

No More Stinky Salmon

In 1889, the people of Chicago, Illinois filled the streets¹. Everyone was excited about the new sea lion pit at the Lincoln Park Zoo². It was going to be home to 18 sea lions³.

What began as a normal morning in the pit soon turned into an adventure the sea lions would never forget. It all started with a sea lion named Sylvester.

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You see, Sylvester and his friends were always fed the same fish at the same time every day.

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But, today at lunch, Sylvester refused to eat the fish.

“What’s the matter?” asked Squirly.

“I’m so sick of eating this stinky salmon⁴!” Sylvester whined.

“But that’s what sea lions eat. That’s what we’ve always eaten!” their friend Sally remarked.

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Sylvester waddled away very hungry. His growling stomach could be heard all around the zoo. As he hungrily paced back and forth in their newly built home, he soon found the answer to his problem. The answer that would take him to the delicious food that he’d been dreaming of.

“Aha! There’s a hole in the fence⁵!” he cheered. “Silly humans!”

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The others questioned how the hole would help them, but Sylvester had a plan.

“I remember one of the men that comes to the zoo talking about a really good restaurant on Clark Street! He said it belonged to a nice lady named Madame Raggiao⁶!” he explained. “That can’t be too far from the zoo.”

Squirly shook her head at her brother’s dangerous idea. “I don’t have a good feeling about this,” she said to herself.

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But Sylvester’s promises of a scrumptious meal were very convincing, so the 18 sea lions squeezed through the hole one by one out into the walkways of the zoo.

The sea lions slid on their round bellies towards the exit, passing the other animals on their way.

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¹ Auditorium Theatre

² Lincoln Park Zoo Timeline

³ Apel, Melanie Ann., and Mindy S. Apel

⁴ What Do Seals Eat?

⁵ Rosenthal, Mark, Carol Tauber, and Edward Uhler

⁶ Rosenthal, Mark, Carol Tauber, and Edward Uhler

First they passed the swans, with their beautiful white feathers⁷. “The sea lions are leaving! The sea lions are leaving!” They honked from their pond.

“We sure are!” replied Sylvester, leading the way.

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Next they passed the beastly bison⁸, who weren’t very friendly. They were butting heads and fighting with one another, as usual, but stopped when they noticed that the sea lions were waddling through the zoo.

“Hey, where do you think you’re going?” one bison yelled out to them.

“We’re going to get some lunch!” explained Sylvester. “And it’s gonna be good!”

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Finally the sea lions journeyed passed the beloved brown bear. Benny the bear was the first animal the zoo had ever bought, and only for ten dollars⁹! Benny was too busy sleeping to notice that the sea lions were making their escape.

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Once the sea lions got out of the zoo, they bounced left and right through the streets barking to one another excitedly.

The people walking on the streets stopped in their tracks to look at the sea lions having lots of fun!

“Whoa!”

“Look at that!”

“How’d they get out?”

The humans in the street were yelling, pointing, and staring at the odd sight of sea lions in the street.

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Though the sea lions were having a blast roaming around, they were quite hungry for their lunch.

Then, they looked over... There it was! Clark Street!

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Shuffling down the busy road, the sea lions passed many restaurants¹⁰, but none of them were Madame Raggiao’s.

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Just as they were starting to lose hope, at the end of the street, they saw it. Madame Raggiao’s restaurant! All 18 sea lions honked with joy.

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Before they had even sat down, the sea lions were placing orders. “I’ll have some pizza!” Squirly screamed. “Spaghetti and meatballs for me!” requested Sally. Sylvester simply couldn’t wait and grabbed some food off a nearby table. The humans were too shocked to stop them.

⁷ Lincoln Park Zoo Timeline

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⁹ Lincoln Park Zoo Timeline

¹⁰ Rosenthal, Mark

Surprised waiters brought out the food within a few minutes, and the sea lions dug in as the amazed humans watched in awe.

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“This is so much better than the smelly fish at the zoo!” they all agreed.

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As they were enjoying their food, the city’s animal rescue team raced into the restaurant.

“You’re all coming with me,” one man said in a booming voice.

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On their way back to the zoo, the sea lions were disappointed that their adventure had ended. When they arrived, the zoo owner, Cyrus DeVry¹¹, was waiting for them.

“Why did you leave?” he asked in shock. “I thought I’d lost you forever!”

Sylvester replied nervously, “We got sick of the same food at the same time everyday. We wanted to try some delicious human food.”

“You can’t just leave the zoo when you want. It’s dangerous out there!” he told them.

They all understood that if they weren’t in their pit at all times, they could get into big trouble out in the streets of the city.

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Suddenly, Sally noticed that they were missing something. “Where’s my brother Stu? Has anyone seen him?”

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All the sea lions panicked wondering where Stu went. Surprisingly, the animal rescue team found him back at the restaurant, but not where you would think. Instead of eating the food, Stu was making it! Stu had always wanted to be a chef, so when the others lined up to go back home, he stayed at the restaurant and learned how to cook with Madame Raggiao.

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Just a couple of days later, the zoo received a letter from Stu. He said he would send them lots of food that he was learning to make at the restaurant.

From now on, the sea lions would receive delicious, mouthwatering meals.

The End

¹¹ Lincoln Park Zoo Timeline

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