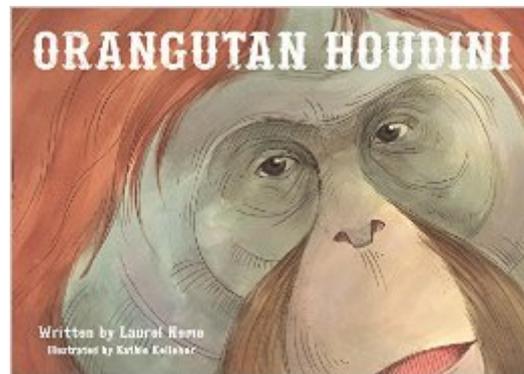


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Orangutan Houdini



Synopsis

This is the true story of Fu Manchu, an adult male orangutan, who relishes outsmarting his friend, zookeeper Jerry Stones. He does just that when he escapes his enclosure at will and spends sunny days with the elephants in another part of the zoo. At first Jerry believes his staff's carelessness allowed the crafty ape to get out. But when that assumption proves wrong, he launches an all-out surveillance mission to discover how Fu manages his getaways. Jerry soon discovers that Fu can open the locked door, but can't figure out how he does it. The zookeeper removes every twig and stick that could be used as a lock pick, but Fu continues to escape. Eventually, Fu reveals to Jerry how he did it, and is rewarded with honorary membership in the American Association of Locksmiths.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #670,509 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #293 in [Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works > Mystery & Wonders](#) #526 in [Books > Children's Books > Animals > Apes & Monkeys](#) #166207 in [Books > Reference](#)

Age Range: 6 - 7 years

Grade Level: 1 - 2

Customer Reviews

Fu Manchu was a [tweener](#) with a twinkle in his eye. He was a twelve-year-old orangutan on a mission and only Heavy Lamar could help him. Maybe, just maybe she could help him get that metal strand he so needed to escape. Heavy Lamar smiled, as orangutans do, and accepted a cookie in exchange for that strand. Now what would an orangutan want with a little bit of wire? He could turn into the Houdini of the Henry Doorly Zoo, that's what! Soon he was fiddling with the lock that would help his troop escape. A little wiggle here, a little wiggle there and the door was open! They were off to see the elephants. The elephants [barely](#) noticed the five balls of red fur dotting the

trees, but zookeeper Jerry Stones noticed. Manchu had done a little wiggle there, a little wiggle there with that metal strand and was happily playing in the trees. Jerry cooed up at the orangutan, but no thank you, he wasn't coming down ... yet. For a while all was calm at the zoo, but he was once again becoming a little restless. It was off to the elephant corral and the elm trees once again. This time when they returned, Jerry was determined it wouldn't happen again, but it did. Jerry fired the person responsible, Jerry shouted at the staff. Was Manchu going to get everyone in big trouble or would someone figure out what he was doing? This is a marvelous story of a mischievous orangutan on a mission that will fascinate young readers. Of course this is a mystery from the outside looking in because the reader knows exactly how the orangutan is making those very unusual visits to the elephants. By default, they will also learn quite a bit about orangutans and their behavior. For example, Manchu has a special way of letting Jerry know just who's boss. We can also see how Jerry reacts to his behaviors.

Fu Manchu, a crafty and clever orangutan in a Nebraska zoo, longed to roam outside the boundaries of the enclosure that he shared with four other orangutans. Although their outdoor play area allowed them to exercise and explore, Fu had his sights set on visiting a stand of elm trees growing near the elephant corral. One day, Fu secured a loose wire from a light fixture. He concealed it in his mouth until he found an opportunity to fiddle with the enclosure's door lock. Wiggling and juggling the wire, Fu soon popped the lock, unbolted the door and signaled to the others that an unauthorized adventure was in store! *ORANGUTAN HOUDINI*, Neme's debut picture book, is based on the true story of an adult male orangutan at the Henry Doorly Zoo in 1968. With gentle humor and mild suspense, Neme skillfully conveys the intelligence and capability of this mischievous ape with a penchant for escape. We, the readers, are in on the joke from the start, knowing how Fu was able to pick the lock. But poor Jerry Stones, the zookeeper, was repeatedly outsmarted by Fu and his friends, finding them at play in the elm trees on several occasions. The zookeeper warns his staff to be more careful with the locks. They double check the locks, and search the enclosure for possible lock-picking tools. Finally, they concede defeat and build a new enclosure for the orangutans. Fu then reveals the wire that he has kept carefully concealed in his mouth all along, and thus earns an honorary certificate from the American Association of Locksmiths. The attractive illustrations by Kathie Kelleher are colorful and nicely detailed, capturing the bemused and carefree attitude of the apes in contrast with the confused and frustrated zoo staff.

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