

Kathleen Ernst
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST

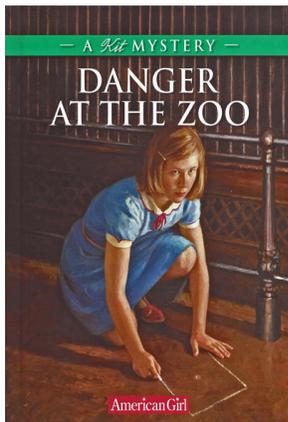


Preview of *Danger At The Zoo: A Kit Mystery*

A Kit Kittredge American Girl Mystery

Written by Kathleen Ernst

Published by American Girl Books 2005



Kit Kittredge is back, in a mystery that takes place at the Cincinnati Zoo! Kit lands a summer job writing a children's column for her local newspaper and looks for story ideas at the Cincinnati Zoo where her friend Stirling works as a guide and her old friend Will, the hobo, has a job cleaning cages.

As Kit noses around, she stumbles into some strange activities in the monkey house. Meanwhile, Kit begins to notice small things missing at home too. It's not long before Will looks like the logical suspect in both places. Can Kit clear her friend--and get a good story in the bargain? Fireworks fly as Kit's mystery is solved at the zoo's grand Fourth of July spectacular.

This book includes a richly illustrated "Peak Into The Past" essay. Originally released as a 192-page book in softcover and hardcover formats, it is now also available in electronic versions for both the Barnes and Noble Nook and the Amazon Kindle.

"Kit led Stirling outside and down the slope toward the camel pen. "I don't believe Will is responsible for those unlocked doors," she began. "If someone is trying to break into the monkey house, he might be able to get onto the grounds at night by slipping through that hedge along Vine Street." She pointed. "I checked, and there's a space big enough to crawl through behind that shed. There are probably other spots, too."

Stirling squinted across the camel pen. "I suppose it's possible. But why would someone want to do that?"



"I don't know," Kit admitted. "Yet. But listen to this. I also heard Otis and another man complaining about money being spent on the new barless cages. They seemed pretty mad at Superintendent Stephan."

"We should keep our eye on Otis," Stirling agreed. Then he glanced at his watch. "Come on. It's almost five. Let's go find Will."

Most of the zoo's large bird collection fluttered and flapped in a row of small buildings linked by large outdoor cages. Keepers let the birds into the outdoor cages during warm weather. Visitors strolling along a shady path could enjoy parakeets, strawberry finches, and brightly colored birds called troupials from the West Indies and South America. Kit and Stirling found Will behind one of the buildings, pushing a wheelbarrow filled with soiled straw

"Hello, Will," Kit said. "We heard there was more trouble, and we want to help."

Will leaned on a shovel, looking tired. "I know that door was secure when I left," he insisted. "I double-checked every door in my area."

Kit stared at a brilliant blue-and-yellow bird in the nearest cage. "What time did you finish your work?" she asked finally.

"I left a little after nine o'clock, just like always." Will sighed. "Officer Culpepper found the door unlocked an hour later."

"It can't be a coincidence," Stirling said. "One door left unlocked--maybe. But twice in one week?"

"I don't know what's going on," Will said, setting the shovel across his wheelbarrow. "But there's nothing I can do about it. I'm just a hobo. Nobody's going to believe me."

The look in his eyes twisted Kit's heart. "We believe you, Will!"

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"Thanks. But you're not the ones to decide if I should get fired." He shook his head. "Listen, don't worry about it. I'll see you back at the house later." He picked up the wheelbarrow handles and walked away.

"We've got to do something!" Kit said. I'm just a hobo, Will had said--she hated that!

"He probably will get fired if anything else happens," Stirling said gloomily. "But what can we do?"

A lion roared in the distance, and the first faint notes from an orchestra drifted through the trees. Kit imagined gaily dressed couples settling in for an evening of Zoo Opera, never guessing that a penniless young man named Will was in danger of losing his job. She tried to gather her thoughts and consider the problem not as a friend, but as a reporter.

"All right," she said finally. "I've got a couple of ideas."

Agatha Award Nominee for Best Children's/Young Adult Mystery

— **Malice Domestic**

"With equal parts suspense and intrigue, *Danger at the Zoo* will hold middle grade readers' imaginations until its swift and satisfying conclusion."

— **Ohio Library Association**

"Those who love 'American Girl' will be clamoring for it."

— **School Library Journal**

Danger At The Zoo is available as a softcover book from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and independent booksellers. It is also available in electronic version for the Amazon Kindle and the Barnes & Noble Nook. New, first-edition, hardcover copies can be acquired directly from the author, Kathleen Ernst, who will be happy to sign and personalize them for you. For more about the story, click on http://www.kathleernerst.com/book_danger_zoo.php