

## **“An Artificial Safari”**

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Safari is something that many or most creatures yearn for. But, as evidenced by my experience today, some humans are not amongst the lineup of creatures who fear.

For those who have an untamed obsession with the animal kingdom, for those beasts big and critters small, zoos offer the best option to get up close and personal with your animal friends for you are safe behind the sturdy barrier, thick glass, and tough netting. Those are there, of course, to keep you from being eaten, infected, injured, or dead. So, what if you wanted to get even closer to your fuzzy tiger friend? What if you wanted to share your hand in their mouth even? Then you go to this so-called “artificial safari” I regrettably set foot into.

The first thing that greets you at the entrance to this place is a tour guide dressed in a tropical green polo shirt, camo pants, and brown riser, decked out with a gravelly sounding lapel microphone. We got through the formalities of introductions and the disclaimer that we were legally obliged to follow them throughout the full duration of the tour.

If you look around where you are right now, you will easily spot several things that are there to safeguard you and your existence. However, when I looked around where I was, there was nothing. No railings, netting, fences, or precautions of any kind set up in a grassy lane conditioned to look like a savannah. That really threw me as there were four lions just sitting a few hundred yards away, barely concealed by the tall, dry grass. While thoughts were zipping inside my head, the rest of the tour’s participants were cooing, snapping their fingers, and coercing the oversized housecats over. Luckily, the tour guide had a modicum of logic and urged the other tour members to half. They begrudgingly listened and I power walked right to the front of the line wanting to have this tour over with quickly without suffering the least attack.

But when a daredevil with their mind set on something goes right out the window and punches a nearby tree which wouldn’t be that bad if it weren’t for the tribe of monkeys taking a siesta in the said tree. With the first howl of the balloon’s maw, the bell in everyone’s head chimed. Some, excluding me, ran for safety but those who were here with the urge to gamble their lives heard a slot machine’s jackpot and they spread in

all directions to whatever their adrenaline pumped hearts desired.

From a safe distance, I watched the idiocy play out. They were wrestling crocodiles, punching balloons out of more trees, and getting chased by rhinos.

All ended with the laced tips of tranquilizer darts. For the human beasts and animal beasts alike. Carried out in stretchers, the wounded and drugged were still looking alright.