

SnapRead!

Charlie's ranch was the last place to find cougars. The land is flat. There are no trees. There is no place to hide. Or is there?

Charlie is a rancher. He raises cattle near the Medicine Bow mountains. Lots of snow falls. It is very cold. Charlie grew up on this ranch. He takes life in stride. But Charlie got a big surprise.

An official truck parked on Charlie's land. It said "Game and Fish Department." A man stood on the porch. He was Billy Brown.

"What's up, Billy?" Charlie said. "Come on in. Have some coffee."

Billy said, "I brought friends from the university."

A young man and woman got out of the truck. They walked into the kitchen. They had worked all week in the forest. They checked animals with radio collars.

Charlie was curious. "What are you tracking?"

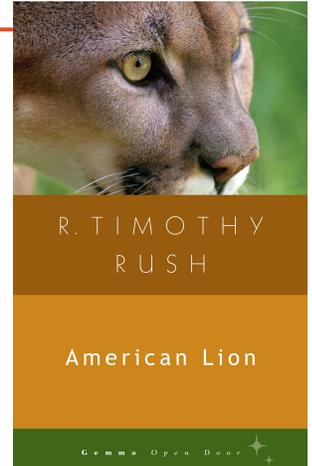
The man's name was Tom. Tom said, "Bears, mostly. But also something harder to find."

Cheryl, the woman said, "A mama mountain lion. She lives in your barn. I think she has kittens."

"What? That's not possible!" said Charlie. "I know my barn. There is no footprint. There is no sign."

Cheryl said, "Oh, she is there. Her radio collar sends a signal."

"Let's go see," Charlie said. "I can't believe it!"



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American Lion
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GEMMA⁺ OPEN DOOR FOR LITERACY

SnapRead!

Charlie opened the big barn door. They went in. The barn was dark. They were very quiet.

Cheryl said, "This receiver says that a mountain lion is here. But it does not tell me where."

Tom pointed toward the hayloft. Cheryl moved toward it. She pointed a flashlight at the boards. They saw something move.

Cheryl took off her coat. She went to the ladder.

"Are you going up there with a lion?" Charlie asked.

"Yes." Cheryl said. "It is my job."

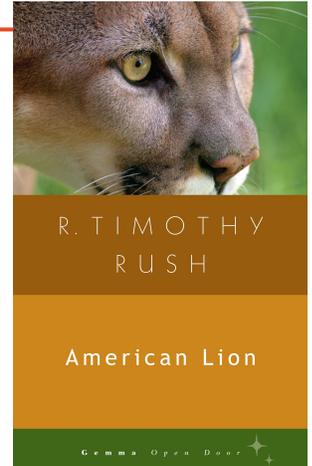
Cheryl went up the ladder fast. She was talking to something in the dark.

Charlie's heart pounded. A small woman was with a female mountain lion. The lion was big. The lion would protect her young. Charlie was afraid for Cheryl.

Cheryl crawled down. She said, "The lion is healthy. She is well fed. There are no babies."

That was good news for Charlie Jansen. Cubs and mothers were caught and moved before they ate Charlie's calves. That would be a very hard job!

Charlie kept an eye on the lion for two months. He called her Liz'beth. He talked to her. Sometimes she growled back. One day, she was gone.



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GEMMA⁺ OPEN DOOR FOR LITERACY

SnapRead!

Jake Hall is a fine young man. He is a cowboy, a hunter, and a fisherman. He is quiet. He is a friend to all.

African lions hunt in groups. Mountain lions hunt alone. Jake was once stalked by a hungry puma in Rock Creek Canyon. One summer day, Jake went fishing. He took Duke. Duke was his dog and his best friend. They went to the mountains. Duke was a hero that day.

Jake and Duke scrambled over jagged rocks. They hiked one hour. They found a good fishing hole. Jake caught three trout. They had a good day!

Jake sat down to eat his sandwich. Duke went on his belly. He was ready to fight. Jake could not see anything. But Duke growled.

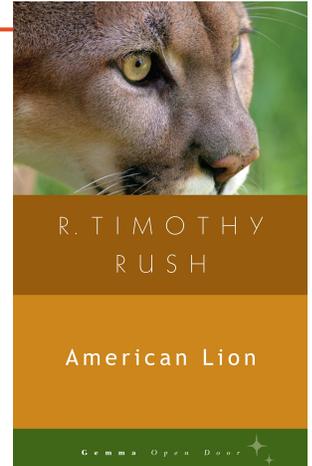
Then, Jake saw the mountain lion. He was grey like the rocks. He was very close. Jake grabbed Duke, but too late!

The cougar was surprised. The dog was smaller than the cat. But the dog was faster. He knocked the mountain lion down. They fought. They both fell off the ledge. They dropped eight feet. The lion ran off.

Jake gave Duke an apple. He patted his back. He said he was a good dog. Duke was proud and happy.

Then, the puma came back! This time, Duke charged. The lion ran back to the rocks. Duke was too brave for him.

Jake and Duke went home. They never saw the lion again.



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GEMMA⁺ OPEN DOOR FOR LITERACY

SnapRead!

Fort Washakie School is in Warm Valley, Wyoming. Warm Valley is in the Wind River Indian Reservation. 500 children go to the school. One mountain lion was there, too. She was curious.

The teacher said, "Respect all things. Respect yourself. You are Shoshone." She loved her class. She taught them to be kind and cheerful. She taught them to work hard. When it was recess time, Billi and her friends put on their jackets. They went outside.

A mama lion hid in the tree. She watched the children. She had watched them for many years.

"Did you see the big kitty?" Billi asked.

"No. Where?" Blaze asked. "Show me."

They waited for lunch. The friends and the cat watched each other.

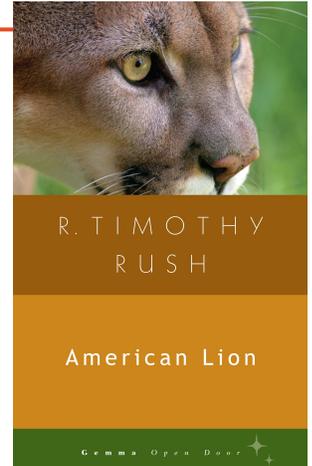
"Grandmother said not to tell others. She said lions watch over us."

The teacher saw the cat. She moved the children away. She went to the office.

Men and women came. They had guns. They talked and talked. The children said, "Don't shoot grandma lion! She is old."

The teacher took the children inside. They heard the shots. The lion did not fall.

The Tribal Policeman climbed the tree. He got the mama lion. She had been dead a long time. She was only watching the children one more time.



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GEMMA OPEN DOOR FOR LITERACY

SnapRead!

Once, I met a mountain lion. He was all muscle. He had big teeth and huge claws. I was alarmed. Then he vanished.

Mountain lions can run fast and jump high. They can jump forty feet. But they rarely attack humans.

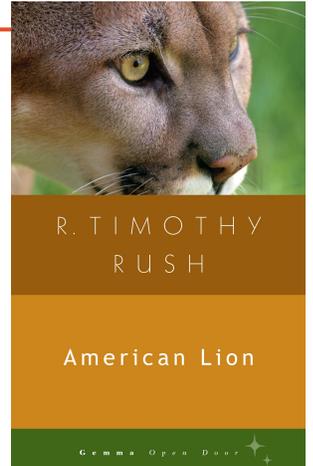
I asked about lions at the horse ranch. The manager showed me his phone. He showed me pictures of two young lions. Their coats were spotted. They walked in the snow. They walked near the kitchen.

Lefty was the ranch chef. He said the lions were good neighbors. “We bring our pets in at night,” he said.

“The lions are peaceful toward us. We try to get along. The cougar was here long before the ranch was built.”

I was surprised. Mountain lions can be trapped. They can be taken far away. These men did not want the puma to move. Not even the big male cat.

Lefty said, “Those pictures show the only lions we have seen this year. We know they are here. We find the deer they kill to eat. But nobody has seen a paw print. It is hard to call it coexistence. You are not sure you have neighbors.”



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