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### The Zoo

*The quizzical expression of the monkey at the zoo comes from his wondering whether he is his brother's keeper or his keeper's brother.*

Evan Esar

Over the course of a day, when there are more demands than time to meet them, people get more obstreperous than usual. They do or say things that are out of keeping with their typical, civilized character. Sophisticated behavior can become surprisingly primitive, and interactions begin to resemble those of animals in the zoo. Although this happens in the clinic when emergencies occur, it is particularly prevalent when dealing with administrative issues.

In the course of one particularly outrageous afternoon, I became an amateur zoologist, cataloging the animal-like behavior of the people I encountered. My first meeting was with a shark. She was sleek, quiet and menacing. Today she was well fed, circling, studying the situation, determining if she would have me for a future meal. She did not strike. I did not get what I came for, but I did not give up anything either. The cheetah was next. He was hungry and clearly faster than me—able to see the prey and pounce before I had a chance to even understand the issues on the table. It was one of those meetings where I was glad to emerge alive. On the way back to the office, I met the ostrich in the hall. The ostrich, walking in his usual head down position, said it was all okay. We had no problems and therefore we did not need any solutions. He reminded me of Alfred E. Neuman, or was it Nero? The horse stopped by. His combination of street smarts, great strength and loyalty shed a whole new light on the situation. From his perspective, we had a problem. He suggested taking the plunge: get a reading from the lion. I was able to get on his calendar late that afternoon. I found him in his den, well groomed, protected by two secretaries. After 30 minutes of quiet discussion, it became apparent he did not care what I thought. After all, this was his jungle. We were going to do it his way.

In my civics class in elementary school, I was told that this was a democracy—with majority rule and at least a fair hearing from the minorities. That is a tyranny of simplicity—it does not work that way. While there are no dictators, there are few sympathetic ears willing to listen and reach a reasonable compromise.

As twilight set in, the animals went home, and I was left alone in my office to lick my wounds and plan to survive tomorrow's foray into the jungle.

**H. William Strauss, Editor**  
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