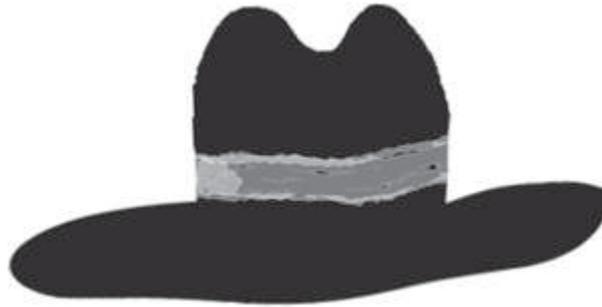


Interview with Jozua Douglas



You've written many children's books over the years with lots of zany characters. If you could invite two of them for dinner, which ones would you pick? What would you ask them and what would you cook for them?

I think that I would invite President Pablo Fernando and Mrs De Leeuw. They are so crazy that it becomes funny! This is something that's really important for a children's book. For Pablo I would cook banana soup because it's something he would love. And for Mrs De Leeuw, who is dead scared of bacteria, I would fry something, so that she knows for sure that what she's eating is completely dead. I would ask them to tell us something about their childhood. Who knows? There might be a good story in there.

At what age did you realise that you wanted to be a writer?

As a child I wanted to become a lot of things: a fighter pilot, a television host, an actor and a Tour de France champion, but one day I woke up and knew exactly what I wanted to be: a goat farmer. At the time I owned three goats. I loved them and I thought: wouldn't it be great to have a farm with hundreds of these creatures. So, it was set. I would become a farmer. Until the day everything was turned upside down. The teacher asked me to read one of my stories out loud in class.



I did and was a huge success. I remember kids saying: Wow, man. That was awesome. You are a writer. And I thought: If I am a writer already, why become a goat farmer? So, I decided to be a writer and I never changed my mind.

What do you miss most about your childhood?

Time. That immeasurable ocean of time. The life of an adult is brief and goes by so quickly. Children live in a sort of eternal bubble, within which time doesn't seem to pass. The future stretches endlessly in front of them. There awaits an endless world of possibilities. On the other hand, I am glad that I am an adult. I no longer have to sit and whine for sweets. If I feel for them, I'll just eat them. And nobody can tell me when to go to bed! And I can watch TV for as long as I want. These are the advantages of adulthood. I feel the frustration of my three-year-old son acutely.

What's your writing process? Do you sit and think about your stories or do they just come to you?

Sometimes a small idea comes to me out of the blue. But this is just a seed which you need to let grow by applying your mind. I usually have to think about it for a few months. Occasionally I write down my thoughts and so the contours of a story arise. Only when I know for sure that I have a good story, do I begin to write. So I first write the story in my head before I put pen to paper.



Which storybook/cartoon character do you like the most? Why?

As a child, I was a fan of Astrix and Obelix and I still find the stories extremely funny with a nice wink to the current day reality.

If you could perform in the circus, what would you like to do?

I would like to be a magician. Or rather, a mentalist. Somebody who knows how to amaze his audience with inscrutable magic tricks. Perhaps I would also like to be a palm reader or a card reader. Then I would invent stories for all those who enter my wagon. There must at least be some magic involved.



If you could visit any fantasy place from a book or movie, where would it be?

*As a child, my parents always read *The Chronicles of Narnia* to me. I thought the stories were wonderful and dreamt of being in that magical land filled with talking animals, giants, knights and mythical creatures.*

If you could have your own talk show, who would your first guest be?

*That would be Roald Dahl if he was still alive. But he's no longer living and therefore I would interview John Laster, one of the founders of Pixar. I have great admiration for just about all of the films made by this great film studio. Laster writes and produces, amongst others, the *Toy Story* films. He is a tremendous story teller and at the moment is the Creative Director for both Disney and Pixar.*

What advice would you give a child who also wants to be a writer?

Write every day. And read as many books as you can. Carry on writing, even if others don't believe in you. Always persevere and continue to always ask how you can improve yourself. If you dare to face your own weaknesses, you can grow and then I am sure that someday you will be a real writer.