

The King of Beasts.

by Philip Jose Farmer.

The biologist was showing the distinguished visitor through the zoo and laboratory.

"Our budget," he said, "is too limited to re-create all known animals. So we bring to life only the higher of extinct animals, the beautiful ones that were wantonly exterminated. I'm trying, as it were, to make up for the brutality and the stupidity. You might say that man struck God in the face every time he wiped out a branch of the animal kingdom."

He paused, and they looked across the meads and the force fields. The quagga wheeled and galloped, delight and fun flashing off his flanks. The sea otter poked his humorous whiskers from the water. The gorilla peered from behind the bamboo shoots. Passenger pigeons strutted. A rhinoceros trotted like a dainty battleship. With gentle eyes a giraffe looked up at them, then resumed eating.

"There's the dodo. Not beautiful, but very droll, and helpless. Come. I'll show you the re-creation itself."

In the great buildings, they passed between rows of tall and wide tanks. They could see clearly through the inspection windows and see the jelly within.

"Those are African elephant embryos," said the biologist. "We plan to grow a large herd and then release them on the new government preserve."

"You positively radiate," said the distinguished visitor, "You really love the animals, don't you?"

"I love all life"

"Tell me," said the visitor, "where did you get the cat data for re-creation?"

"Mostly from skeletons and skins from the ancient museums; we excavated books and films that we succeeded in restoring and then translating. Ah, see those huge eggs? the chicks of the giant moa are growing within them. These are almost ready, we can soon take these tiger cubs from their tank. They'll be dangerous when grown but they will be confined to the preserve".

The visitor stopped before the last tank. "Just one?" he commented.

"Poor little thing," said the biologist, now sad. "It will be so alone, but I shall give it all the love I have."

"Is it dangerous?" asked the visitor, "Worse than the elephants, tigers and bears?"

"I had to get special permission to grow this one," said the biologist. "His voice quavered.

The visitor stepped sharply back from the tank. He said, "Then it must be But you wouldn't dare!"

The biologist nodded. "Yes. ~~MAN~~ it's a MAN."