



Chasing the Lion

Nancy Kimball

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From the blood-soaked sand of the Roman arena, a divine destiny will rise.

For as long as Jonathan Tarquinius can remember, everyone has wanted something from him.

His half brother wants him dead. His master's wife wants his innocence. The gladiator dealers want him to fight—and die—for their greed. Rome's most famous prostitute wants his love. And the gentle slave girl who tends the wounds on his body and the hidden ones on his soul longs for him to return to his faith.

What Jonathan wants is simple. Freedom.

But God wants something from Jonathan too—something more than anyone would ever imagine. The young warrior's journey will push him to the limits of human endurance and teach him that true freedom is found within. The greatest battle Jonathan must ever fight will not come in the arena, but deep within himself as he is forced to choose between vengeance and mercy—with the fate of an empire and the life of the woman he loves hanging in the balance.

Chasing the Lion Details

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From Reader Review Chasing the Lion for online ebook

Sara Ella says

I'm an avid YA reader. Give me dystopians, fantasies or angsty teens any day. It's rare I am inclined to read a historical novel. I have to really be in the mood for one and even then I always choose books with a female as the main protagonist.

Suffice it to say, "Chasing the Lion" is not the kind of read typically found on my shelf. I wasn't sure what to expect. Little did I know I was in for a massive, jaw-dropping surprise.

I absolutely loved this story. I could gush all day about it, but let's get right into the review, shall we?

The Characters...

"Chasing the Lion" has the strongest male lead of any book I've ever read, and I've read a lot. Jonathan Tarquinius is complex, wounded, broken, swoon-worthy, handsome, brave, flawed. This guy has it all. I loved being a part of his journey from beginning to end. The transformation that takes place within those pages is, in a word, life-changing. I was in tears several times throughout the story. Nancy Kimball writes Jonathan in such an intimate way. I was so deep within his head and point of view I had to keep reminding myself that the author was female. This makes Jonathan's story even sweeter. It's obvious Nancy Kimball put a ton of blood, sweat and tears into Jonathan's story.

I also have to mention Nessa. Oh I love Nessa. I could read a whole book just about Nessa (novella anyone?). Her beauty radiates from the page in her quiet spirit and forgiving heart. She's the kind of woman I aspire to be, but she's also relatable. My favorite scenes from "Chasing the Lion" were the ones with Jonathan and Nessa together. They have such a chemistry. Theirs is the kind of love I'd like to see on the big screen someday.

The Plot....

Wow. This story really has everything. It's similar to the Biblical story of Joseph, but if you think that means you have "Chasing the Lion" figured out you're wrong, just like I was. I hate spoilers, so I won't give anything away, but Nancy Kimball puts twist after twist in there. I was so not expecting what happened between a certain someone and a certain someone else. If you want to know who I'm talking about, you'll just have to read the book. (READ THIS BOOK!) In the end her pacing was right on as was the way she tied everything together in the end.

The Setting...

As a reader I truly appreciate when an author does her homework. It's clear from page one Nancy Kimball spent hours researching this time and place. I felt like I was there in the arena with Jonathan. I could hear the roar of the crowd, see the sweat dripping from Jonathan's brow. And oh my word, the fight scenes! I have to hand it to this author because the fight scenes were so visual, a man could've written them. That is a true compliment. I would not have expected so much detail in sword play and hand to hand combat coming from a female author, but Nancy Kimball pulled this one off above and beyond my greatest expectations. Bravo!

Recommendation....

Yes. I highly recommend this book. It has something for everyone. Love, passion, revenge, forgiveness, redemption, action, suspense. It's all in there. Maybe you're like me, and historical gladiator stories aren't really your thing. I urge you to give "Chasing the Lion" a chance anyway. Nancy Kimball has created a true masterpiece. Think "Redeeming Love" by Francine Rivers meets "Gladiator" with Russel Crowe. You won't want to miss it!

Claire Banschbach says

Great storyline and characters. I just didn't really care for the way some content was presented. There was nothing explicit, but I just felt like most of it didn't really add to the story at all.

If you like historical fiction and stories of redemption, then check this book out.

Leah Good says

If you're looking for a book that will break your heart for about 350 out of 375 pages, this is the way to go! Poor Jonathan just couldn't catch a break!

Suffering is a pile of stones. You can carry them, let them lay upon the ground, throw them at others, or you can build an altar. Build an altar, my son. Always.

Chasing the Lion starts out like a retelling of the Biblical story of Joseph. Twelve-year-old Jonathan has always been subject to bullying because he doesn't have a father, but his life is about to change. It turns out his father not only lives but is a high-standing Roman official who very much wants to be part of Jonathan's life. Unfortunately, his older half-brother doesn't share the sentiment. Sold into slavery by the men hired to kill him, Jonathan eventually ends up in a gladiatorial ludus where gentle slave girl saves his life. From there, his story departs from that of Joseph's and becomes one of a wrongfully treated young man fighting for his life, for the life of one he loves, and for the dignity routinely striped from him.

I've read few books that go from bad to worse to even more worse as consistently as this one. Just when you think things can't get worse for Jonathan, they do. Again. Yet he perseveres. Despite turning his back on his mother's God at a young age, Jonathan retains his honor and integrity throughout the book. This is not the story of a "bad boy" won back to grace by a "good girl." Instead it's the story of a boy who turns his back on faith because of difficult circumstances, not realizing that faith is his best way through the hardship. Jonathan clings to the dignity left to him, trying to protect others while holding to the conviction that God turned away from him--failed him. Will he eventually learn that God's hand has preserved him all along?

This book kept me up till 2AM two nights in a row. That's as good a recommendation as any in my book (unless you're neck-deep in finals or something)!

NOTE: In keeping with the "Joseph" theme at the beginning of this book, Jonathan's mistress attempts to seduce him early on the book. He's periodically humiliated by being forced to strip. Later on the book, a couple's preparation to consummate their marriage is described. Definitely at least a PG-13 rating.

Karls says

I can't say enough about this book. From the first moment to the last I was captivated by the journey Jonathan was set on. His struggles with man and with God, his ultimate surrender, and the results that came from each. Nancy has taken this man and painted a stunning picture of how God will pursue, never giving up, and always remaining faithful in His love for us. We may never understand. We may shake our fist at Him because of our lack of understanding. But He is patient, loving, and will build in us the person He has fashioned us to be.

Reeda Booke says

I won't go into a lengthy review as there are plenty of them here, but I did want to at least say that I LOVED this book! A wonderfully told tale of the sacrifice, courage, love and the amazing power of forgiveness and redemption. That it was an historical fiction book set in ancient Rome, one of my favorites, made it all the better. That it included the important message of God and His love for us, made it the best! It was very difficult to put down. Highly, highly recommended!

I am hoping for a follow up book to continue this amazing story.

Nicki Rhode keck says

this is an absolutely awesome book! I love books set in this time period. this was reminiscent of the "Mark of the Lion" series by Francine rivers. if you liked those books, you will like this one. a friend recommended it to me. it kept me on the edge of my seat from start to finish. I read the audible edition, and I really hope that more books in this series will come out on audible. jonathan is raised in poverty by his mother and a woman from Jerusalem, Deborah. his father, a roman senator, finds out about his existence, and even though he was an illegitimate son, his father decides to do the honorable thing and claim him. his mother dies, as she is very sick, and his father raises him. also, his mother is a Christian, a believer in Jesus, the messiah. After she dies, and especially after his half-brother unjustly tries to get him killed, Jonathan turns away from his god. he is unjustly sold into slavery. the story moves on from there, and I won't give away any more, except to say that I loved the way his coming back and devotion to God was orchestrated.

Kathrese says

The story of Jonathan will get under your skin and nestle into your heart. Ms. Kimball stepped out of the "historical fiction" box and onto the historical epic stage when she wrote "Chasing the Lion."

As far as main characters go, Jonathan is one you won't easily forget. The people in the book will live on in your mind, too. When you're reading the story, an epic movie begins in your head, and you can't put the book down.

The world building in this book rivals the level found in "The Silver Chalice" and "The Bronze Bow." Better than any other book I've read, this one brings the Roman world to life, from the lofty homes of the senators

to the dingy back alleys and into the gladiator ring.

There's even romance, but the romance transcends the usual formula. Gritty and tender, horrific and hopeful, "Chasing the Lions" is a brilliant debut novel.

Carla Rossi says

I had the pleasure of reading Chasing the Lion before its release. I am a huge fan of historicals, but had not read many from this time period. I was totally blown away by Nancy Kimball's tight writing style and natural storytelling talent. Her careful attention to detail and painstaking research is evident in the story's authentic feel. Jonathan is a perfect hero, and I can't wait to read more about him in the next book in this series. This book is a truly phenomenal debut and I highly recommend it.

Marion Ueckermann says

Jonathan Tarquinius will steal your heart from the moment you meet him as a fatherless boy of twelve trying to escape the village bullies, to the sixteen-year-old son of a nobleman sold into slavery by his cruel step-brother, and finally as the brave gladiator destined against all odds to become the champion of Rome.

As you read Jonathan's story, you'll share in his resentment and fury toward those who have wronged him, tortured him, used him—from the lust-hungry wife of his master, to his greed-filled owner, and the blood-thirsty crowds that throng the auditorium. You'll weep for him. You'll love with him.

But will he ever find his way back to his father and home? To the woman he loves? To freedom? Amongst the injustice, hatred, envy, and lust, Award-winning author, Nancy Kimball, weaves the beautiful story of redemption. The scarlet thread is intertwined in the narrative and dialogue of Jonathan's childhood memories; through the love of a young slave girl who fight after fight faithfully tends his injuries and pours salve onto his wounded soul; and in the sacrificial death of a worthy opponent. No greater love has a man than to lay down his life for a friend.

Set in ancient Rome in the era of gladiators and slaves, Chasing the Lion is an epic novel written in beautiful prose. For me, every word has been a sumptuous feast and I've not wanted this banquet to end. Well done, Nancy. I'm so proud to call you my friend.

Natalie says

One of the best books I've read in a long time, maybe ever. I'd be comfortable putting it in the top ten. No review I could write would do this story justice.

All I can say is, Nancy, keep writing. And be fast about it. I want to read more. ;) Really, this is amazing.

Can't wait for the audio book.

Angi G. says

Chasing the Lion – The Story of a Hero!

I LOVED Chasing the Lion! To say that this is one of the best books I've read this year is an understatement. Nancy Kimball is a new author who has had the story of Johnathan Tarquinius burning on her heart for quite some time. We are taken on a journey as Johnathan grows from a young boy into a young man within just a few chapters. Tragedy and disappointment find him at a very young age and follow him into manhood where he is forced to face the biggest challenges of his life in the arena of the Gladiator. All while trying to save the life of the woman he loves.

The message of the Gospel is beautifully woven throughout the story as Johnathan struggles to find his way, leaving no doubt where true strength lies and where one's faith is deepened. Chasing the Lion is the powerful story of testing and trials where one can come through the fire with the heart of a champion!

I give this book 5 stars and 2 thumbs up!

Jaye Knight says

Right off, let me tell you Chasing the Lion has made it to the number one spot of my historical fiction favorites, and is my third all-time favorite book after Lord of the Rings and Books of the Infinite by R.J. Larson. There are few books I've enjoyed quite to this extent. I also want to make a note that I recommend it for older teen and adult readers. It does not shy away from the rampant immorality of Roman society, though I felt Nancy Kimball handled it well without unnecessary details. It also contains violence and extreme cruelty (most scenes cut away, but you still have to read about the aftermath). I have a pretty high tolerance when I read, but I caution more sensitive.

That said, I devoured this book in a little over a day. I first came across it a couple of weeks ago on one of the ebook sale websites I follow. I never spend more than 99 cents on an ebook I've never heard of before. I just have too many to read right now. This one was \$3.99. Normally, I would have passed it up, but when I saw it involved gladiators, I just couldn't. (I have quite an interest in gladiators since that became part of Jace's backstory in Ilyon Chronicles.) I am SO glad I bought it. Chasing the Lion has a very Joseph-like storyline in the beginning, though Jonathan is not quite Joseph in character. He spends a good portion of the book driven by hatred and desire for revenge, yet, was so noble. I completely fell in love with his character. He was so easy to relate to, and my heart just ached with all his hardship. I don't remember the last character who pulled at my emotions like he did. My heart would just be pounding sometimes as I was reading.

The book sucked me right in. The writing was so good that I completely forgot I was reading. I was just right there in the story. And it wasn't only Jonathan who made the book. It had a very diverse cast of interesting individuals and points-of-view. Though historical, it had just enough description to lay out the setting, but not so much as to draw you out of the story itself. A perfect balance, in my opinion.

But I think what set this book apart from most was the spiritual aspect of it. Most fiction is just entertainment

and relaxation for me. For more, I read non-fiction. It has to be a special book to touch me spiritually, and this one did. I feel like God brought it into my life at just the right time. Reading about how the believers in the book endured their trials and clung to their faith encouraged me to do the same in the trials I'm facing. The theme of forgiveness was also very powerful.

I can't say enough good things about this book, and I can hardly wait to read more by Nancy Kimball. This is the first time I've wanted to start reading a book again immediately after I finished it. I even went and bought the paperback right away just so I could grab it off my shelf and easily flip to my favorite parts.

Kevinity says

In *Chasing the Lion*, debut author Nancy Kimball adeptly blends the gritty history of ancient Rome with the inspirational message of embracing faith. A fully realized hero is born as the harrowing journey of Jonathan Tarquinius explodes like a spray of hot sand from the gladiator's arena off the pages of this expertly written, independently published novel. The genre defying story is engaging as a reader of historical fiction, sword-and-shield fantasy, and Christian inspiration with a respectable dash of romance to emphasize it all. Kimball spends just enough time on each setting and character, whether a lavish senator or a lowly slave, to immediately produce a strong mental image without drowning in details. She clearly knows her time period, but allows the reader to experience it with her rather than trying to teach a history lesson. While some of the violence is rather graphic, and the ending mildly convenient, this book caught my attention, inspired me, and deeply impressed me. Nancy Kimball is an author on the verge of shattering the conventions and expectations of her genre. I cannot wait to read the sequel, though the first book is entirely self contained. Highly recommend!

Nicole says

Nancy Kimball has an unmistakable gift with words and storytelling.

Chasing the Lion is an INCREDIBLE story of courage, sacrifice, heartache and LOVE. I am not usually a fan of the historical fiction genre, but this remarkable story set me straight :) A great book is a great book, no matter where it's set or what the characters wear (or don't wear!). Jonathan is truly an amazingly written character. Talk about hardcore. He is a man's man. NO doubt about it. And he's a man you'll want to follow into the Lion pit.

A gorgeous tale of redemption awaits you...

Pick up this book! It will be one of your forever favorites!

Laura says

Fans of Francine Rivers' *Mark of the Lion* series will enjoy this gladiator tale.

Jonathan is a great character, and the book is full of twists and turns that will keep the reader staying up way too late to finish.

