

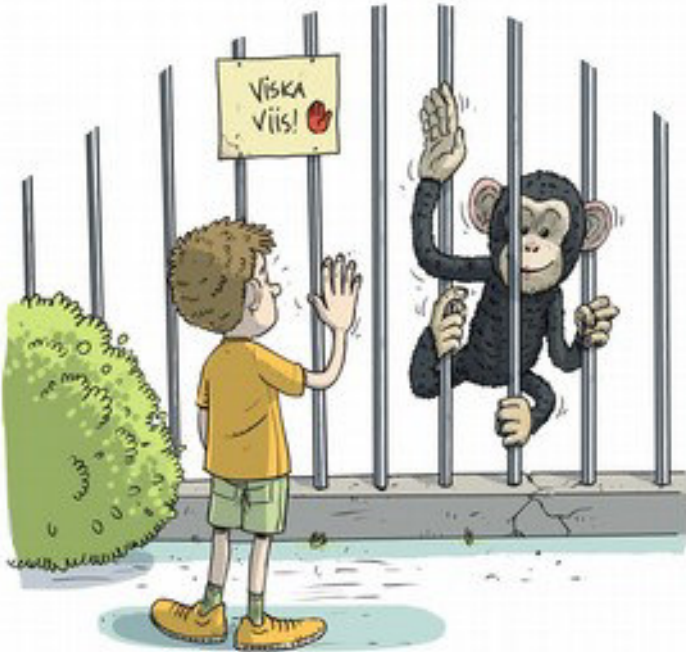
## A Strange Zoo

It was a beautiful sunny day and William was at the zoo with Dad, walking around.

Once they had seen all wolves, foxes, giraffes and other animals, the two of them sat on the bench facing the chimpanzee cage, to rest their feet.

“I’ll go and buy some ice-cream,” Dad said. “Sit here and don’t go anywhere!”

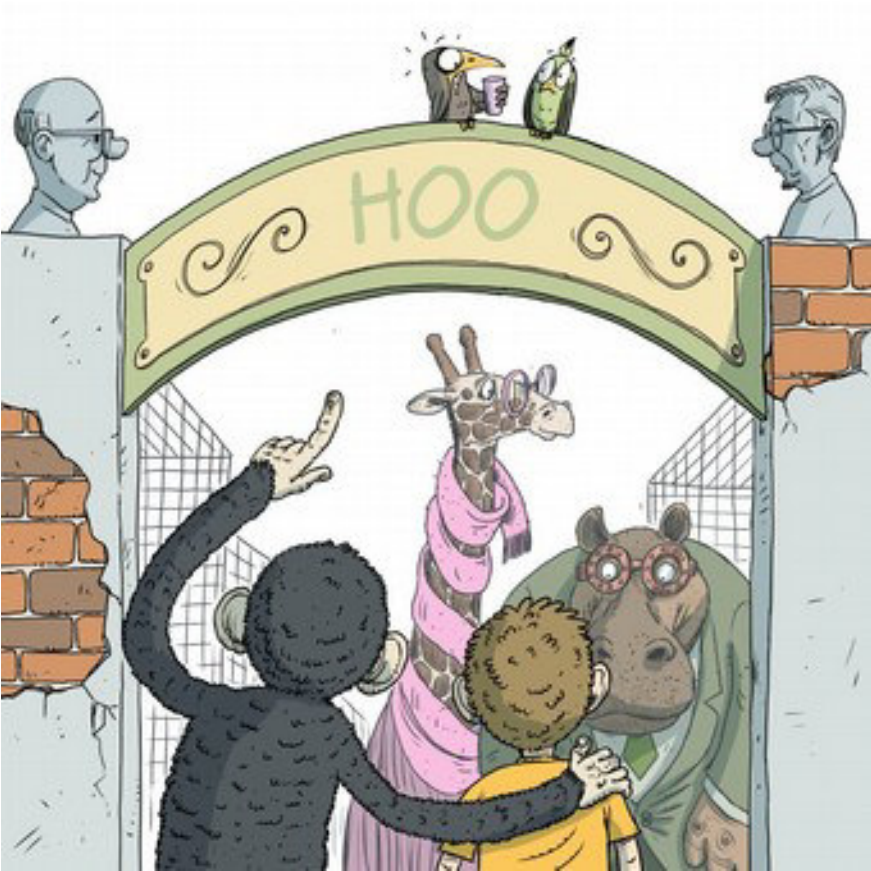
All of a sudden, a chimpanzee, who had just been hanging on the branch with his hands, came to the railing and started talking:



“Hello! I’m Vello, Velts for short. Would you like me to show you a bit different kind of zoo?”

William sure did. The chimpanzee climbed over the railing and took his hand.

“Come this way!” He guided William around the corner of the chimpanzee building and through the bushes. The fence surrounding the zoo was broken at one place and they got out from there.



After they had been walking in a scrub, crossed a tiny bridge and climbed through an underground tunnel, William saw the weirdest sight. They were standing in front of something that kind of looked like a real zoo but kind of didn't. There were animals strolling along the pathways between the exhibits and there were people in the cages.

In one of the cages, for instance, there was a punk rocker with a huge red mohawk. He was sitting on a tree stub and picking his nose. His clothes were thickly covered with rivets and badges. He had several piercings in his nose and ears and there were chains hanging all over his body.

"This is one of our finest specimens," Velts explained. "If you give him some money, he can also sing very loud and totally off-key." The punk rocker waved to them and put his finger in his mouth. A baboon who was passing by gave him a lollypop for that.

"Look at that!" the chimpanzee pointed at a cage opposite the punk. There was a man with a bow tie sitting inside. "A perfectly intelligent fellow! Just comes here for free to sit and dream. Sometimes he makes speeches and waves his arms. Sometimes he brings all sorts of papers and then signs them. Then he puts on his traditional folk costume and starts to dance polka. Once he even gave out medals to passers-by!"

In the following exhibits they could see school girls dressed only in black, with eyes painted black, black hair and dead white faces.



“These are goth chicks,” Velts introduced them. “They are gloomy. They are so gloomy and silent that you dare not even ask anything from them. They remind me of vampires.”

In the next cage there were long-haired scrawny guys wearing knee-length sweaters and giving out tortured looks.

“They are called Sloppy Joes,” the chimpanzee explained. “Probably because of their sloppy sweater and long hair.”

One Sloppy Joe came closer, grabbed the bars and asked:

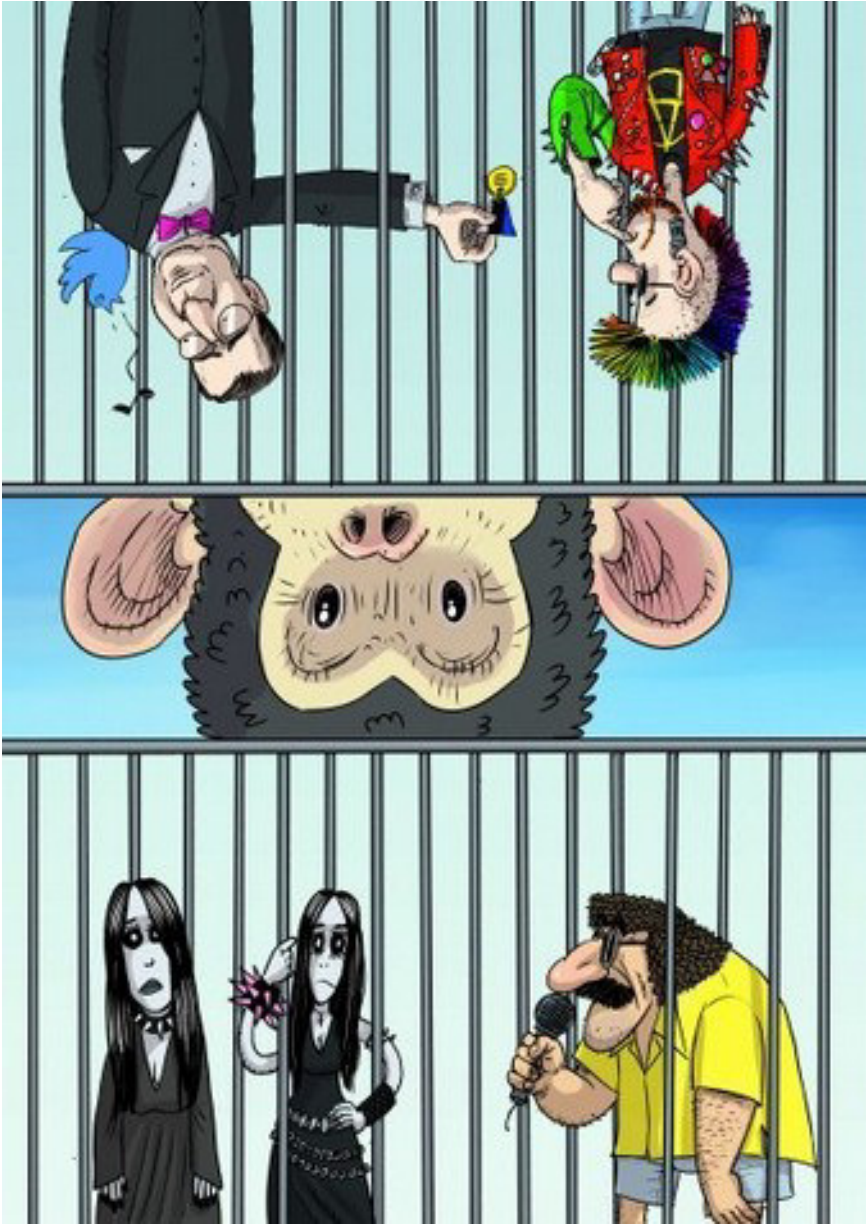
“Where is the end of the world?”

How was William supposed to know where the end of the world was! Luckily, Velts grabbed William’s sleeve and dragged him away, to the next exhibit.

“These guys with rivets and leather jackets are rockers,” Velts introduced them. The rockers were scurrying around the cage, pushing each other to the ground. Some of them had a guitar hanging on their chest, others were singing in a raspy voice, as loud as they could, and some were making horns of their fingers and cheering.

“But what about the guy who looks like a gorilla and is lip-syncing to the song playing from the record?” William pointed at a sturdy hairy guy. “This one seems to be quite okay.”

Velts smirked. “Yes, this is one of the singers. If he keeps on lip-syncing for a while and doesn’t start singing anymore, they’ll put him with the real gorillas.”



In the next exhibit, there was a funny guy wearing rounded glasses. He seemed to be quite naughty as from time to time, he shot his neighbors from a shotgun, meanwhile chuckling to himself.

“Otherwise he’s a really smart guy but from time to time he turns into a child. I don’t know why that happens. Children call him the Teddy Bear. Isn’t he kind of round and cute? Don’t you think?”

“He sure is,” William nodded.

In the next cage, there was a man, looking very much like a hippo, soaking in a pool and chewing on potato peels.

“He is one of our most famous exhibits,” Velts explained. “But once you let him out of the cage, he is off to have a chat with the bears straight away.

And once he starts talking about something, everyone listens to him for some reason. Even the bears do.

“And what does he talk about then?” William asked.

“I have no idea,” the chimpanzee answered. “So far, nobody has understood it yet.”

“Listen,” Velts gave William a hopeful glance. “Could you maybe come back later in the evening? Then you’ll see the kind of a circus this place turns into. Oh boy! And all these lying competitions they have around here... They all lie through their teeth so well that all their teeth fall out already before midnight.

Sometimes they’ve even called the cleaning company to clean up the teeth, so that they wouldn’t get drowned in them.”



William spent a moment looking at the lions, elephants, giraffes and wolves strolling peacefully between the cages. From time to time they threw a lollypop or a cookie to a cage-dweller.

“It takes all kinds to make a world,” an old lady sitting next to William said. William realized now that he’d fallen asleep. Right after that, Dad came with two cones of ice-cream.

“It’s time to go home now, right?” he asked William.

“Yes, let’s go home,” William agreed. He looked over his shoulder towards the chimpanzee exhibit and for a moment, it seemed to him that Velts the Chimpanzee was winking at him.

“What a trickster!” William thought.