

CHAPTER 5--SEEDS OF DOUBT

She closed her eyes and just listened. The thought crossed her mind that there was something to be panicked about at the zoo, but that was wrong. It was just the loud and boisterous, uncontrolled school kids, making a ruckus. Amanda and Haley sat quietly, resting, trying to make the best of the situation. Haley looked out of place as she sat while the other kids, older and younger, screamed up a storm.

“Excuse me, is somebody sitting here?”

“No, not at all,” Amanda answered.

An older lady sat down in a chair next to Haley. “Thank you. Crazy isn’t it?”

“I’ll say,” Amanda responded.

“Did you bring your child to see the polar bears?”

Amanda hesitated for a moment. She didn’t want to bother explaining all the circumstances of the recent past. A simple yes was all she could muster.

“They don’t look very happy,” Haley commented.

“Is that right?” the lady responded.

Amanda hesitated again, now thinking she didn't want to make such a fuss, but she couldn't resist. It was why she was so good at marketing, she was very chatty. “I don't think we are terribly impressed by the living conditions or the atmosphere here.”

The lady sat forward, raising a hand to the side of her mouth, she whispered loudly. “I have a secret, I don't like it either.”

“Why are you here then?”

“I come here every once in awhile to remind myself how sad it is.”

“Sad? What do you find sad about it?”

“The whole idea of having zoos bothers me. The impression that it gives people that we are separate from nature. The setting is unreal, and it is a distortion of the animals' natural behaviors too.”

“How's that?” Amanda asked, wanting to hear the woman's explanation, although she already suspected the same. No ice, no trees, she told herself.

The woman explained how a single polar bear's natural territory could be hundreds of miles and that they had been known to swim for fifty miles at a time. She noted how a typical zoo enclosure was up to one million times smaller than a polar bear's home range.

Amanda did the math later - 100 miles x 100 miles divided by the approximate space for a polar bear here. She didn't know what the precise area of the enclosure was, but she used a high school running track as an estimate. One sixteenth of a mile is the same as a 100 meter dash. One quarter of that was one over sixty four, which equaled .015625. Divided into 10,000

square miles gave a ratio of 640,000 times smaller. It wasn't hard to arrive at the one million times smaller figure she realized whatever the actual space here was.

Before Amanda made this calculation, the lady shared with her studies that showed 20% of zoo animals live in an area 1,000 times smaller than their minimum home range. The lady noted that it affected big animals more than others, like elephants, chimps, sea lions, but especially polar bears. Even the best zoos couldn't be much better she added, and worse, was that zoos didn't make a point about highlighting these facts. The numbers of animals that have equivalent spaces at zoos was perhaps as low as 10%. Some lucked out by being in area only 10 to 100 times smaller than normal, but none of the figures accounted for the height of an enclosure, for those animals which like to go vertical, like chimpanzees and birds.

“Did you mention something about their natural behavior?”

“Maybe it is better if you see it for yourself. Are you staying much longer? I'm getting ready to leave, I've had enough. We can continue talking while we walk, I can take the long route.”

“Are you ready to go Haley?”

“Ready, when you are.”

The three of them got up and worked their way around the zoo. They walked back toward the entrance. They passed reindeer, musk ox, some birds, then some red wolves. A black crow flew over them as they passed the kettle corn popping station. A bus roared by on the road surrounding the zoo.

Soon, they came upon the kid's zone. It was a riot of color, and attention grabbing play

pens. There was the otter slide, dancing lily pad fountain, climbing bars, and swings. Kids were wildly running around. Kids were hopping up and down on the lily pad fountain. Not real lily pads, just colored circles. Hop, leap, said the writing on the ground, so they did. It all struck Amanda as very artificial as they walked by. She looked at how Haley would react at the sight of the various contraptions, but Haley was disinterested if anything, more so because she was too tired. In the end, they were more artificial creations, pandering to the whims of children.

They kept walking and soon reached the Asian forest sanctuary, spread over five acres the literature claimed. It was home to Sumatran tigers, tapirs, otters, and elephants.

Large tents of metal netting were the first things that captured their attention. They were enclosures designed to contain the first animals they came across in this ‘sanctuary,’ monkeys. At first glance, none of them could see any animals inside.

“Look, up there,” Haley shouted.

The monkeys were at the very top of the steel netting, like they were trying to escape. The monkeys left alone, the lifeless, token, bare leafed tree. None of the visitors seemed to notice. They had either bought into the fantasy or subconsciously submitted to the illusion.

They walked by some signs about conservation, but nobody had stopped to read them, nor did they. They arrived at the tiger exhibit. The three of them gazed out at the two tigers.

“What do you see?” the lady asked.

Amanda saw two tigers. Their orange fur coat with white highlights and black stripes stood out in the enclosure. They were both at the edge, trying to get away from the prying eyes. One of them got up and began to pace around amongst the green foliage. Amanda wasn’t quite

sure what she was looking for. The sound of a faux waterfall provided a backdrop for the area set below, an artificial pond. Some other visitors were also looking at the tiger, but they were too busy gawking and taking photographs to even attempt to notice anything amiss. “They look lonely.”

It’s not barbed wire – It’s angled so they can’t escape – Tiger! Tiger!

Why is the water green? – You don’t wave back to me, bleh!

I see a tiger up close – It’s my turn with the binoculars – Let me see!

Amanda refocused her attention on the tigers.

“Tigers are solitary creatures. That’s not what I was thinking.”

And there it was. The tiger was pacing the same path, again, and again. She pointed her finger at the tiger. She hoped that tigers didn’t think it was rude to point. She moved her finger to the left and right in a steady rhythm.

“I think you’ve got it.”

“What does it mean?”

“Animals behave unnaturally when confined.”

The lady explained the effects of confinement How giraffes start licking the walls and chewing the bars of their pens, and how great apes had been known in captivity to pleasure themselves repeatedly, even to the point of damage.

Amanda frowned at this news, she considered herself an animal lover, but this was beginning to challenge her basic views about zoos. It occurred to her suddenly, that she had done something similar, when cooped up in her office. She paced back and forth frequently. It took on

a whole new meaning as she watched the tiger repeat this behavior.

The lady continued on with the causes of unnatural behaviors. The forced social groupings, the inappropriate diets, and the restriction on migrating anywhere when the climate changed.

Once again, Amanda thought about how she spent her average work day, or work year. She would binge eat sometimes after, or even during work. Could this be like the inappropriate diet that zoo animals were fed? She got fidgety when the seasons changed, but she was tied to her job with limited vacation, she couldn't go anywhere. She would have to tough out her seasonal affect disorder. She liked her co-workers, but sometimes they just got to be a little too much, no wonder she didn't like after hours corporate social functions.

The lady noted how even the better zoos in the world weren't that good. How at one of the more famous ones in Southern California, nearly half of the animals might be engaging in stereotypical behaviors. The problem being, that most people didn't know what to look for and if you hadn't seen animals behaving normally in nature, how would you know?

Amanda pondered the question and the apparent conundrum. For a fleeting moment, she wondered that if everyone she knew was cooped up in a zoo like cage, how would she know what normal behavior was? The thought terrified her, she quickly dismissed it.

The lady gave an example on how animals couldn't do the things they were meant to do. Since they were looking at big cats, she gave the example of the well known cheetah. They couldn't run at their top speed of sixty miles per hour when confined in a cage. While tigers weren't known for speed, in a zoo they couldn't hunt normally, their style was stealthy.

While animals were fine tuned to their environment, a lot more of their behavior than we had thought, was learned and passed down from mother or group to infant, which explained why species re-introductions often failed or only succeeded at great expense. Thus, a wild animal was markedly different than a caged animal.

Amanda glanced over at Haley, who switched between paying attention and watching the other children and adults walk by. The activities of the crowd and other children were more engaging than the two tigers.

She took a moment to wonder about this learned behavior idea as it applied to her own life growing up. She had always wondered what life might be like and how she might view the world if her parents never divorced. Would she still be fearful of commitment? This was too serious of a thought for a zoo.

The two majestic Sumatran tigers that once instilled fear and respect in men, were good for less than a few minutes of observation, by mostly noisy and unruly children no less. Even the most quiet and introspective visitors lasted only a couple more minutes. Perhaps they looked on, sensing something was wrong, but they persisted with their morbid fascination, as if the tiger's predicament looked familiar.

They left the tiger and moved on to the elephant exhibit.

"What do you see now?" the lady asked again. It was a benign question, yet asked in the right way, terribly thought provoking.

Amanda looked again, this time she noticed the repetitive behavior right away. "I got it. I see the elephants rocking and shifting from side to side. Is that a repetitive, unnatural behavior?"

“It sure is. Anything else?”

Amanda didn't notice anything particular. If her knowledge of polar bears in the wild was limited, her knowledge of elephants was even less.

“Elephants may walk from fifteen to twenty miles a day in the wild. Do they do that in this tiny enclosure?”

“No, I guess they can't.” It was the same story as with the polar bear, there was no hint of what was missing.

“Can I tell you a favorite story of mine?” the woman proffered as they watched the elephants.

“Sure.”

“One of my most life changing moments is when I went to Africa for the first time. My husband and I went on a safari. There were no fences, no signs, and little, if any, tourist facilities. No injury waivers either.” She laughed. “All we did was drive on the roads past the gate. We saw giraffes, zebras, a rhino, and monkeys crossing the road, and supposedly a lion, hiding in the bushes. Our driver saw it.”

Haley's ears perked up at the mention of so many animals.

“The best moment was when we were driving down the road and had to start backing up because a small group of elephants was walking toward us. Wild African elephants. At one point we couldn't back up anymore because two other elephants were fighting and blocking the road behind us. One of the elephants was now just fifteen feet or so in front of our car, flapping its ears and making a lot of noise. We were there for a few minutes. Our driver then tells us that he

once saw some people killed when their car was crushed by a mad elephant. He didn't sound like he was joking.”

“Whoa! Were you scared?” Amanda gasped.

The woman hesitated for a moment as if she was vividly reliving the moment. “A little, but that was the beauty of it. This was raw nature. Once the elephant realized we weren't a threat and that we respected it, it went off to the side to eat some leaves on a tree. We then sped around it and watched as another car behind us had to try and make it out. This is how animals behave naturally, not confined in some playpen.”

Amanda felt no fear as she gazed out at the elephants. Nor was there any hint of danger at the tiger enclosure. It had all been safely sanitized.

They made their way back toward the entrance, stopping to sit for awhile and chat on a terrace as Haley munched on a light snack.

They talked about how zoos argued that animals didn't need to hunt or forage for food, or migrate with the seasons, and how this simply showed how unnatural a captive life is for wild animals. The emphasis being that many animals are designed for a life in the wild, not for a life in a zoo to amuse visitors. There was no sense of their true lives.

Amanda, being in marketing, liked to come up with simple analogies for her clients. She shared with the lady if this sense of one's true life was how she felt when stuck working in a cubicle. Going 'public' with her feelings that had been building up inside her was a bit of a relief. But it was apparent that Amanda was making a choice, the animals weren't. Perhaps more perplexing was why she would make such a choice to spend a majority of her waking hours

in a cubicle.

“I used to work in a cubicle, I know what it’s like. Did you ever feel like you didn’t have enough privacy?”

“All the time. I have an office now, and I still feel that way sometimes, if not confined by the four walls too.”

“Lots of animals are solitary, shy, and creatures of the night. They cannot spend a day away from human eyes, our eyes. It would be like living with a camera around you all day that you didn’t want, like some of the stuff on TV these days.”

“Or the Internet.”

“Yes.”

“It sounds like some of the movies I’ve seen, or some of those ‘reality’ shows. I know I would never want to be on some of those reality TV shows. Every moment of my life for public view. I’m not an exhibitionist.” She noticed the sign for the amphitheatre.

“At least the contestants have a possibility for a big prize before they leave. No such luck for these animals.”

“True.”

“If you consider that we live the majority of our lives in a one mile radius, which is a gross understatement of course, then, if we were confined in space like most animals in a zoo, we would be living in a telephone box.”

“That doesn’t sound pleasant.” She began to count the hours in a day. Eight hours of sleep. Nine, if she needed to look particularly radiant. Eight hours, no, make that ten hours or

more at the office, most spent in a confining cubicle or office. Then, there was the commute home where she sat in a car, sometimes in a traffic jam. How many hours of her life did she not live in a 'telephone box'? She was afraid to realize the truth.

Amanda countered with a fistful of questions. "Zoos must be good for something. What about injured animals? What about endangered animals? Don't zoos do good research?" Amanda hoped to justify why she decided to visit the zoo with Haley, apart from seeing a live polar bear.

It became quite clear to Amanda that zoos had very little impact on conservation after hearing this convincing lady. The few high profile successes were few and far in between. The system was called the Species Survival Plan. Of those that had succeeded, some of them were only temporary. Of an estimated 10,000 zoos worldwide, less than 500 registered their animals on an international species database. Of these, it was estimated that only 5% to 10% of space was devoted to endangered species. To add insult to injury, about 1/3 of 'excess' animals were sent to non-accredited zoos, like dealers or auctions.

For injured animals, she gave the analogy of a zoo deciding to exhibit human beings, which did occur with indigenous people in times past. The assumption for the analogy was that the person was injured or sick and would die soon. They didn't have proper health care or insurance. They often went hungry for lack of money. This person could be from America or to make it interesting, they could be from another 'exotic' country. Due to regular feedings, meals, and health care that the zoo provided, the person would live longer in captivity.

Amanda pondered this and considered how this was like the right to die debate, Did length of life equal quality of life?

“I think about it like this - how do you want to be remembered? Like Elvis in his heyday, or near the end?”

“I suppose in his heyday,” Amanda replied.

“Unfortunately, many people will know these animals like they were in the end.”

Amanda felt a pang in her stomach, as if it was starting to feel uncomfortable with merely being at the zoo.

“I remember when the US Post office came out with a stamp, there was a big debate over what image of Elvis to use. They chose the younger one.”

“Good choice.”

The lady answered Amanda’s question on research too. While there was some good, it was disproportionate to the number of zoos. Much of it was related to breeding and husbandry. It was for the benefit of the zoo industry, rather than the animals. The research often taught us more about wild animals in zoos, which was ironic, as it would not be necessary if there were no zoos. The research had little to do with wild animals in their natural habitat.

Research, research. Market research. Amanda was good at that. She wondered how much research was done to make people like her more efficient at the office. She hadn’t yet resorted to licking bars or pleasuring herself, though she wondered about others, those corporate rumors. She had been taught to stare at a computer screen most of the day. That was in addition to the pacing and the boring meetings. Ah ha! Meetings. Daily meetings were the worst, they were like the lady’s comment on privacy from prying eyes. It didn’t matter whether she had a bad hair day or not, she had to attend the daily meeting. What else would make her a better ‘zoo animal’?

The answer was the concept of environmental enrichment. A word that sounded like a rather unpolished marketing term to describe the concept of creating a stimulating environment for zoo animals. A term she had used in a marketing class study paper, but for a theme park marketing plan.

“How long have zoos been around?”

“Officially, 250 years. If you count the menageries of the Roman Empire, and Egyptian pharaohs and the like, then much longer.”

“The zoo has been ingrained for a long time it sounds like.”

The lady was not against some reserves, but rather the places where animals were confined to small areas strictly for the convenience of the visitors.

Amanda began to wonder if this woman was some kind of activist. There was a negative stigma attached to such a label, though she wasn't quite sure why. The lady assured Amanda that she was just a concerned citizen.

“The way I think about zoos mirrors how I think about life.”

The lady's vivid recollection of being on the plains of Africa face to face with an elephant sounded both exciting, and a little nerve wracking. “You're lucky to have experienced that trip to Africa. I wish I could afford to go to Africa.”

“It's not as expensive as you think. There are packages to go to South Africa for less than \$1,500 per person. Look at all the fancy cars people buy. For many, I don't think it's a matter of affordability. It's a matter of priority. Accumulate stuff or accumulate experience.”

Amanda thought about all the things she owned. She had her fancy car, designer purse,

nice jewelry, lots of nice things. She remembered how she was also dumbstruck when visiting some of her co-workers or friend's homes. Their garages were full of stuff, probably junk. She strained to put the woman's words out of her mind. While she understood what the lady was saying, it contradicted much of what she believed. Stuff was good, it was very good. More is better. Bigger is better. She helped companies to sell more!

The lady talked on, oblivious to Amanda's blank face which was frantically wondering about her own existence. "If that is still too much, maybe it is better to just leave it to television. Every part of the world has wildlife to view naturally, people just need to make an effort. You can see orca whales in the San Juan Islands. You can whistle with marmots in the meadows of Mt. Rainier. You can go whale watching from the Oregon Coast. It's very inexpensive to charter a boat or do a flyover too. They're a magnificent site from the air, I've seen it myself. If you like birds, in late December and early January, hundreds of bald eagles can be seen around the Upper Skagit river as they pick off dead salmon along the river every year."

Amanda snapped out of her daze in time to answer. "I've never seen one." She felt a sense of shame. So much for patriotism she thought.

"It's not as easy as going to the zoo, but I think the reward for making a small effort to see the real thing is life changing and liberating. You don't have to go far."

"Liberating?"

"It's nice to see the real thing, but you go to see 'wild' life. Not caged life. Live free or die."

Amanda wasn't comfortable with any word reminding her of death. She forced out an

answer – “That sounds familiar.”

“It’s the state motto of New Hampshire I think. The question is – what is the definition of free?”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t catch your name.”

“Oh sorry, my name is Ruth. What is your daughter’s name?”

“My name is Haley,” the girl said proudly. While she may not have been listening to the whole conversation she heard that question.

“My name is Amanda. She’s a friend’s daughter.”

Ruth felt a hint of tension in Amanda’s voice and decided not to press further.

“Pleased to meet both of you. When is the last time you came to the zoo, Haley?”

She hesitated for a moment. “Two years ago.”

“What do you remember about that trip?”

“It was a different zoo. The Woodland Park Zoo! We saw lots of animals. I remember the giraffes. The lions. The zebras. The wolfs. The leopards.”

“You have a good memory. Did you learn anything about the animals?” Ruth asked.

“I just remember the animals.”

“When is the last time you went to a zoo, Amanda?”

“Good question. I don’t remember, it’s been a long time. Maybe when I was a young teenager.”

Ruth remarked how lucky they were today, if they had come at the peak of summer, the zoo would be packed with even more screaming summer camp kids. Zoos seemed to be a

prerequisite on the camp itinerary. She noted how it was these same school trips to zoos that left children with a distorted view of wildlife. The main education was in viewing the animal behind a cage, it was a lack of respect. Zoos had misled visitors into believing that it was acceptable to keep animals for human entertainment. Companionship was one thing, crass entertainment, quite another. The only way to accurately learn about animals was to observe them in the wild she emphasized. It was impossible to respect and appreciate the full capabilities of wildlife while they are caged, or confined to less than natural spaces. Her last indictment was that you didn't have to jump very far to go from lack of respect for animals to a lack of respect for ourselves.

It was this last statement that troubled Amanda. For the moment she responded by mentioning an observation she had made that people didn't seem to spend that much time looking at each exhibit. It was short attention span theatre, or like flicking channels on a television remote control.

Ruth noted that a study conducted at a US Zoo found that most visitors spent less than three minutes looking at each exhibit, and sometimes as little as eight seconds. A six month study at a UK zoo found similar results.

“Children are the most impressionable. That is when most go for the first, and sometimes only time, until they are parents.”

It was simple math Amanda realized. Children had a short attention span, though she wondered about some adults too. If the typical zoo visit was two hours, divided by the number of animals in a typical zoo, and you came out with precious little time to look at an animal, whether it was the majestic tiger, or a small group of otters.

Amanda wanted to know if there were better zoo examples out there. Ruth mentioned the Singapore Night Zoo and Safari, Costa Rica Zoo Ave, the Belize Zoo, and the Tuxtla Guitierrez Zoo in Mexico. In the US, there was the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum, and the Bronx Zoo in New York. Perhaps even better were free range parks like the Oregon High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, and Northwest Trek near Mount Rainier, Washington, both notable for being populated with only native animals, not animals from afar.

She also mentioned newer concepts like the TechnEco Zoo in Leicester, England which had no real animals, instead relying on high tech presentations. Or the Wildscreen ARKive in Bristol, England along the same lines.

“Apart from concerns about extinction, zoos keep animals without suggesting any change in our attitudes toward them.”

“What do you think should happen to zoos?”

“Zoos as we know them should all be closed, make them illegal.”

“Isn’t that a little drastic? What about the better examples you mentioned?”

“The problem is well meaning people try to copy good ideas and it gets worse. Whether due to inexperience, management, or financial constraints. Zoos don’t have to be like ball parks. The whole experience is just unnatural.”

“Where would people go to learn about animals?”

“People should be taught about reserves, free range parks with local wildlife, or go to places where animals live naturally like we talked about earlier. Facilities at national parks could be upgraded too. I’ve read about bioparks too. They’re like regional centers which educate

people about the local environment, not some distant far away one.”

“What do you think that would mean if all zoos, as we know them, were closed?”

Ruth was staring out into the distance, ignoring Amanda’s question. She had gotten worked up and needed a break. Haley was fidgeting more, having completed her meal. She was marking up a coloring book they had bought in the gift shop.

“What about the animals that are endangered?”

“Maybe they should go extinct. Let their extinction be a testament to how we live, wasteful and without a care. Live free or die,” she repeated. “To tell you the truth, I’m not worried about saving animals at all.”

“You’re not?” This came as a complete surprise to Amanda. “What are you worried about?”

“It’s not about animal rights or animal welfare. It doesn’t matter if their self aware or not. It’s only about saving ourselves. Animals don’t need our care, only respect.”

Saving ourselves, Amanda repeated in her mind.

“I’ll have to respectfully disagree with ‘vegetarian animal lovers’ too. There is nothing wrong with eating meat in moderation if it is raised humanely. These animal lovers often send the wrong message.”

If Amanda thought she should know what this message was, the dots still weren’t connecting in her mind. “What message is that?”

“The same one that zoos give, that we need to save animals rather than respecting them. When you realize the implications of the most popular exhibit in any zoo, gorillas and

chimpanzees, then you will understand the full extent of that message.”

A deafening silence enveloped their table space as Amanda pondered this question. She thought about asking, but something held her back, she wasn't ready for the answer.

Ruth signaled her intent to leave. She emphasized one last time the separation of us from nature and that if we just looked at animals as fellow creatures to live with, rather than trying to save, we would be better off. Harmony instead of confrontation.

She shared a relevant travel experience. This one from a visit to Japan a few years ago. It was a visit to a town called Nara, just outside of Kyoto. It was a town where the people co-existed with 1,200 wild deer. There was a large park set aside for them, but they were free to roam anywhere they wanted in the city. You could even buy and feed them deer biscuits. There was a ceremony every year to cut their antlers so they didn't hurt people. Traffic was kept at low speeds and many of the streets were pedestrian friendly and had not been taken over by loud mechanical beasts.

“I think the way we view animals will reflect in how we choose to live our own lives. Live free or die.”

Amanda began to tune out from fatigue. Haley, while full of energy earlier, was now drifting away too, starting to look fidgety and impatient. She had lost interest in the coloring book. “You wouldn't happen to know where the best place to see polar bears in the wild is, would you?”

“I've been to Churchill in the province of Manitoba, Canada.”

“Where?”

“Sorry, I just assume people know about these obscure places I have traveled too. Churchill, Canada is a little over 600 miles north of Winnipeg. It’s in the middle of Canada.”

They all got up and approached the zoo exit. “Thanks for all this information. Haley is getting tired. I hope we can manage to get out of this circus.” Another crowd of visitors was massed outside the gates.

Ruth laughed heartily. “If you like I can give you a business card of a woman who helps me with traveling. She knows a lot about where to go see animals in their natural homes.”

“That would be great.”

Ruth rummaged through her purse and dug out a card. She paused to write some words on the back of the card before handing it over. POLAR BEARS - GREENLAND, RUTH WILLIAMS. “One more thing. You might find Churchill a little bit on the circus side too. A different kind of circus that is. It’s natural, but when the bears are there during their migration, a whole bunch of tourists and photographers go there.”

“No more circuses please. Is there a better place?”

“I wrote it down on the back of the card. I hope to go there one day soon. Maybe you can tell me about it. I wrote my number on the back too ”

Amanda looked at the card then turned it over. “Greenland?”

“Beautiful icebergs I hear.”

“Thanks for sharing your experiences.”

“My pleasure. Good luck finding a polar bear. I’m going to go find a bathroom before I leave.” She turned around and disappeared around a corner.

“Shall we go?” Amanda asked Haley.

“I’m tired.”

Amanda couldn’t help but notice the large green and blue child strollers in the shape of turtles cruising over the paved walkways as they headed for the exit. It was as if more money was spent on landscaping for human comfort than the habitats themselves. They heard more chatter.

Did you see the owl? – Guys come here, a caterpillar! – I want to see the sharks again.

Mom, I want to see a giraffe. -The only thing left is the ox and polar bear!

The polar bears were just another attraction in a circus freak show. Just another item to check off the list. It might as well have been a human freak show. Passing through the exit, Amanda glanced over at the entrance gate, a different set of kids were sitting and standing atop the polar bear. It was representative of man’s disrespect for nature. They walked up the hill to the parking lot.

If zoos didn’t exist she thought, maybe people would be more motivated to go out in the wild. At the very least, the discovery of nature must occur without large crowds she realized. Maybe it would have been better to bring Haley to the zoo right when they opened, but few people did that she suspected.

As Amanda glanced back, she noticed the zoo logo had three polar bear silhouettes on it. The zoo’s 29 acres, 0.4531 square miles, had made an impression on her, a decidedly negative one. They quickly walked past the stand where you could buy a t-shirt commemorating your visit. While Amanda left more depressed than when she arrived, there was a question hanging

over her head. For animals born in a zoo, how would they know what a life in the wild was like, if they had never experienced it before.