

Zoo you later sample chapter:

Don't forget to shut the door!

Everyone makes mistakes, and when you're as busy as a zoo keeper occasionally (though it doesn't often happen) you slip up. Sometimes the simplest mistakes can cause huge problems — like leaving the door to an animal's enclosure unlocked or even open! One crafty capuchin — a Central or South American monkey — led his keepers on a merry chase after he found an open door. A resourceful Mother Bear managed an escape the same way.

The Three Bears

Grills, bars, moats, fences, doors and toughened glass are all used to keep zoo visitors at a safe distance from bears. But none of these things is much use if the doors to the bears' enclosure aren't securely locked — as keepers discovered on the day of the three bears' escape. For a Kodiak mother bear and her two cubs, a keeper forgetting to snap shut the padlock on the back door of their enclosure meant a little outing.

Although bear paws are large, they are still nimble enough to grab hold of thin branches or snatch up a fish. So this inquisitive mother bear simply pushed her paw between the bars on the door, then twisted and shook the padlock until it fell to the ground. After working the door catch free, she shoved her big, heavy body hard against the door until it burst open. There was a second door, but it was already open!

Out into the zoo marched the three bears. They didn't go very far. In fact, they stopped at a patch of grass right outside their back door and started to feast on it.

A woman working in the zoo gift shop was first to see the three roaming bears. Then a few children who whipped out their cameras and started snapping pictures. Very soon a large crowd gathered — not realising that they were in great danger! All that separated them from the bears was a low wire fence, barely a metre high. If the mother bear had felt for a moment that her cubs were being threatened she wouldn't have hesitated to use her sharp claws and teeth to protect them.

Luckily, this mother bear must have decided that her best option was to take her cubs to a safe place away from the crowd. So she rounded up her cubs

and headed back to the safest place she knew: the den. They went through the first door then stopped — almost like they were about to change their minds. But one keeper had a sneaky idea. The bears sniffed the air and smelled something delicious. For inside their den was an irresistible feast — fish, fruit and hamburger meat. The bears rushed eagerly back into the den.

The keepers, the vet with a tranquilliser gun and the zoo police all breathed a big sigh of relief as the doors were shut and padlocked behind the three bears — this time properly!