of someone to take care of him for a change.

Despite this, when the opportunity comes for Luc to choose between rescuing Mango or staying behind with Prof, his protective instinct is too strong for him to ignore, and he



chooses to save Mango. Of course he cannot know the consequences of what will happen, but this choice is symbolic of not just choosing Mango over Prof, but the Inside over the Outside.

As Luc reflects the possibility of going back to civilization, it is clear that he understands that interactions with human beings can be just as dangerous as his life in the jungle. He worries about thieves, as well as reflecting on what Monsieur Tatagani would do to him if he caught him. Luc also recalls that his father's family turned their back on him when they discovered his father had the worm. On the Outside as well as the Inside, he feels truly alone, until he remembers that he has Mango and Omar to look after. The return of Drummer will also play an important role in building Luc's new family, though he is not yet aware of that.

Discussion Question 1

Luc has spent most of the book wanting to figure out the numbers to the combination to Prof's case. Why, when Prof finally gives them to him, does Luc not want them anymore?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Luc choose to go after Mango instead of staying with Prof in the tent? Would you have chosen to do the same?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Luc believe that Drummer killed Prof? Is there another person that Luc might subconsciously blame for Prof's death that he won't admit to himself?

Vocabulary

radiating, mottled, smoldering, hulking, fainting, maneuvered, skidded, haul, makeshift, dispassionately, malaria, ember, machete, guidelines, perch, artificial, lure, cooing, brandished, relentless, abandon, torment, sensation, seized, crumpled, exhaustion

Section 5, Chapters 13-15

Summary

Still believing Drummer has killed Prof, Luc debates whether or not he should release him from the trap or kill him. Mango arrives and Luc lets Drummer go, then tends to his wounds. Luc doesn't have any medicine to treat Drummer but remembers one time when his father was injured and his mother treated him by dribbling saltwater into the wound. He does the same for Drummer.

Luc wakes up to Drummer grooming him. Luc again decides not to kill Drummer because Prof would not want him to. Luc opens Prof's notebooks and decides to take over his notes, drawing pictures instead of using words. Luc opens Prof's suitcase and discovers that underneath the money, there are letters and photographs. Through these he catches a glimpse into Prof's past, seeing photographs of Prof's childhood, his friendship with a young man, his marriage and family, and his continued friendship with the same young man who has now grown older. The last picture is of Prof alone.

Drummer wakes up and he and Mango are hungry. Luc finds them food and they bond over sharing the meal together. Drummer continues to recuperate, building his own nest in the trees instead of sleeping in the tent with Luc. Mango tries to follow but can't, so Luc uses his sister's basin to help her get up into the tree.

Luc debates whether or not he should stay, then realizes his life is here now, helping the chimps. He decides to venture deeper into the jungle.

Analysis

When Drummer is stuck in the trap, it's the first time that Luc sees him as a vulnerable being describing not only the soft, unprotected parts of his body, but also his fear and pain. It is the first time that Luc is able to see them as being equals, which sets the foundation for them to be able to join together as a family. This is echoed later on as Drummer, Mango, Omar, and Luc share their campsite for the first time, and as Drummer shows his submission to Luc by grooming him like he would a member of his family.

Luc is also beginning to overcome his self-consciousness about his lack of reading and writing skills. Although he's unable to write the notes the way Prof did, he improvises a set of drawings to be able to keep track of what's going on with the chimps, and realizes that he loves it. It is this discovery of how much he loves the research that makes Luc decide he's going to stay. Even though he may not have the formal education that he missed out on as a young boy, he can still use his natural gifts to keep a record of the chimps, and in that way honor Prof's memory.



Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of Drummer grooming Luc?

Discussion Question 2

What can you piece together about Prof from his photographs? How does this help you understand his earlier comments about not being able to be himself?

Discussion Question 3

What does Luc mean when he says there is no everyday world waiting for him on the outside? Why does this persuade him to stay on the Inside?

Vocabulary

waver, bulk, network, glistening, comical, entwined, mechanism, rustle, fronds, gouged, recuperating, gash, forage, trek, predators, lug, crisscrossed, sparse, stingier, kneading, meticulous, indicate, tentatively, recoiled, intensity, assembling



Section 6, Chapters 16-18

Summary

Luc ventures deeper into the jungle. He searches for a better spot for the tent where they'll be closer to food and where the tent will be able to dry out so it won't rot. Luc finds a spot near where the other chimps live and observes them interact for a while. Drummer and Mango follow him there and attempt to rejoin the group, through Silver Stripes and the other males run them off.

Luc notices that his bedroll has become infested with bugs and realizes that his clothes have done the same, so decides to go without them. Mango and Omar bond with each other by chasing each other through the campsite. Drummer seems restless to join the other chimps and becomes distant from their little family. He disappears into the jungle and Mango mourns for him, refusing to come into the tent with Luc. Knowing Mango's and Drummer's best chance to survive is to rejoin the other chimps, Luc schemes ways to make Drummer more dominant despite his small frame and injuries.

Luc moves Prof's letters and photos to another case and gives the metal suitcase to Drummer. Drummer makes banging noises on the suitcase to assert his dominance over the other chimps and scares the other males off with the noise. Luc moves his tent to the lagoon. He wakes to Silver Stripes and the other males hunting him and Omar. Drummer protects him. The other males rejoin the group, but Drummer remains the dominant male, and they all must answer to him.

Luc begins to grow ill. He eats dirt and finds that it surprisingly makes him feel better. Finally able to eat again, Luc searches for bananas to eat but smells banana beer. He looks up to see Monsieur Tatagani has found him. Luc is paralyzed by fear. Monsieur Tatagani wants to use Luc as bait to find the professor so he can take his revenge for giving him fake money. Drummer and the other chimps intervene and chase Monsieur Tatagani away. Monsieur Tatagani returns a few days later with some hunters who have come to kill the chimps. Luc sees them while in hiding and prepares to run away, but then Mango cries and gives their position away.

Analysis

When Drummer and Mango first try to rejoin the chimpanzee group with Luc with them, Luc and Drummer only escape by going into the river, which establishes that chimpanzees cannot swim and are afraid of the water. This will be an important resource for Luc when he has to escape from the chimps, and later when he has to help Madame Osgood do the same. During this scene, Luc also sees Drummer and Mango attempting to rejoin the chimps, which gives him his first ideas about scheming ways to help in this process. At first, Luc only does so because he knows that the chimps will be



Mango's and Drummer's best chance at survival. He has not yet discovered that they will be his best hope for survival, as well.

Drummer spent most of the novel trying to rejoin the other chimps and assert his dominance, but when it comes down to choosing between the chimps and Luc, Drummer chooses Luc. This shows that Luc has truly become part of their family. It also proves that the chimps really can feel emotions and understand things much deeper than we expect animals can. Drummer remembers what Luc has done for him and shows his gratitude by protecting him with his life.

When Luc eats the soil and becomes better because of it, this is symbolic of Luc's growing dependence on the wild and how much he's becoming part of the Inside. This sickness may also be symbolic of his loneliness. The soil, much like the chimps and the life in the jungle, may seem like a strange cure, but it helps Luc feel whole and strong again, just like his new family.

The repercussions of Prof scaring off the hunter have finally come full circle. The hunter is the one to lead Monsieur Tatagani into the jungle to find Prof and Luc. The scent of the banana beer has been tied to Monsieur Tatagani from the beginning of the book, when Luc dislikes Prof drinking banana beer because it makes him smell like Monsieur Tatagani. Luc tells readers that Monsieur Tatagani gets a really bad temper when he's drunk, and though it isn't stated outright, the possibility of abuse is implied. Smelling the banana beer again out in the jungle is not only an indicator that Monsieur Tatagani has come for Luc, but that all of his old fears have followed him into the jungle and must be confronted and overcome for him to truly become a man. There is some irony in that the jungle used to be what Luc feared the most, but is what ends up saving him in the end.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Luc is most interested in watching the mother chimps with their babies?

Discussion Question 2

What makes Drummer feel embarrassed? What does it mean that he is able to feel embarrassment?

Discussion Question 3

How does Luc know that chimps respond to noises? How does he use this to help Drummer and Mango?

Vocabulary

clamber, nestled, edible, canine, lagoon, caressing, sidetracked, plentiful, tattered, mimicking, ruckus, flailing, sputtering, sulkily, speckles, prickles, lobbed, lethargic, exert, dome, audible, jangled, mauled, penning, sluggish, catapulting, plummeted



Section 7, Chapters 19-21

Summary

Monsieur Tatagani and the men come after Luc and Mango. Silver Stripes, Drummer, and the other male chimps attack and kill Monsieur Tatagani and one of the hunters and run off the others.

Luc brings some of the supplies from the old campsite to the lagoon, including Beggar's hide. Mango cuddles with the hide and falls asleep in Luc's arms. Luc takes the supplies that the hunters left behind. He finds a glowing rectangular box and doesn't know what it is, but knows that it is too expensive for the hunters to have left behind if they planned on coming back. They are finally safe now.

Luc cooks a bushbuck that the hunters killed and left behind and shares the meat with the other chimps. He also finds a machete and uses it to chop down trees so he can build his own hut. Luc wakes one morning to find all the chimps gone. Only Mango and Drummer return, but Luc knows that eventually they will have to join the other chimps. He tells himself that he's okay being alone.

Analysis

Monsieur Tatagani's death is extremely violent. This ties back into the moral question asked a few chapters back about how far one should go to survive. In order for Luc to be safe, Monsieur Tatagani needs to die. In order for the chimps to protect their family from being hunted, they need to kill him. What results might not be very pleasant, but it is necessary.

Readers piece together that the rectangular boxes Luc finds in the jungle are actually cell phones. This is another instance where the reader is meant to understand something that Luc cannot because he doesn't have the proper information.

Discussion Question 1

What is significant about Mango cuddling with Luc and her mother's hide? Does this indicate anything about a new family being formed?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Luc hate the thought of the bushbuck that the hunters killed rotting in the jungle? How can you see a change in his attitude in the way that he used to think about animals?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Drummer defer to Luc and let him have the bushbuck meat first?

Vocabulary

whisking, flickered, combat, intimidate, demonstrate, spurted, slaughter, temporary, scents, exposed, ailing, inadvertently, forearm, twilight, foreigners, dusk, devices, charred, frantic, racket, adrift, scampered, morsel, hindquarter, devote, homebody



Section 8, Chapters 22-24

Summary

Luc wakes to hear Omar making the same screaming noise he did when Prof disappeared. In the morning, he finds leopard tracks outside his home and follows them to find a dead leopard, killed by the chimps. Inside the leopard's den, Luc finds a skull and originally believes it is a chimp's, then realizes it is Prof's because of his distinctive taqiyah. Luc realizes that the leopard killed Prof, not Drummer. Luc skins the leopard and uses its pelt to decorate his house.

Luc's clothes are beginning to fall apart, so he begins to wander around mostly naked. The chimps return and begin exploring Luc's hut. Luc begins to make his camp into more of a home. Omar gets sick, and Luc cares for him. Luc catches a glimpse of himself in a stream and hardly recognizes his reflection.

Luc hears a motorboat approaching camp. It is an older woman, Madame Osgood. The chimps try to attack her, but Luc teaches her how to approach so she won't be a threat. Luc shows her around his camp, but is disappointed that she is less impressed with his house than with the chimps. Mango is jealous of Madame Osgood and tries to run her off. Madame Osgood gives Luc various supplies from the outside, including food and antibiotics. She tells him she came here to find him because she heard stories from the hunters about a boy who lived among the chimps. She interviews Luc and agrees to publish some of his research. She also helps him practice with reading and writing.

Madame Osgood asks Luc to leave with her, but he can't. Instead, he asks her to tell Prof's friend and the world about what he accomplished. Madame Osgood offers to come back and visit him. Madame Osgood leaves and Luc immediately questions his decision to stay, but it's too late to turn back now. Luc settles into his new home and resolves to go through all of Prof's books. He sits down with one--Baedeker's Guide to Civilized Life in the Jungle--and begins to read with Drummer, Mango, and Omar.

Analysis

When Luc discovers Prof's skull, he begins to realize his own mortality more than he ever has before, even having dealt with so much death in his life. Luc realizes that he has a skull just like Prof's, and just like all of his dead family members and Monsieur Tatagani did. This is an important life moment for anyone coming of age: to realize that they are not immortal, and just how fragile their bodies truly are. Luc's nudity is another important moment for him. It is yet one more way that he is removed from civilization, becoming more and more like the chimps.

Luc's interactions with Madame Osgood show that he is not entirely a man yet. Just as with his earlier interactions with Prof, there is still a part of him that is a child and wants someone to look after him, approve of him, and keep him safe. This is one of the



biggest incentives for him to leave the chimps and go back to civilization with Madame Osgood. Ultimately, Luc's choice to stay in the jungle is not just choosing the Inside over the Outside, but also choosing to become a man over staying a child.

The arrival of Madame Osgood casts even more mystery over Prof's past. Readers learn he is not associated with the National Geographic Society and that he was not really a professor at the University of Leipzig. It remains unclear why he would lie about these things, but in death as well as in life, Prof remains a mystery.

Discussion Question 1

What can readers tell about how Luc has changed from his reflection? How does this reflect how he has changed on the inside as well?

Discussion Question 2

What are some clues from Luc's interactions with Madame Osgood that indicate that he hasn't entirely given up civilization?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Luc feel both content and terrified about deciding to stay in the jungle? Have you ever made a decision that made you feel such conflicting emotions?

Vocabulary

scuttle, brutal, dash, scavenged, fragile, mantle, foodstuffs, thatch, roughhoused, dense, corduroy, gingerly, singe, pronounced, rasping, munched, tolerate, rickety, staggered, greenery, bashful, strands, faltered, companion, dominant



Characters

Luc

Luc is the central character, protagonist, and narrator of the novel. His age at the beginning of the novel is uncertain since he cannot remember the last time he celebrated a birthday, though he guesses himself to be around 12 or 13 years old. At the beginning of the novel, he is alone: his mother and baby sister are dead, and his father has abandoned him (and is presumed dead as well). Luc, along with many other orphaned boys, has been taken in by Monsieur Tatagani and works in a café to pay off his debts. He is also encouraged to steal and perform other petty crimes to get money, so long as he isn't caught. At this point, Luc has a pretty bleak outlook on life and has learned not to care too much about anyone. Even though Prof expresses an interest in him and treats him kindly when they first meet, Luc steals from him because his freedom is more important to him. Later, Luc continues to plot ways to run away from Prof and take his money, until Prof gets sick and Luc has to care for him.

Luc is also originally very distrustful of the chimps he encounters in the jungle, except for the baby Mango. Again, it isn't until Drummer is injured and in need of help that Luc begins to change his mind about him. From this, readers understand that Luc is a natural caregiver, which has also been hinted at in his treatment of his dead mother and sister. This also comes across in the expert way that he tends the camp and forages for food. In addition, having been abandoned by his father, Luc seems determined not to abandon other creatures who are in need of his help.

Luc is very self-conscious about his lack of schooling, though it is clear from his narrative and his interactions with Prof and the chimps that he is very bright and incredibly resourceful. When there is anything lacking in his formal education, he improvises his own ways around things. For instance, though he isn't very good at writing, he wants to continue keeping Prof's records of the chimps, so he creates his own symbols to do so. He devises the way for Drummer to become the dominant chimp, constructs his own shelter, and at the end of the book resolves to teach himself to improve his own reading skills.

Luc's narrative arc goes from being alone to being surrounded by family, though not the conventional family that he has lost. Luc learns to use his natural abilities as a caregiver to construct his own family and become the sort of man he wants to be.

Prof

Prof is a very enigmatic figure. He is one of the only living adults in the narrative who treats Luc kindly and seems to be genuinely invested in teaching him and helping to broaden his horizons. Everything readers learn about Prof is filtered through Luc's perspective, so there are some gaps in information. Readers know that Prof is middle-



aged, that he is Arab, and that he is a practicing Muslim. He is passionate about his work studying the chimps and seems to be drawn to helping other mistreated creatures as well: he took in Omar after he was badly burned and rescues Luc from Monsieur Tatagani. Prof also lies about belonging to the National Geographic Society, forges money, and traps the Hunter to scare him off from hunting the chimps. He is an intriguingly complex character who, due to his untimely death, is never fully explained.

One of the biggest mysteries surrounding Prof is the metal case he carries. Not only is it full of forged money, but it also contains many letters and photographs. Again, Luc's understanding of these photographs is incomplete so readers must draw their own conclusions, but they seem to imply that Prof was raised in a devout Muslim home but that he fell in love with his male friend and companion. Through the series of photographs and some veiled conversations with Luc, readers can infer that Prof tried to lead a normal life by marrying and raising a family but was deeply unhappy doing so. It is also understood that his friend actually does have connections to the National Geographic Society, which is why Prof has decided to take this expedition into the jungle. The significance of the code to his metal briefcase--1971--is never explained.

Prof's influence on Luc remains long after his death. His encouragement of Luc and his love for the chimpanzees is a large part of what helps Luc find his place and his new family. He is the one to encourage Luc to lead the life that he wants to lead and not what others expect of him, and it is the legacy of his letters, his example, and the books he leaves behind that will help Luc become the man he wants to be.

Monsieur Tatagani

Monsieur Tatagani is one of the main antagonists of the story. After Luc's mother runs up debts for her hospital bills and then dies, leaving Luc alone, Monsieur Tatagani takes in Luc and his baby sister, as well as various other orphaned boys, and forces them to work and steal to pay off their debts. From past anecdotes, readers know that Monsieur Tatagani has influence over the local police, who will chop off boys' hands at his command. Luc's recollections of living with Monsieur Tatagani also include overhearing him commit crimes and seduce women.

When Monsieur Tatagani sees Luc with Prof, he encourages him to go back and solicit more money from him by any means necessary, implying sexual favors, though it is unclear whether Luc is aware of this meaning. Monsieur Tatagani is painted as an utterly horrible character with no redeeming qualities, though perhaps he is meant to represent the corruption of society at large more than an individual person.

When Prof pays off Luc's debt to Monsieur Tatagani, he uses a fake check, assuming that they will be safe from his wrath in the jungle, though Luc knows better and constantly fears being tracked down. Monsieur Tatagani's presence is so frightening to him that any time he hears a boat or sees evidence of human life, he assumes it is Monsieur Tatagani coming after him. Monsieur Tatagani does eventually come after Luc, though by then Luc has a new family to protect him. Still, Monsieur Tatagani's influence



has clearly left a strong impact on Luc, particularly at the beginning of the book when he is constantly scheming to steal, lie, and run away. In some ways, Monsieur Tatagani has been one of the main male role models in Luc's life, until Prof comes to show him a different example of what it is to be a man.

Drummer

Drummer is a chimpanzee who begins the book as one of Luc's enemies but ends it as one of his closest allies. Drummer belongs to a chimp family that parallels Luc's human family: a mother, a teenaged son, and a baby daughter. In many ways, Drummer acts as a double to Luc. He is also trying to find his family, a sense of belonging, and an understanding of his role as a male in his society. Also like Luc, Drummer acts as a caregiver, defending his mother and his baby sister Mango. Drummer earns his name from Luc by his ability to make loud drumming noises using the strength in his legs. It is this same drumming ability that enables him, Luc, Mango, and Omar to rejoin the other chimps and form a new family.

Luc initially believes that Drummer is responsible for killing Prof because of some violent encounters they have had in the past. Drummer sees Luc as a threat as much as Luc sees Drummer as a threat. However, after Luc saves Drummer from the steel trap, Drummer initiates the process of making them into a family when he grooms Luc, a signal that shows he is accepting Luc into his tribe. After this, Luc and Drummer are unquestionably allies, even before Luc knows for certain that Drummer did not kill Prof. Because they have so many parallels to each other, in many ways they are each other's equals, more so than any other two characters in the book.

Mango

Mango is a baby chimpanzee who becomes part of Luc's new family. She is part of the parallel chimp family to Luc's human family and helps remind him of his baby sister, Carrine. Mango craves love and affection, especially after the death of her mother, and she is the first to welcome Luc and Omar into her new family. She is also fiercely protective of Luc and gets jealous of any threat that will take him away, such as Madame Osgood.

Silver Stripes

Silver Stripes begins as an antagonist and is one of the dominant chimpanzee in the main chimpanzee tribe. He drives off Drummer and Mango from the group and tries to drive off Luc as well. It is only after Drummer asserts his dominance by drumming on Prof's suitcase that Silver Stripes is forced to be submissive and allow Drummer, Luc, Mango, and Omar back into the group. At this point, he joins the side of the protagonists and helps on various occasions to protect the family unit, including Luc from Monsieur Tatagani.



Omar

Omar is a vervet monkey who was rescued by Prof. When Omar was a baby, his mother was electrocuted on an electric wire while she was holding Omar, and his paws were badly burned. Omar is at first very protective of Prof and suspicious of Luc, though he eventually becomes very attached to Luc, then Mango, then Drummer. Omar fills in the role of Pierre, a little boy Luc used to take care of back in Monsieur Tatagani's orphanage.

Madame Osgood

Madame Osgood is an older English woman who works for the National Geographic Society. She comes into the jungle to find Luc after hearing stories about the boy who lives among the chimpanzees. Madame Osgood represents one last tie for Luc to return to civilization. She is also one of the only few "safe" adults to be portrayed in the novel. She offers Luc an opportunity to return to a different sort of life and to be taken care of, but Luc chooses instead to live his own life and be an adult.

The Hunter

The Hunter is a minor character, but many important plot points take place around him. He sells Prof and Luc the canoe that takes them into the jungle. Luc also discovers that the Hunter has been hunting chimpanzees in the jungle even though it is illegal. Prof catches him and scares him off, providing Luc an example of being a protector. To get his revenge, the Hunter tells Monsieur Tatagani where Luc and Prof are. It is unclear whether he is the hunter who tells Madame Osgood about Luc, but it is highly possible.

Beggar

Beggar is the mother of the chimp family that Luc befriends. She is a parallel to his own mother, and much like his mother, she passes away, leaving behind a teenaged son and baby daughter to fend for themselves.



Symbols and Symbolism

Basin

This is the only object that Luc takes from his old life to bring into his new life. He used to carry his little sister around in it before she died; once he is in the jungle, Luc's basin is used to help him form bonds with his new family: Omar uses it to sleep in, and Luc uses it to lift Mango to her nest.

Prof's suitcase

Prof's suitcase instigates many of the changes in Luc's life. By stealing the suitcase in the beginning, Luc starts down the path that leads him to become Prof's research assistant. In the jungle, Luc gives Drummer the suitcase to pound on and establish his dominance, which allows them to join the other chimps. In both cases, the suitcase not only takes Luc on a physical journey, but an emotional journey. He goes from being alone to being in a family unit.

Prof's taqiyah

Prof's taqiyah is one of the first things that Luc notices about him. It is because of this that Luc knows Prof is a foreigner. Later, Luc often takes note of the taqiyah as Prof prays and performs other rituals of his religion. When Luc finds the leopard's layer, he only knows the skull belongs to Prof because of the taqiyah. Because of this, he is able to realize the leopard killed Prof, not Drummer, and is better able to trust Drummer and form the bonds of friendship and family. Luc is also able to keep the taqiyah as a way to remember Prof and keep him with him.

Books

Luc is self-conscious about the fact that he had to leave school and can't read as well as he wants to. He and Prof bond as they have reading lessons together. After Prof dies, he leaves many of his books behind, which will be Luc's only tie to civilization now that he's alone in the jungle. Notably, the book he reads in the end is Baedeker's Guide to Civilized Life in the Jungle, which parallels Luc's own efforts to keep a bit of human civilization with him while living among the chimps.

Fake money

One of the first things readers learn about Prof is that he carries around a briefcase full of fake money and sometimes uses it to pay off people when he feels like it's necessary to further the cause of the chimps. From this, readers learn that even though Prof



sometimes lies and does untrustworthy things, he does them for what he believes to be good reasons. Readers also understand that Prof is a gray character: not all good, not all bad. Prof's fake money is also used to cover up his photos and letters, indicating that his past may not be all good or bad, but have some shades of gray.

Nests

Prof puts a lot of consideration into where they set up their camp, wanting to be close to where the chimps build their nests. In a way, Prof and Luc are building their own nest. Beggar is killed by the leopard in her nest, just like Prof is killed by the leopard in his tent. Later, Drummer builds his nest next to the tent, and Mango attempts to make her own. When Drummer, Mango, and Luc rejoin the other chimps, Luc picks a perfect spot to set up camp (or build a nest), then makes a permanent nest (or hut) once he decides to stay.

Bushmeat

In the beginning of the novel, Luc talks about how he used to hunt animals for their bushmeat to stay alive. Later, Prof hints to Luc about feeling guilty for eating chickens, but Luc doesn't care because they are delicious. As Luc goes deeper into the jungle and becomes more and more involved with various animals, he begins to care more about the animals. In the end, when he sees that the hunters have killed an animal for its bushmeat, he mourns for the loss. This represents Luc's emotional arc as the lines between him, the chimpanzees, and other animals becomes less and less defined.

Photographs

Underneath the fake money in Prof's suitcase, Luc discovers several photographs of Prof that tell his life story. Because Prof is no longer there to explain the photographs himself, Luc must rely on the pictures alone. Similarly, when Madame Osgood comes to write her story on Luc, she wants Luc to come back with her to civilization, but he refuses; all she has are photographs of him that will need to tell his story since he is not there to tell it for himself.

Jane Goodall

Jane Goodall is referenced throughout the novel. First, she is used as a joke when Prof tries to explain what he is doing and Luc wonders what a "janegoodall" is. Later Prof claims to have worked with Jane Goodall in studying chimpanzees, though it is unclear if this is one of his lies or not. Jane Goodall has become a legend for her groundbreaking work in studying chimps, so a novel about people going into the jungle to study chimps would feel incomplete without referencing her. Jane Goodall is also known for being enamored with Tarzan, a man who lives in the wild among apes, which is what Luc eventually becomes.

Inside/Outside

The Outside refers to the area on the outskirts of the jungle and the Inside refers to the jungle itself. Luc establishes early on in the novel that the Inside is for animals and that the Outside is for humans. Humans do not belong on the Inside. Luc's journey takes him from the Outside to deeper and deeper on the Inside, until he no longer has a place on the Outside anymore.



Settings

Franceville

This city is on the fringes of the jungle in Gabon. Luc is not from here but came with his mother when she became sick so she could get better medical treatment. After she dies, he has to stay to pay off her debt to Monsieur Tatagani. The place represents civilization to Luc, but even this place is tinged with the wild. The town is close enough to the jungle that Luc can hear the mock men screaming at night. The town's policemen cut off children's hands for stealing. Monsieur Tatagani is a successful member of society, but he is also cruel and manipulative. The lines are more blurred than they might first seem.

Okondja

Luc and Prof stop at this small village on their way into the jungle. The village is full of huts, dirt roads, and very few amenities (for example, there is no electricity, running water, etc.), although there is a system of buying and exchange; Prof is able to buy chickens for him and Luke to eat. The village is run by a chief, who barter with Prof to provide him and Luc goods in the jungle. This place is most significant because it is where they meet the Hunter, who will later lead Monsieur Tatagani into the jungle after them, as well as send Madame Osgood to find Luc.

Campsite

Luc and Prof make their first campsite in the jungle where they will be close to the chimps. They set up their tent and Luc works to make the area clean and forages for available food nearby. There are many trees, where Luc is able to hang the basin that Omar and Mango sleep in. They are close enough to a stream that they can wash their clothes, cook, and attend to their bodily functions. This is Luc's first real home in a very long time, and it is here that he begins to build his new families: first with Prof and Omar, then with Drummer and Mango.

The Lagoon

This is where the majority of the chimps live, including Silver Stripes, Good Mother, and Bad Mother. Beggar, Drummer, and Mango are initially exiled from here but through Luc's help are able to return. Luc admires this spot because it is sunnier, closer to the water, and because he will be surrounded by his new family of chimps. He originally puts up Prof's tent there but ultimately sets up a more permanent camp by building a hut. This is significant because although he keeps some of Prof's things, it is important in his progression to becoming an adult that he create a territory of his own.

Inside/Outside

Luc uses this description at the beginning of the novel to describe the differences between in the jungle and out of the jungle. Inside is the jungle itself, and Outside is the area on the fringes. Humans inhabit the Outside, animals inhabit the Inside. This is significant because more fully than any other character, Luc is able to inhabit both worlds.



Themes and Motifs

Families

One of the main, recurring themes of the novel is that families are formed, not born. There are several instances of this in the novel. Even before the novel begins, Luc watches out for a young boy named Pierre at Monsieur Tatagani's. After Luc leaves with Prof, he daydreams about using Prof's money to build a home for him and Pierre and the other boys. Although the boys were brought into Luc's life out of circumstance, not family relations, he still feels a strong sense of loyalty and wants to protect them.

As the novel progresses, Luc begins to view the Professor as a father figure, as Prof actually is in many ways more of a father to him than his own father ever was. Prof rescues him from Monsieur Tatagani, builds a home with him, encourages him, and re-teaches him how to read. Though Luc originally schemes ways to run away from Prof and steal his money, because Prof treats Luc like a son, Luc stays with him even when their roles are reversed and he is the one having to take care of Prof. Completing this family unit is Omar, who becomes a little brother figure to Luc (who compares him to Pierre and the closeness they once shared).

The reader also learns that Prof, much like Luc, has been estranged from his family. Even though the circumstances are different for the two of them--Luc's family members died and abandoned him; Prof's rejected him because of his closeted homosexuality--Prof understands what it means to be alone and feels the same drive as Luc to form a family of his own. His journey is the opposite of Luc's, in that he goes into the jungle believing the chimps will be his true family, but instead bonds more with his fellow human than he anticipated; Luc begins by bonding with the humans around him but ultimately discovers the chimps are his true family.

When Beggar dies, followed by Prof, Luc and Omar begin a new surrogate family with Drummer and Mango. Mango fills in the roll of Luc's little sister, Carrine, even sleeping in the same basin in which Luc used to carry her around. Drummer, who plays the same role in his chimp family as Luc did in his human family, is a little more suspicious at first, much as Luc is suspicious of him. However, once they overcome their differences, they are able to expand their family unit to include the rest of the chimps and give Luc the kind of family security that he's never had before.

Drumming

Drumming is a motif that occurs many times throughout the novel. Drumming usually occurs as a way to build tension and suspense, implying a sense of danger and foreboding. However, drumming also usually leads, in some form or another, to helping Luc come closer and closer to building his family and finding his place among the chimps.



From the very beginning of the novel, Luc informs the reader that the mock men are known for the sounds of their drumming in the jungle. He is taught that this is an ominous sound because the mock men secretly want to steal him and all little children away. Later, it is drumming that first signifies to Prof that they are nearing the chimpanzee's camp, and why he and Luc decide to make their campsite where they do. This is what leads them to being in the ideal spot to encounter Beggar, Drummer, and Mango, and form the bonds with them that they do over the course of the novel.

It is drumming that earns Drummer his nickname, and why Luc is initially afraid of him: because it signifies Drummer's great strength. This strength is accompanied by a strong sense of danger, since Drummer perceives Luc as a threat and on many occasions confronts him, attacks him, and even attempts to kill him. Yet, like the sound he is named after, though Drummer starts out as something frightening, he soon becomes the key piece to helping Luc form a new family unit.

It is drumming on Prof's suitcase that allows Drummer to assert his dominance and enable him, Luc, Omar, and Mango to join the other chimps in the Lagoon. Even in this instance, drumming is initially used as something frightening--Drummer chases around the other chimps with the suitcase and scares them into submission--but afterward, the family unit is made stronger and the chimps seem to live more happily than they did before when Silver Stripes was in charge. This is where Luc finally finds his place: among creatures and sounds that used to be frightening to him, but have now become home.

Happiness

Another recurring theme is that you can't be happy living the life others expect for you. One of the characters who exemplifies this the most is Prof. For most of the book, Prof's life is shrouded in mystery. He gives some hints of unhappiness in his past, implying that he was not free to be himself. Later when Luc finds his photographs, it is strongly implied that Prof was in love with his male friend but was restricted by his religion and family from pursuing this. The reader can infer from the pictures that Prof tried to live a normal life with a respectable job, a wife and children, but ultimately was unable to keep doing so because it did not bring him happiness. Even though he dies in the jungle, he dies pursuing his dream, which Luc believes would have been his wish.

A less obvious example of this is Drummer. Drummer is a smaller male chimp and walks with a limp due to some injuries. Because of this, he is expected to be a submissive member of the chimp family unit and to bow down to the stronger males like Silver Stripes. It is implied that before the start of the story, Drummer tried to assert his authority, which is why the other chimps try to hunt him and his family down. During the novel, he tries to get back into the good graces of the other chimps by acting submissively like he is supposed to do, but is rejected and even attacked. It is only when he starts to act differently than chimps are supposed to--befriending a human, using human tools for drumming--that he is able to take the place of dominance in the chimp family.



Luc is slightly different from Prof and Drummer in that it is his own expectations and not society's that he must originally overcome to find happiness. Luc doesn't necessarily want to be a thief at the beginning of the story, but he feels he has no other choices and must accept his lot in life. Prof shows him that he actually has many other options--that he can use his cleverness and his resourcefulness to find his place in life. He is also terrified of going into the jungle, but soon finds more happiness there than he ever had in the outside world. Once Luc gains this confidence in himself, he ultimately decides not to go back to civilization--first on his own, then with Madame Osgood. Though it may seem the more logical thing to do to return to the Outside, he decides to pursue his own happiness, which will come from staying with the chimps.

Reading

Reading is another motif that occurs throughout the book. Like most of the ideas in the book, it is tied to the idea of family, as well as remembrances of the past. Luc is initially embarrassed by his inability to read very well, since he was forced to leave school at an early age to care for his sick mother and sister. When Prof takes Luc with him on his journey, he is not just offering Luc a new life because of their new surroundings, but because Luc will be encouraged to explore the part of himself he thought long dead: the part who was a good student, who liked to learn and read.

Prof offers to re-teach Luc to read, which initially embarrasses him because he realizes how much he has lost. Because of this, he resents Prof, even though he wants to learn. Luc never consciously realizes this, but he probably also resents Prof because the offer reminds him of time he used to spend with his father before he abandoned the family. Though Luc is beginning to view Prof as a new father figure, he has much to overcome in order to trust others again.

Prof also spends much of his time reading. He travels with several books and carries around a suitcase full of letters. Many times, Luc notices him reading his Koran, which is a holy book for those who are Muslim, like Prof. Prof uses all of these items of reading to connect himself to others. The Koran ties him to his faith, history, and the beliefs of his family. His books help connect him to his passion for helping chimps, which it is implied was shared by the man he loved. The letters are also another connection to his past, presumably to his lover and to his family.

When Prof dies, Luc still isn't able to read as well as he would like, but he feels connected to Prof through his books. After receiving some additional help from Madame Osgood, he vows to take the time to read through each book carefully, which will be his last connection to civilized life. The last scene of the book is Luc reading aloud to Drummer, Beggar, and Mango from one of Prof's books, showing how reading binds Luc with his new family as well as his old, and how it will help him keep at least a few ties to civilization.



Nighttime

The motif of nighttime is referenced often throughout *Threatened*. The novel begins with Luc remembering his mother warning him to always be home before dark or the mock men would snatch him away. Throughout the novel, it is nighttime that Luc hears the chimps screaming and remembers this warning.

The first night and Prof and Luc are in the jungle, as it grows darker Prof jokes that the lights have been turned out. Despite this attempt at levity, Luc remains fearful of nighttime and the dangers it presents. He often reminds himself and the reader that predators come out at night and will attack anyone and anything that isn't safe in his nest/tent, perhaps hearkening back to the warnings from his mother about being stolen away in the night.

Despite his fear of nighttime, Luc overcomes some of his fears in order to save Mango when he hears her crying. Knowing she will be eaten by some predator if he doesn't come to her rescue, he braves the dark and brings her back to the tent. Unfortunately, his fears about nighttime have proven to be correct, since in his absence, Prof is attacked and killed by the leopard. Even the tent, which is supposed to be safe, can become a dangerous place in the night.

Once Luc begins to form his family with the chimps, nighttime is no longer as frightening to him. Part of this is because Luc has grown older and has more responsibility to care about others instead of just worrying about himself, which helps with his fears. Because of this, nighttime becomes more of a domestic routine, trying to figure out who will sleep where, so there is not as much time to be afraid. Another is that Luc now has a large family to surround and protect him. The warning at the beginning of the book--that he will be stolen away by the mock men and become one of them--has already happened, so there is not as much to fear anymore.



Styles

Point of View

The novel is written first person, solely from Luc's point of view. It stays mostly present in the current action, except for the first few paragraphs of the book where Luc recalls warnings that his mother used to give him about the mock men living in the jungle. Because of this limited perspective, there are many things that Luc as the narrator does not understand but that readers are meant to understand. For example, at the beginning where Prof tells Luc about Jane Goodall the chimpanzee researcher, but Luc tells us about it as "janegoodall," misunderstanding that she is a person and not an odd commodity. Other instances of this include Prof's homosexuality, which is implied only through the pictures of his past found in his suitcase, as well as Prof's lies about working for the National Geographic Society. Readers are also never exactly certain how old Luc is, since he is unable to recall that detail himself.

Language and Meaning

As the story is narrated by a 12 - 13-year-old boy who is self-conscious about his lack of literacy, the language choices are fairly simplistic, with a small smattering of words that may be unfamiliar to the reader but become clear through context (such as Prof's clothing, the taqiyah and the galabia). Luc often refers to people by nicknames instead of their actual names, such as "Prof" for "Professor Abdul Mohammad," as well as some characters who are never given a name at all (e.g. the Hunter and the shopkeeper). Similarly, he refers to certain things by the names he has for them rather than their actual names, such as "mock men" for chimpanzees and "moonsickness" for malaria. Though Luc encounters characters from various social and cultural backgrounds, no attempt is shown in the language to show a difference in vernacular (accents, speech patterns, etc.).

Structure

The novel is broken into 24 chapters, which in turn are broken up into four parts. Part One is called "Outside" and refers to the time spent in civilization amongst other human beings. Part Two is called "Mock Men" and details Luc's first encounters with chimpanzees as he and Prof adjust to living in the jungle. It ends with Prof disappearing and Luc being left alone with only Omar and the chimps. Part Three is called "family" and details Luc bonding first with Mango and Drummer, then with the other chimps. Part four is called "Inside" and ends the arc of Luc fully transitioning from living on the Outside (or man-made society) to the Inside (or the depths of the jungle). This is where he truly becomes part of the chimp tribe after they kill Monsieur Tatagani, and where Luc decides to stay amongst them even after being offered a chance to return to the Outside by Madame Osgood.



Quotes

Many evenings the chimpanzees would scream within the dark trees surrounding my village, their cries too strange for a person and too intimate for an animal. I still hear those shrieks, these years later. Whenever they got too loud, my mother and I would huddle on the floor of our hut, her arms wrapped tight around me. 'This is why you must promise always to be home before dark, Luc,' she would whisper. 'If you're not, you'll become one of the kivili-chimpanzee.' The mock men.

-- Luc (Chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote comes at the beginning of the story and foreshadows the journey that Luc will take away from civilization and toward living in the wild. Luc mother's fears he will be snatched away from her, but she is the one to die and leave Luc alone, just like all the important adult figures in Luc's life.

It might have all been in my head, but for the first time in years I thought I could hear the mock men off in the trees, shrieking about how they had once been just like me.

-- Luc (Chapter 1 paragraph 72)

Importance: This quote is another foreshadowing of Luc's eventual journey into the jungle and his place amongst the chimpanzees. It also comes just after he has stolen the Professor's suitcase, reflecting his state of guilt. He has had to learn at a very young age that in order to survive, he cannot always live the way society tells him to.

It was impossible to be a street boy, after all, where there was no street. Here I was a-- what had Prof called it?--research assistant.

-- Luc (Chapter 4 paragraph 34)

Importance: This quote shows Luc's change in the way he thinks about himself as the journey continues. He begins to realize how much of his circumstances revolve around where he lives. Now that he is going on a new adventure into new lands, he doesn't have to be the same person anymore. The choice of who he will become is in his own hands.

Humans will break your heart... The same selfishness that makes so many of us hurt the ones we love makes our species hurt creatures that it admires. To hunt and destroy chimpanzees, like they would never do to us. Our treatment of animals is a great failure of our empathy.

-- Prof (Chapter 5 paragraph 69)

Importance: This quote reflects one of the major themes of the novel, which is the need for a shift in focus in how we view animals. Though they may seem frightening because of their wildness, humans are actually the creatures that most often need to be feared.

When you think about it, all the survival stories that end happily are also family stories.

-- Prof (Chapter 8 paragraph 45)



Importance: This quote foreshadows the arc of the story. Luc begins alone as an orphan, forced to survive in the world. He is then taken to the jungle where he forms a new family, but is abandoned once more and forced to survive in a new environment. At the end, he finds a new family, as well as his place in the world.

There was something I needed, beside me. And something that needed me, out there in the jungle. I had to choose one of them. Come back. That was to Prof. I'm coming for you. That was to Mango.

-- Luc (Chapter 11 paragraph 21-23)

Importance: This moment reflects an important fork in the road for Luc: where he symbolically and literally has to choose between his old life--humans and society--and his new life with his chimpanzee family. Luc ultimately chooses the chimps and ends up turning his back on civilization.

If I have to die, I am content that it's here. This feels more like home than my home ever did.

-- Prof (Chapter 10 paragraph 52)

Importance: Prof's sentiments here foreshadow the path that Luc will soon follow. At this point in the story, Luc is still afraid of being in the jungle and wants to get back to civilization, even though he, like Prof, has never truly had a home back in the real world. Prof understands before Luc does that home is the place where you can be accepted, where you have family.

There were so many ways to lose a person. So many ways to be lost to a person.

-- Luc (Chapter 8 paragraph 4)

Importance: Luc has had to deal with a great amount of loss in his life, even at such a young age: his mother, his father, his sister, and all of his friends back at Monsieur Tatagani's, as well as other individuals readers probably don't encounter in the pages of the story. This quote also hints at another theme of the book, which is the importance of being true to yourself. Prof explains this when he tells Luc that he cannot live his life to please others. In that way, a person can become lost not only to those around them, but to him or herself. This is a lesson that Luc learns over the course of the book and is part of why he decides to stay in the jungle at the end.

I had scored very well on my primaries before leaving the village, and being reminded of it was like learning a stolen treasure had been more valuable than I'd thought. But I mouthed Prof's compliment to myself as I cleared up the dinner bowl and straightened the campsite.

-- Luc (Chapter 9 paragraph 92)

Importance: This quote reflects Luc's self-consciousness about his lack of education. He resents Prof's offers to teach him more, but also desires to be educated. This quote also reflects how much a person's destiny is impacted by their circumstances. If Luc's



mother hadn't become ill, his father might not have left, his sister wouldn't have died, and he would have lived a very different life. Similarly, if Prof had been born in a different part of the world, he might not have felt so restrained in who he could love and might not have led such a lonely life.

The canopy was a katydid green, the jungle floor decked with clean circles and triangles of sunlight. It was almost as though the Inside was saying to me: Yes, I will take everything. You will wind up alone here. But it will be beautiful. Once you and I are all alone--and you have always known this would happen, haven't you?--there will still be beauty.

-- Luc (Chapter 10 paragraph 41)

Importance: This quote more explicitly states what has been hinted at all along up to this point in the novel: that Luc will learn to live in the jungle, and that he will have to do so on his own. However, in the past this has been a frightening thought to Luc, with the idea of mock men stealing him in the middle of the night. Now, although he is still afraid, he can begin to see the possibilities of how it could actually be a beautiful thing. This is the first indication readers get from Luc that he might not want to leave the Inside if given a choice.

How would I survive alone? It had been the question of my life, and I was still no closer to an answer.

-- Luc (Chapter 12 paragraph 17)

Importance: This quote takes place shortly after Prof goes missing and Luc realizes that he is on his own again. In many ways, this is a survival book, even before the novel begins. Luc has been forced to do any number of things just to get by in Franceville, and now without Prof, he realizes he will have to do the same in the jungle. This quote implies that survival has begun to shift in Luc's mind to not only mean staying alive, but keeping who he is as a person intact.

There was no chance I was going to refuse Madame Osgood's gifts, but I was embarrassed by how many there were and by how much I wanted them after I'd come to believe want was no longer a part of me.

-- Luc (Chapter 24 paragraph 120)

Importance: Although Luc has chosen to remain in the jungle among his chimpanzee family, he is not entirely removed from his wants for civilization. Just like many other aspects of this novel, readers are left with no clear cut answers but instead some shades of gray.