

Orangutan Houdini

Laurel Neme

Reviewed by: Kaden Shover, 17

Star Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are Charity

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Orangutan Houdini is a book written by Laurel Ames and is based on a true story that happened at the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville Texas. Fu Manchu was a twelve year old male Sumatran Orangutan who is somehow able to escape his enclosure and spend the day roaming freely throughout the zoo, visiting other animals. Fu Manchu is so adept at escaping his enclosure he is compared to the famous escape artist Harry Houdini. The problem is no one including his friend zookeeper Jerry Stones, nor the other zoo staff can figure out how he is doing it. Fu lives with four other orangutans including his mate, an older female and two teenage orangutan siblings. One sunny day, Fu quietly hides near a locked door in the dry trench of their enclosure and using his hands tugs at the bottom of the door and fiddles with the lock until the door opens. He and his family deftly make their escape and make their way to the rest of the zoo where they decide to spend the day in a group of elm trees above the elephant corral. He repeatedly does this which results in the keepers at the zoo being blamed and threatened with being fired so they decide to go undercover to discover his secret of escaping his enclosure. They discover Fu fiddling with the lock and escaping. After moving Fu and his mates to a new enclosure, they discover his secret, a wire bent into a horseshoe that he hides in his mouth. Fu is honored as an honorary member of the American Association of Locksmiths.

The parts I liked the most about this book is the ingenuity Fu showed in figuring out how to escape his enclosure. It shows the intelligence of Orangutan's and their ability to figure out how to outwit the zookeepers. I liked the authors descriptive way of explaining how Fu was so crafty and how insightful he

was in hiding his secret for such a long time. The author does a great job of showing how developed the mental abilities of the Orangutan are to fool his keepers and figure out such an amazing way to hide the wire around his gums away from view of his keepers. I also liked the illustrations which are very colorful and you really get a sense of Fu and his playful nature from it.

This book is suggested for young readers age 6-7 but I think any age child would find it interesting and amusing. You can obtain this book from the Library, Amazon and on Kindle.

I would suggest the following books to readers if they liked this book:

Tuesday Tucks Me In: The Loyal Bond between a Solider and His Service Dog by Luis Carlos Montalvan

Eye on the Wild Elephant by Suzi Eszterhas

Ivan: The Remarkable True Story of the Shopping Mall Gorilla by Katherine Applegate