Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Charlie Bone and the Red Knight

written by

Jenny Nimmo

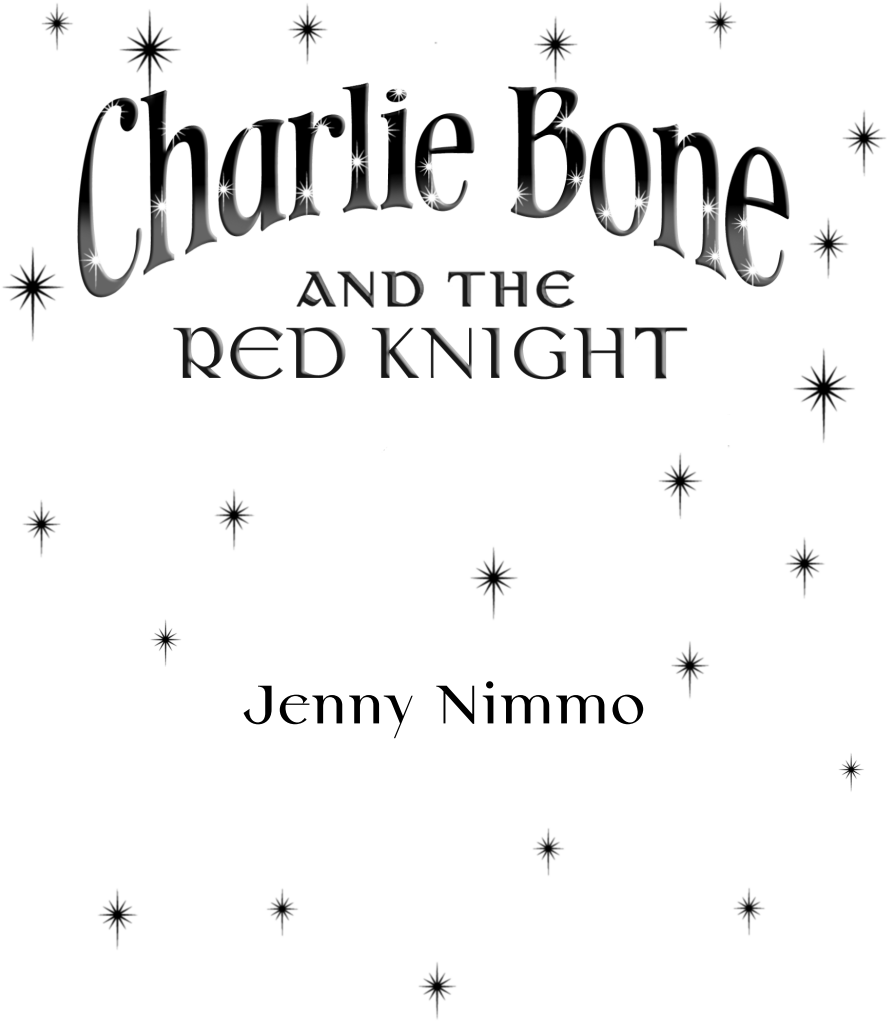
published by

Egmont Children's Books

All text is copyright © of the author/ illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk



Jenny Nimmo

www.egmont.co.uk

EGMONT



To Alice and Corwine, with love

www.charlie-bone.com

EGMONT
We bring stories to life

Charlie Bone and the Red Knight first published in
Great Britain 2009
by Egmont UK Limited
239 Kensington High Street
London W8 6SA

Text copyright © 2009 Jenny Nimmo
Cover illustration copyright © 2009 Sam Hadley

The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted

ISBN 978 1 4052 4823 5

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

Typeset by Avon DataSet Ltd, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by the CPI Group

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher and copyright owner.



Contents

The endowed children	vii
Prologue	xiii
1. The enchanted sword	1
2. Lord Grimwald arrives	17
3. A family tree	39
4. Gabriel's secret	57
5. Fire in the tunnel	77
6. Charlie escapes	101
7. Olivia and the gargoyle	113
8. The Sea Globe	131
9. The false godmother	147
10. Tigerfield Steps	169
11. Angel in the snow	187
12. The sea-gold charms	211
13. The roaring wave	233
14. A perplexing postcard	255
15. Fog!	275



16. A distant voice 293
17. Eagle thief 311
18. Rembrandt's fly 325
19. Rescuing Solomon 347
20. On the heath 367
21. The battle 389
22. The seat of evil 399



The children of the Red King, called the endowed

Manfred Bloor	Talents Master at Bloor's Academy. Previously head boy. A hypnotiser. He is descended from Borlath, eldest son of the Red King. Borlath was a brutal and sadistic tyrant.
Naren Bloor	Adopted daughter of Bartholomew Bloor, Naren can send shadow words over great distances. She is descended from the Red King's grandson who was abducted by pirates and taken to China.
Asa Pike	A were-beast. He is descended from a tribe who lived in the Northern forests and kept strange beasts. Asa can change shape at dusk.



Billy Raven	Billy can communicate with animals. One of his ancestors conversed with ravens that sat on a gibbet where dead men hung. For this talent he was banished from his village.
Lysander Sage	Descended from an African wise man. He can call up his spirit ancestors.
Tancred Torsson	A storm-bringer. His Scandinavian ancestor was named after the thunder god, Thor. Tancred can bring rain, wind, thunder and lightning.
Gabriel Silk	Gabriel can feel scenes and emotions through the clothes of others. He comes from a line of psychics.
Emma Tolly	Emma can fly. Her surname



	derives from the Spanish swordsman from Toledo, whose daughter married the Red King. He is therefore an ancestor to all the endowed children.
Charlie Bone	Charlie can travel into photographs and pictures. Through his father he is descended from the Red King, and through his mother, from Mathonwy, a Welsh magician and friend of the Red King.
Dorcas Loom	Dorcas can bewitch items of clothing. Her ancestor, Lola Defarge, knitted a shrivelling shawl whilst enjoying the execution of the Queen of France in 1793.
Idith and Inez Branko	Telekinetic twins, distantly related to Zelda Dobinsky, who has left Bloor's Academy.



Joshua Tilpin	Joshua has magnetism. He is descended from Lilith, the Red King's oldest daughter, and Harken, the evil enchanter who married her.
Una Onimous	Mr Onimous's niece. Una is five years old and her endowment is being kept secret until it has fully developed.
Olivia Vertigo	Descended from Guanhamara, who fled the Red King's castle and married an Italian Prince. Olivia is an illusionist. The Bloors are unaware of her endowment.
Dagbert Endless	Dagbert is the son of Lord Grimwald who can control the oceans. His mother took the gold from drowned men's teeth, and made them into charms to protect her son. Dagbert is a drowner.



Eric Shellhorn Eric can animate stone carvings.

The endowed are all descended from the ten children of the Red King: a magician-king who left Africa in the twelfth century, accompanied by three leopards.



Prologue

The Red King arrived in the North nine hundred years ago. He was an African magician and each of his ten children inherited a small part of his power. These powers were passed down, through their descendants, to the inhabitants of an ancient city. But not all the inheritors use their powers wisely. Some of them are bent on evil, and Charlie Bone strives constantly to thwart them.

Charlie's parents are on their second honeymoon. They have been away for more than a month. Postcards arrive for Charlie, describing his parents' wonderful adventures on the world's oceans. Although Charlie is happy for them, he wishes they would return. The city is becoming a dangerous place for him and his friends. One of them was almost drowned and their favourite meeting place, the Pets' Café, has been closed. Charlie is afraid that the Red King's old enemy, Count Harken,



will try and enter the city once again. The count, an enchanter, has already abducted the orphan, Billy Raven, and now keeps him in Badlock, a world that exists in the far distant past.

If only the Red King could return to keep the city safe. But that is too much to hope for. And yet, deep in the ruins of the Red King's castle, a heart still beats within a tall red tree. The king can watch with the eyes of birds that settle on his branches; he can listen with the ears of creatures that graze beside him; sometimes he can even move. But he who was once mighty is now powerless to help the children who need him. His last spell has been cast. He can only hope that his cloak and sword will protect the man who has chosen to take his place. One thing is certain: the white mare that was once the king's beloved queen will do all in her power to carry their champion to victory.

The enchanted sword

To the small man hurrying through the city, the dark buildings that rose about him had never appeared so menacing.

'Menaced,' muttered Orvil Onimous. 'That's what we are, my dears, menaced.' He was speaking to three cats that paced about him, magnificent creatures with fire-bright coats, from the deep copper of the cat that leapt ahead, to the flame orange and starry yellow of the two that ran on either side of him.

'You are a comfort, Flames,' sighed the little man, 'you know that, don't you?'

They turned off the High Street and made their way down Frog Street, a narrow alley that led to the ancient city walls. It was



a cold, damp night and the cobblestones were wet with melting frost. Every step the small man took became more laboured. He rounded a corner and came within sight of an unusual-looking shop, built into the very fabric of the old walls. Above a large, latticed window, the words 'The Pets' Café' could just be made out on a sign filled with the paintings of animals.

Mr Onimous seemed unable to continue. He hung his head, gasping for air. With his whiskery face and furry brown head he resembled a large vole in an ill-fitting tweed coat.

The cats gathered round him, mewing encouragement, but Orvil Onimous let out a mournful sob and pointed to a sheet of paper nailed to the green painted door.

These premises are closed, said the notice, *by order of the city councillors, in accordance with Section 238 of the Public Health Act*.

The cats could not read the notice but they were well aware of its meaning. Their friend's livelihood had been stolen from him. The Pets' Café, where every customer was obliged to bring a pet, was now closed. The joyful twittering, the braying, barking and mewing



that once had welcomed every visitor was now gone, leaving only a bleak silence.

Inside the café, chairs were piled on empty tables, the lights were out in the coloured lanterns hanging from the ceiling, and in the kitchen Mrs Onimous endlessly filled the stove with cakes and cookies that no one would eat.

Thinking of his wife, Mr Onimous took a firm step towards the green door, and then hesitated. A sound at the far end of the alley made him peer cautiously round the corner.

A figure came striding towards him.

'We're closed,' called Mr Onimous. 'It's no use coming down here. Besides,' he added sadly, 'you haven't got a pet – unless it's in your pocket. Go away.'

The stranger paid no attention. He marched purposefully closer. A boy, thought Mr Onimous, noting the slim build and youthful stride. A yellow scarf covered the lower half of the boy's face, and the hood of his blue coat was pulled well down over his forehead.

Mr Onimous backed nervously round the corner. His heart was beating rather fast, but his gloomy mood had been replaced by resentful anger. Who was this silent



stranger, marching towards him when he had expressly told him to go away?

The cats were usually quick to defend Mr Onimous but they stood in the alley with their tails erect, sniffing the air and mewing expectantly.

A strong breeze accompanied the stranger – a sinister breeze in Mr Onimous's opinion. Can't be one of the kids, he thought. Can't be one of the endowed. It's Wednesday night. They're all at school and in bed most likely. He ran across to the green door and, pulling a key from his pocket, shakily inserted it into the lock.

'Mr Onimous!' The voice was a harsh, urgent whisper.

The little man turned fearfully, and looked into a pair of familiar sky-blue eyes. 'Tancred Torsson!' he cried.

'Sssh!' Tancred put a finger to his lips.

'Oh, my dear, dear fellow.' Mr Onimous clasped both Tancred's hands and squeezed them tight. 'Oh, you can't know how you've lifted my spirits. We thought you were dead.'

'I am dead, Mr Onimous,' whispered Tancred. 'Dead to THEM at least. Can I come in? I'll explain everything.'

'Of course, of course.' Mr Onimous unlocked the



door and drew Tancred into the empty café. The three cats bounced swiftly after them and Mr Onimous locked and bolted the door.

Tancred pulled down his scarf and gazed at the upturned chairs with their legs pointing desolately at the darkened ceiling. 'This is so sad, Mr Onimous,' he said. 'We must do something about it.'

'Course we must, but it's too much for my poor old brain to sort out.' Mr Onimous led the way round the counter at the back of the café, and into the bright kitchen beyond.

An exceptionally tall woman with a long melancholy face was spooning jam into some rather pale-looking tarts. There were several plates of them spread across the kitchen table, and if it hadn't been for Mrs Onimous's desolate expression, you would have thought she was preparing for a party.

'Don't say it,' murmured Mrs Onimous, without looking up. 'Who's going to eat a hundred tarts? I couldn't help myself, Orvil. What else am I to do?'

'Onoria, my darling,' Mr Onimous failed to keep a squeak of excitement out of his voice. 'We have a visitor.'



She looked up, opened her mouth, screamed, staggered backwards and collapsed into an old armchair. 'Tancred Torsson!' she gasped. 'You're dead!'

'Not so, Mrs Onimous.' Tancred pulled back his hood, revealing a mop of thick corn-gold hair. 'As you see, I am very much alive.'

'The news is all round the city. They said you had drowned.' Two fat tears rolled down Mrs Onimous's cheeks. 'A terrible accident, they said it was, but we guessed it was that evil boy Dagbert Endless who had drowned you.'

'Well, he did, in a sense,' Tancred agreed. 'I was just about gone when Emma rescued me. And then, soon after my father had carried my lifeless body home, we had visitors.' Tancred sat at the table and stroked the head of the yellow cat, Sagittarius, drawing a deep purr from his silky throat. 'I thought you had sent them.'

'The cats!' cried Mr Onimous, clapping his hands. 'I should have known it. But they lead a mysterious life. I never know where they are off to.'

'They saved your life too, Orvil,' said his wife, pouring tea for their visitor. 'It's a miracle how they



always know when a child of the Red King is in trouble.'

'I'm no child,' chuckled Mr Onimous, lifting orange Leo into his arms.

'You're a descendant; that's good enough for them.' Onoria smiled as Aries, the copper cat, wound himself round her legs.

'They sat on my bed all through the night.' Tancred's eyes took on a faraway gleam as he began to describe the warmth and comfort the cats had brought to his aching limbs, and how their voices had soothed the pain in his head and steadied his faltering heart.

'I know, I know.' Mr Onimous thought of his own miraculous recovery.

Mrs Onimous sat down and pushed same tarts across to Tancred. 'Empty the plate, there's a good boy,' she said. 'And take some home to your mother. We don't see enough of her down here.'

'She doesn't have a pet,' said Tancred through a mouthful of tart. 'She's tried dogs and cats, guinea pigs and rabbits, even a pony, but they all ran away. They couldn't take my dad's thunder.'

Tancred's father was known as the Thunder Man, on



account of the violent weather that constantly attended him.

'Does Charlie Bone know that you survived?' asked Mr Onimous, biting into one of his wife's tarts.

Tancred nodded vigorously. 'So do the others: Lysander, Gabriel and co, but no one else must know. I can do more to help them if Dagbert and the Bloors think that I'm dead.'

'We won't tell a soul.' Mr Onimous lowered his voice as though the Bloors might be outside the door that very moment. 'I feel so sorry for poor Charlie. His parents have been away for more than a month now, and although I don't like to criticise a fine person like Lyell Bone, it's a long time to leave your only child when you've already been apart for more than ten years.'

'I agree,' said Tancred, 'but Charlie's such a great –' A loud knocking caused him to stop mid-sentence and stare over his shoulder.

'Whoever can it be?' Mr Onimous opened the kitchen door and stared across the café at a large figure framed in the window. 'Bless me, it's Norton. I'll –'

'NO, Mr Onimous!' Tancred leapt up and pulled the little man back into the kitchen. 'Charlie asked me to



warn you. That's why I came. Norton Cross has betrayed you, Mr Onimous.'

'What?' Mr Onimous frowned at Tancred in disbelief. 'How can you say such a thing? Norton? He's the best doorman we've ever had.'

'You have to believe me, sir,' said Tancred in a low voice. 'He's been seen in the company of the Witch Tilpin and others. Some of the villains from Piminy Street, in fact.'

'Norton?' Clutching the edge of the table, Mr Onimous sank on to a chair. 'What's the world coming to?'

'Well, at least we'll be on our guard, Orvil,' said his wife. She shook her head. 'Who can have turned our dear Norton to wickedness?'

No one could answer her.

The knocking had ceased at last and, peering into the dark café, Tancred caught a glimpse of two figures walking down the alley. Norton was unmistakable, his bulky form clad in a green padded jacket printed with yellow elephants. His companion was shorter and wore a black cloak and a hat with a drooping feather. The hat was an odd shape, soft and velvety. It reminded



Tancred of another hat he'd seen. Was it in a book or in a painting? He couldn't yet place it.

'Think I'd better be going now,' Tancred told the Onimouses.

'Do take care, my dear.' Mrs Onimous came and gave him a hug. 'You're young to be out alone on such a dark night.'

Tancred was fourteen and accustomed to being out alone on dark nights. His endowment was the only protection he needed, or so he thought. A bolt of lightning or a blast of gale-force wind had always been enough to deter any would-be assailant. 'I can look after myself,' he said, extricating himself from Mrs Onimous's embrace.

A violent gust of wind blew through the kitchen and the cups hanging on the dresser rattled and clinked in a wild tune.

'All right, Weather-boy, you don't have to prove it,' chuckled Mr Onimous.

Tancred walked briskly through the café, calling, 'Goodnight, Onimouses. Keep safe!'

Stepping into the alley, he closed the café door and stood listening for a moment. Footfalls could be heard



turning right on to the High Street. Pulling up his hood, Tancred tiptoed swiftly up the alley and looked round the corner.

The two figures were walking briskly in the direction of Bloor's Academy. Tancred drew his scarf over the lower part of his face and hurried after them. At first, Norton and his companion seemed unaware of their stalker, but all at once the man in the black cloak swung round. Tancred leapt into a doorway. He stood with his back against the door, breathing heavily.

He must have seen me, thought Tancred, for I saw him.

It was a face Tancred had instantly recognised. Framed in shoulder-length black curls, the stranger's pale features were dominated by large dark eyes and heavy arched eyebrows. He had a small pointed beard and the tips of his fine moustache curled up to each cheek.

If the man had seen Tancred he was apparently unconcerned, for the footsteps resumed their brisk walk.

It was several minutes before Tancred could bring himself to move again and, by the time he emerged on to the High Street, the two figures were nowhere to be



seen. They had evidently taken the side street that led to the Academy.

Keeping close to the buildings, Tancred flew after them. He reached the square in front of the Academy just in time to see Norton climb the steps up to the school.

A cold shudder ran down Tancred's spine. He had spent three years at the Academy and, in spite of the friends he had made, he had always been aware that at any moment old Ezekiel Bloor and the children he controlled might do something irrevocably evil. And then Dagbert-the-drowner had arrived, and the evil had finally shown its hand. Dagbert thought he had drowned Tancred Torsson; indeed, if it hadn't been for the cats' miraculous powers, Tancred would be dead.

He watched Norton climb to the top step, then turn and look back at the fountain in the centre of the square. A circle of swans, their beaks upraised, blew silvery streams into the lamplit air. Tancred pressed himself against a wall, where the light from the street lamps couldn't reach him. Norton made an odd sign with his hand: a sort of thumbs up, with all his fingers. And then, before Tancred realised what was



happening, Norton's hand had twisted round so that his forefinger was now pointing straight at him. Tancred cursed himself for being such a fool. He had forgotten Norton's companion.

The man now emerged from behind the fountain and advanced towards Tancred.

'Who are ye? Give us thy name.' The voice was deep and husky. 'Speak!'

With his back to the wall Tancred shuffled sideways, attempting to slide back into the alley.

'Stop!' roared the man, and Tancred froze as, from beneath the folds of his cloak, the man drew out a gleaming sword. 'Spy! Give thy name!'

Tancred found he couldn't breathe; his legs felt so weak he feared they would give way at any moment. He tried to summon up a wind, to fill the air with hailstones, but in the stranger's presence he could only muster up a damp breeze. The man was almost upon him, his sword slicing the air in shining arcs of light.

'Must I die a second time?' Tancred whispered dismally.

There would be no witnesses. The city seemed deserted, even the noise of traffic had died away; the



only sound that Tancred could hear was a faint clattering, which he mistook for his own beating heart. But the clattering grew louder. And now the sound resembled hoofs cantering on stone, and then a voice cut through the night, 'ASHKELAN!'

The swordsman whirled round and Tancred blinked in amazement as a knight on a white horse charged into the square. The knight was dressed from head to foot in glittering chain mail; he wore a helmet of polished metal with a plume of red feathers flowing from its crown, and a red cloak that billowed behind him like a sail. In his right hand he wielded a bright sword, the hilt encrusted with glittering jewels, and the shield that hung from his saddle was emblazoned with a burning sun.

'You!' grunted the man called Ashkelan; holding his sword aloft, he rushed at the knight.

With one blow of his own weapon the knight swept the sword from his assailant's hand, and it rattled over the cobblestones. There was a scream of pain, followed by a roar of anger as the owner of the sword fell to the ground, clutching his arm.

A stream of mysterious and indecipherable words



issued from the man as he reached for his sword. Tancred had been about to run from the scene but he stood rooted to the spot, scarcely able to believe his eyes. For all at once the fallen sword was in the air and flying towards the knight. Lifting his weapon, the knight parried the blow that would surely have severed his arm, but the enchanted sword came at him again, and again he fought off the blow. An extraordinary duel was taking place and, frightened as he was, Tancred could not bring himself to leave the square.

The knight and his mount seemed almost to be one, for the horse turned in a flash. It leapt high above the fountain and raced around the square, its hoofs moving in a cloud of sparks. The enchanted sword, now a flying streak of light, attacked the knight from every angle. How he managed to fight off such a battery of lightning blows, it was hard to comprehend. And then, at last, came the strike that might have finished him. It fell across his chest, slicing through the chain mail and drawing a deep grunt of pain from the knight. But with a mighty upward thrust he caught the enchanted sword and set it spinning into the sky.

Tancred didn't wait for the sword to fall to earth.



Astounded by what he had seen, he tore down the alley and on to the High Street. Fear and excitement caused great gusts of wind to whistle round his head; his hood blew back and the air above him fizzed with blue and white sparks. He reached Frog Street and ran towards the Pets' Café, calling, 'Mr Onimous, let me in!'

A tall man stepped out of the shadows and Tancred ran straight into him. With a moan of defeat the weather-boy closed his eyes and dropped to the ground.