



# Midnight at the Zoo

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It promises to be an exciting day for siblings, Max and Mia: it's the school trip to the zoo. Excitement rises as they enter the zoo gates but as they wander around, the whole place seems oddly devoid of animals: where are the lemurs, flamingos, pandas and salamanders? And what of the lions and meerkats? Not one is visible though something has left traces. After a disappointing wander around, it's time to board the bus once more and off it goes leaving Mia and Max behind. (Surely that teacher of theirs has heard of risk assessments ? at the very least she should have done a head count.)

Conveniently, the two are well prepared for a long stay and they, as they have been doing all along, make the most of things. What they weren't prepared for though is what happens when midnight strikes: that's when the zoo truly comes alive and the magic begins. In the company of a friendly lion cub, Max and Mia feast their eyes on exotic scenes ?loud, laughing lemurs with lanterns alight ?? prancing, partying pandas, dancing flamingos and much more to marvel at until finally, in the warm embrace of two kingly cats, the children drop off to sleep.

What stories they'll have to tell come morning, but will anybody believe them?

I loved the 3d aerial map showing the layout of the daytime zoo, dotted with the not-to-scale animals on the front endpaper and the fantastical star and butterfly-spangled kingdom of the midnight zoo at the back. In between there is so much more to enjoy in Faye Hanson's illustrations: the children's mood of wild excitement and gleeful exuberance in her large-sale spreads, games for the reader, of spot the animal in the smaller frames and images of the nocturnal adventures in a magical world seemingly drawn from the myth, fantasy and rich colours of India, the Far East and South America.

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