

# Animal Instincts

*by* Jake Barnes

I take her to the zoo, and the tigers get out. The little tigers, I mean. Cubs. Two of them. The zoo employees are scurrying about, peeking into locked closets, checking purses, making visitors empty their pockets.

Where could they be? Lost? Stolen? Call the cops. Check lost and found.

Meanwhile we wander around. We peer over the rails at the gorillas. "The go-rillas," I pronounce it. She's too young to remember. We watch the keepers feeding the lions. Raw meat. The ones who get fed first eat; the others roar in indignation.

My friend thinks the polar bears are cute, the baboons yukky. We both like the elephants. I ask her if she has ever ridden an elephant. She says no, and I say, "Neither have I."

Later on we get into an argument about politics, and there go my plans for the evening. She is a Republican, and I am a Democrat. I say something snide about Sarah Palin. She takes umbrage.

She cheers up when we get to the field where they keep the giraffes. She adores giraffes, she says. I hate giraffes, but I don't tell her that. So ungainly. Misshapen, really. I look at my watch; almost closing time. We walk toward the exit.

A zoo employee is standing near the gate. She is showing the tiger kittens to a woman and two small children. Found them in one of the out buildings under a pile of hay. We stand there gawking at the little beasts. They are fizzing with energy. Feral, wide-eyed. The air crackles with their vitality. The air smells like ozone.

