



Zoo by Edward D. Hoch

The children were always good during the month of August. This was especially so when it began to get near the twenty-third. For every year on the twenty-third of August, Professor Hugo's Interplanetary Zoo came to the Chicago area. The great silver spaceship would settle down in a huge parking area. It would remain there during its annual six-hour visit.

Long before daybreak large crowds gather. Lines of children and adults, each one clutching his or her dollar, would wait restlessly to see the Professor's Interplanetary Zoo. Everyone was eager to see what race of strange creatures the Professor had brought this year.

In the past they had been treated to three-legged creatures from Venus. Or tall, thin men from Mars. Or snake-like horrors from some even more distant planet.

This year, as the large silver spaceship settled down to Earth in the huge parking area just outside of Chicago, the children watched with awe. They saw the sides of the spaceship slide up to reveal the usual cages made of thick bars. Inside the cages were some wild, small, horse-like animals that moved with quick, uneven motions and kept chattering in a high-pitched tone.

The citizens of earth clustered around as Professor Hugo's crew quickly collected a dollar from everyone in the audience. Soon the good Professor, himself, made an appearance. He was wearing his many-colored cape and top hat.



"Peoples of Earth," he called into his microphone.

The crowd's noise died down and he continued. "Peoples of Earth," he went on, "this year we have a real treat for your dollar. Here are the little-known horse-spider people of Kaan—brought to you across a million miles of space at great expense. Gather around the amazing horse-spider people of Kaan. See them, study them, listen to them. Tell your friends about them, but hurry! My spaceship can remain here for only six hours!

And the crowds slowly filed by, horrified and fascinated by these strange creatures that looked like horses, but ran up the walls of their cages like spiders. "This is certainly worth a dollar," one man remarked. "I'm going home to tell my wife."

All day long it went like that. Finally, ten thousand people had filed by the barred cages which were built into the side of the spaceship. Then, as the six-hour time limit ran out, Professor Hugo once more took the microphone in his hand.

"We must go now," said the Professor, but we will return again next year on this date. And if you enjoyed Professor Hugo's Interplanetary Zoo this year, phone your friends in other cities. Tell them about it. We will land in New York tomorrow. Next

week we go on to London, Paris, Rome, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. Then we must leave for other worlds!

He waved farewell to them. And, as the ship rose from the ground, the Earth peoples agreed that this had been the very best Zoo yet...

Two months and three planets later, the silver spaceship of Professor Hugo settled at last onto the familiar jagged rock of Kaan. The horse-spider creatures filed quickly out of their cages.

Professor Hugo was there to say a few parting words to them. Then the horse-spider creatures scurried away in different directions as they began seeking their homes among the rocks.

In one such home, the she-creature was happy to see the return of her mate and little one. She babbled a greeting in the strange Kaan language. Then she hurried to embrace them. "You were gone a long time," she said. "Was it good?"

The he-creature nodded. "Our little one enjoyed it especially," he said. "We visited eight worlds and saw many things."

The little one ran up the wall of the cave. "The place they call Earth was the best. The creatures there wear garments over their skins, and they walk on two legs."

"But isn't it dangerous?" asked the she-creature.

"No," the he-creature answered. "There are bars to protect us from them. We stay right in the ship. Next time you must come with us. It is well worth the nineteen commocs it costs.

The little one nodded. "It was the very best Zoo ever..."



Telling About The Story. Complete each of the following statements by putting an x in the box next to the correct answer. Each statement tells something about the story.

1. Every year, Professor Hugo's Interplanetary Zoo stayed in Chicago: ☐ six hours
☐ two days ☐ one month
2. The Earth people agreed that the Professor's latest Zoo was: ☐ not worth a dollar
☐ not as good as earlier ones ☐ the very best one yet
3. The Earth people were fascinated by the creatures from Kaan because they: ☐ spoke the same language as Earth people ☐ looked like horses and ran up the side of the cage like spiders
☐ were tall, thin, and pale like aliens
4. The little one from Kaan thought that the Earth people were unusual because they: ☐ waited in long lines to see the Professor's Zoo ☐ used dollars rather commocs for money ☐ wore garments and walked on two legs

New Vocabulary Words. Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an x in the box next to the correct response.

1. Large crowds waited restlessly to see the strange creatures. What is the meaning of the word *restlessly*? ☐ unhappily ☐ impatiently ☐ thoughtlessly ☐ carelessly
2. The creatures of Kaan filed quickly out of their cages. As used in this sentence, what is the meaning of *filed*? ☐ sharp, pointed edge ☐ smoothed down with a tool ☐ placed in a folder
☐ walked in line
3. As the spaceship settled down, the children watched in awe.. Define the word *awe*.
☐ wonder ☐ sorrow ☐ confidence ☐ anger
4. The she-creature hurried to embrace her returning family. What is the meaning of the word *embrace*? ☐ push ☐ hug ☐ locate ☐ hide

Identifying Story Elements. Each of the following questions tests your understanding of story elements. Put an x in the box next to each correct answer.

1. When is The Zoo *set* ?" ☐ in the past ☐ in the present ☐ in the future
2. What happened first in the *plot* of the story? ☐ The Professor's spaceship returned to Kaan
☐ Professor Hugo spoke to the citizens of Earth ☐ The he-creature said he liked Earth best
3. Which statement best *characterizes* Professor Hugo? ☐ He was famous for his magic tricks
☐ He was a clever showman ☐ He was an excellent teacher

4. Which sentence best expresses the *theme* of the story? ☐ Sometimes, things which are only different, are considered strange. ☐ There are many different kinds of creatures in space ☐ Zoos are fun to visit.

Thinking About The Story. Each of the following questions requires you to *think critically* about the selection. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer.

1. Probably, the children were very good just before the twenty-third of August because they:
☐ enjoyed summer vacation so much ☐ wanted to be permitted to visit the Zoo ☐ wanted to be chosen to leave the planet
2. Clues in the story suggest that Kaan is: ☐ a world very near Earth
☐ a planet very different from Earth ☐ Professor Hugo's home
3. The story suggests that things which are unfamiliar are: ☐ viewed as fascinating or strange
☐ not very interesting ☐ not worth paying to see
4. We may infer that the Professor did not tell the creatures from Kaan: ☐ the trip would cost nineteen commocs ☐ they would visit many strange worlds ☐ Earth people were paying to look at them

- What do you think the Professor told the horse-spider creatures before they set off from Kaan on their journey through space? In your opinion, how good a business person was the Professor? Explain.

- The he-creature said that they visited eight worlds and saw many things. What do you think they would have seen? Describe in detail.

- The statement, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" would apply to this story. Give reasons to support this statement.