

STORY STARTER by INBALI ISERLES



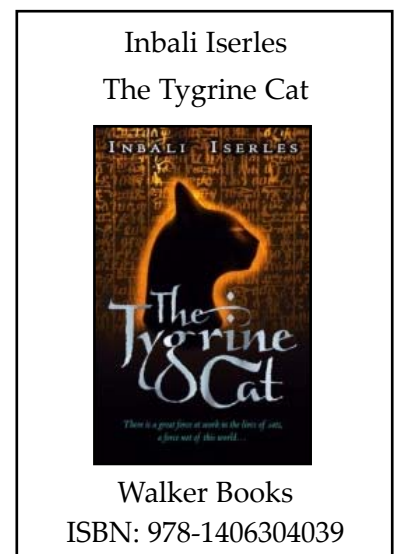
In my book, *The Tygrine Cat*, a young cat called Mati stumbles upon a community of street cats at Cressida Lock – a market-place based on Camden Lock in North London.

Once a year during the summer holidays when I was a girl, my mum would take me to Camden Market with my older sister, Tali.

We lived in Cambridge and the drive was arduous – but it was worth it! Camden was overwhelming, full of exotic food and colourful characters. It was there that I spotted my first punk, sipped my first chai and bought my first knee-length boots.

Set loose on the sprawling market, Tali and I roamed between vibrant stalls. These adventures took us up flights of winding stairs past sound systems competing with thumping bass. For hours we lost ourselves in the market's cavernous tunnels. And finally, growing hungry from our efforts, we bought chips in grease-proof paper and headed to the overgrown banks of

the lock to watch Camden unfold in its sinister majesty. Because Camden was a wild sort of place – a market of extraordinary energy – but one where a sense of mystery and danger crept just beyond the stalls.



Story starter: walkabout

I believe that stories are everywhere, if only you keep your eyes open. The best thing about this story starter is that you don't need to know what you're looking for when you begin! You just have to lay your hands on a camera – a disposable will do or perhaps a camera phone. The camera lens is your eye to the world.

When researching *The Tygrine Cat*, I re-visited Camden Lock with my digital camera. It was a bitterly cold winter day but the traders were out in force, standing behind their stalls clutching mugs of warming tea. Without a clear idea of what I was looking for, I gave

myself a walking tour, snapping away on the camera. I captured details: the trader's hands in fingerless gloves as they clutched the chipped mug; the pattern of rugs hanging from hooks; broken paving slabs and tufts of grass that burst between them. Peering through the camera, I saw the urban landscape that would – eventually – become Mati's world in *The Tygrine Cat*.

Camera in hand, you're ready to begin...

- Take a walk around your neighbourhood with a camera – you could even start with your home or school. Perhaps you've lived there all your life but try to imagine

it as if you were seeing it for the very first time.

- What do you see through the lens? What details can you pick up?
- Look around you: is the place well looked after? Is there mess? Is there litter?
- How do you feel when you look through the camera's eye? Is the world you are seeing friendly? Is it scary?
- What sort of person would come here? What sort of animals?
- You don't need to stick to your normal eye level: try crouching or

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climbing onto steps – does the world look different from down below, or higher up?

Once the photos are processed or loaded onto digital format, you can look at them and remember your walkabout. Try keeping the images in a scrapbook and noting down helpful information, like the smells and sounds you recall when you took them.

So now you have the setting for your story. Perhaps you have even captured a character or two...

