

THIS PLACE IS A ZOO.

The city zookeeper has hired the party for their experience with "difficult creatures." It seems that the zoo's creatures have started displaying ...strange abilities. Security is top-notch, and the zoo is concerned over what might happen if the news gets out about these inexplicable events. The party is invited to stay in one of the outbuildings for as long as it takes to resolve what is happening with the zoo's inhabitants.

WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING

The zoo's Octopus is too smart. She's been moonlighting in the lab every night, experimenting with the zoo's groundbreaking new genetics research. The party will have to be very observant to catch the Octopus slipping into other habitats during the night — perhaps climbing a tree in the rainforest, crawling along the savanna, or dangling from the rafters of the aviary — and slipping the inhabitant(s) a mixture from a slightly smoking test tube. In the morning, that creature will have a random new ability and may choose to display it in a disruptive manner. If the players have a hard time putting it together, perhaps every night a new page of "handwritten" (tentacle-written?) notes appears in the lab, cataloguing the past day's events with scientific precision.

HOW TO PLAY: Explore the zoo! The zookeeper will alert the party when a new situation arises. They should spend at least one night at the zoo as they attempt to address different scenarios. Non-lethal combat is preferred by the zoo employees or researchers. Throw in multiple situations at the same time to see how they prioritize. After visiting the aquarium, research center, and/or after spending the night, the party should have enough information to suspect who the culprit is.

THE CULPRIT: The party can meet the Octopus in either its aquarium habitat or the research center, and will hear about its fame in both places from other guests or researchers. Incredibly intelligent, a master of camouflage (practically invisible!), highly mobile in or out of water, and able to climb and squeeze through tight spaces, the Octopus has been one of the zoo's most beloved creatures of study. No one would suspect her of such errant behavior. The Octopus has all its standard creature abilities, but amplified. When first meeting the Octopus, only the party member who rolls the highest will be able to spot it.

PLAY OPTIONS & RESOLUTION: Is the Octopus a benevolent scientist or an evil genius? What's her end-game? The science here doesn't necessarily need to make sense — after all, only the octopus is smart enough to know what she's doing. How does the zoo react when the culprit is found out? Is the zookeeper trustworthy, with the zoo creatures' best interests at heart? What would the Octopus do to boost her own abilities in order to provide for an incredibly difficult (or peculiar) final fight? Be willing to get weird.

UPDATES FROM THE ZOOKEEPER: Roll three d12 to fill in each of the blanks using the table below and a d20 for the location on the map. "The [creature] has/have developed [ability] and [scenario]. Located in [map zone]." The GM can also substitute other creatures/abilities/scenarios in as they like; there are far more creatures at the zoo than what is listed!

CREATURE

1. The Penguin(s)
2. The Phoenix
3. The Dolphin(s)
4. The Unicorn
5. The Meerkats
6. The Plesiosaur
7. The Chimpanzees
8. The Wyvern Nestlings
9. The Otters
10. The Manticore
11. The Wolf Pack
12. The Dire Goldfish

ABILITY

1. the ability to Swarm
2. several pairs of alarmingly large antlers
3. camouflage
4. amphibious
5. the ability to fly (or gills if already capable of flight)

6. psychic abilities
7. ability to use a breath weapon of GM's choice (acid, fireball, etc.)
8. the ability to speak, plus a taste for playing devil's advocate
9. tentacles
10. a substantial (increase/decrease) in size and is/are now very (enormous/tiny)
11. has/have learned how to open doors
12. the ability to clone itself/themselves.

SCENARIO

1. must be wrangled back into the proper enclosure;
2. won't stop picking fights with the ____.
3. has/have trapped the interns in a broom closet.
4. is/are slowly

- draining the aquarium and/or flooding the zoo.
5. now seems to think that they are a ____.
6. is/are running amok in the amphitheatre.
7. has/have taken up residence in the gift shop.
8. is/are attempting to woo the ____.
9. is/are trying to abduct a family of guests.
10. won't stop upsetting the Panda.
11. stole the Hippokampus's egg and hid it.
12. is/are now (hiding in/rampaging through) the ____ habitat.

EXPLORING THE ZOO

Each zoo habitat is highly realistic via magical climate control. Indoor rest areas, feeding areas, administrative and veterinary service buildings are also scattered throughout the zoo. Keep the climate of each habitat in mind for movement/combat; GM's preferred underwater mechanics should apply in aquatic environments.

1. Main Hall: Contains the ticketing office, gift shop, main offices, and a small restaurant.
2. Petting Zoo
3. Stables & Equine Pasture
4. Savannah & Grasslands
5. Desert
6. Outback: Watch out for Drop-bears.
7. Big Cats
8. Primates & Apes
9. Woodlands
10. Aviary
11. Amphitheatre: Small in-ground stone stadium seating for performances and events.
12. Rainforest
13. Bug Pavilion & Butterfly Garden: Insect and arachnid habitats, including a rare specimen of the most many-legged species of the Centaurpede.
14. Reptile House: Indoor reptile habitats and an outdoor aviary-like structure contains the dragon rookery.
15. Pond Life: No, that's just a Kelpie *pretending* to be a guest who fell in the pond.
16. Swamp
17. Research Center: See below.
18. Sea Life
19. Aquarium: Enormous complex with vast habitat tanks full of marine and freshwater creatures.
20. Polar Life.

17. RESEARCH CENTER

Workers here speak with pride of the top-notch security and research (a lot of which has been thanks to a mystery researcher's unexplained night-time contributions to the lab). Missing items were meticulously catalogued by whoever took them. A photo sits on an office desk; it's of the head researcher and an octopus in the lab.

Words and art
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* (GM's choice or roll for second creature)