

Friday April 3rd

Hi, I'm Sammy Feral. I've never had a reason to keep a diary—until now. Today my world did a total 180. I've lost my family, narrowly escaped death, and discovered that werewolves are more than just a story made up to scare kids.

This diary is evidence to prove I'm not insane when the men in white coats try to wheel me away to the loony bin.

I'd better start from the beginning . . .

I live in a small town called Tyler's Rest. Nothing exciting ever happened here—until today. The most interesting thing about Tyler's Rest is Feral Zoo—it's won "Zoo of the Year"

three times and is home to the world's oldest gorilla living in captivity.

My family owns Feral Zoo, and that makes me pretty popular.

This is my family . . .

DAD

Job: Owner of Feral Zoo

Looks like: Overtired ape in a suit

Age: Older than Mom but younger than Darwin, the oldest gorilla in Feral Zoo

Can be found: His office

Favorite animal: Cheetah cos he's always running around at top speed



MOM

Job: Chief zookeeper (both at home and at work)

Looks like: A lioness with frizzy golden hair

Age: BIG secret

Can be found: Breeding rare tigers and bugging me about school

Favorite animal: Llama (dumb creatures if you ask me)



GRACE

Job: Older sister and zoo-keeping apprentice

Looks like: Girly girl in a zookeeper's uniform

Age: 17

Can be found: Kissing her boyfriend Max behind the aviary at lunchtime

Favorite animal: Dolphin
(Boring! Sharks are way cooler)

NATTY (SHORT FOR NATALIE)

Job: Little sister and most annoying person on planet Earth

Looks like: Hyperactive squirrel monkey

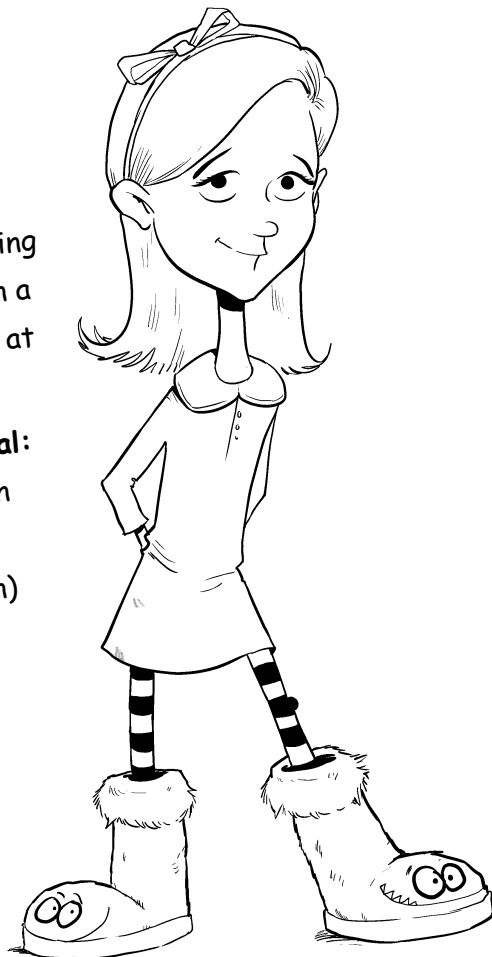
Age: 6

Can be found:

Following me around and making more noise than a pack of hyenas at feeding time

Favorite animal:

Hamster (Even more boring than a dolphin)



And this is what you should know about me . . .

SAMMY

Job: Helping out at Feral Zoo to earn pocket money

Looks like: Freckly face like a tree frog

Age: 12

Can be found: Cleaning out snake tanks, feeding crocodiles, and hanging out with my best friend, Mark

Top five animals (can't pick just one):

- 1 Pythons
- 2 Jumping spiders
- 3 Great white sharks
- 4 Wolves (until today)
- 5 Iguanas



So that's me and my family—and here's why our lives will never be the same again . . .

After school today I was helping out at the zoo as normal. I'd finished feeding the gorillas and was on my way to visit Khan, our mega-grouchy Sumatran tiger, when I stopped off at the reptile house to feed Beelzebub.

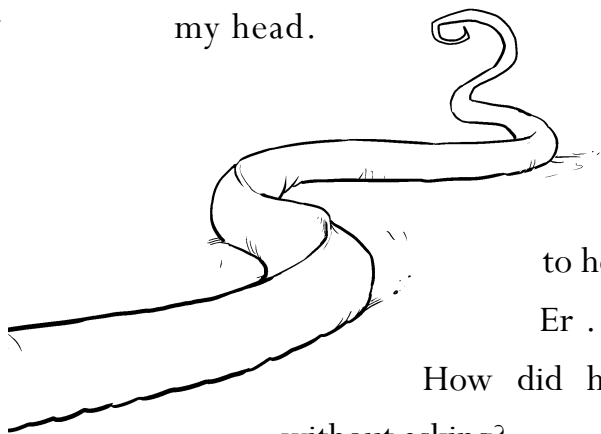
Beelzebub is my pet python. I helped him hatch as a baby and he lived in a tank in my bedroom for a year. But then he escaped and tried to eat Natty while she was sleeping, so now Mom makes me keep him at the zoo.



I got to the reptile house and pushed open the door with my shoulder (cos I was holding a

box of Beelzebub's favorite frozen field mice). A strange-looking teenage boy was standing in the middle of the room. He smiled when I walked in, as if he'd been waiting for me to arrive.

There was no one else in there, so when the door slammed shut we were alone. I ignored him, thinking he was just another zoo visitor, and walked over to Beelzebub's vivarium. As I lowered the frozen mice into the tank I could feel the boy's eyes burning into the back of my head.



“Hey, Sammy,”
he said. “I’m
Donny. I’m here
to help you.”

Er . . . minor freak-out!

How did he know my name
without asking?

Was he psychic? Was he a crazy stalker? Or was
he something else . . . ?

DONNY

Age: 17 (although he has gray hair like my granddad did)

Looks: As cool and calm as an alley cat

First impressions:
This guy is seriously weird!



I figured that Donny was probably just a new zookeeper and that's how he knew who I was—everyone at Feral Zoo knows me.

I held out the box of frozen mice toward Donny, thinking he'd take one and feed it to a snake. But he just stood there.

I stared back.

That's when I noticed Donny didn't look like a zookeeper. He was wearing a plain white

T-shirt, ripped jeans, and motorcycle boots—not exactly regular zoo-keeping gear.

“How’s Caliban?” Donny asked, bending down and studying a rare Peruvian boa constrictor winding around a damp log.

I should have explained earlier that Caliban is our new puppy. We’ve only had him three weeks. Caliban spends every day sitting in Dad’s office. The man who sold him to Dad said he was a purebred husky. He was lying.

I shrugged my shoulders at Donny and ignored him while I fed Beelzebub a few more field mice. At the time I was more interested in the way Beelzebub dislocated his jaw to swallow the mice (such a cool trick—wish I could do it with burgers) than wondering how Donny knew about Caliban. Now I wish I’d paid more attention—maybe then I could have saved my family.

Donny walked over and tugged my arm.

“Look, if you’re ever in trouble,” he whispered, “or if things get really weird, just let me know. I love weird. Weird is totally up my street.”

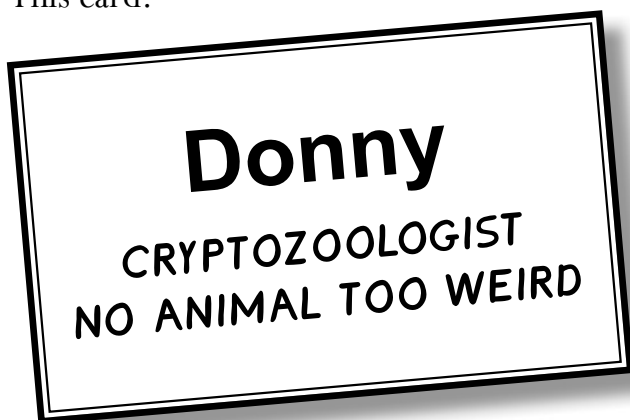
Er, excuse me? What? This guy was making no sense.

Then Donny stuffed something into my hand.

“Remember,” he said, looking me right in the eye, “I can help.” Then he just walked off, like nothing had happened.

I looked down at what Donny had slipped into my hand—it was a card.

This card:



What's a cryptozoologist?

The word was like it was from an alien language—I had no idea what it meant.

So I did what I always do when I want to know something—I went to see Dad.

“What's a cryptozoologist?” I asked as we sat down for a snack in the zoo café.

“Someone who studies animals that don't exist,” Dad said, biting into his ham sandwich. Dad knows the answer to everything. “Like the abominable snowman, or dragons, or werewolves.”

Yep, that confirmed it—Donny was a weirdo of the highest degree. But why was he interested in me?

Anyway . . . the rest of the afternoon was pretty normal. Dad had a meeting with a panda breeder who was visiting from China. Grace trained a chimp to wave. Natty and Mom took turns throwing steaks into the tiger den, and I

cleaned out the spider tanks. One of the black widows had eaten her mate—cool!

After all the visitors had left I headed toward Dad's office. The plan was to round everyone up and go home for dinner.

But things never, *ever* go according to plan.

It was dark outside and the light of a full moon illuminated the animal cages as I walked through the zoo. I could hear barking coming from Dad's office. It sounded like Caliban.

Caliban's growls got louder and louder as I opened the office door. "Caliban, chill . . ." I started, but I never finished my sentence.

I was way too freaked out by what I saw . . .

As the door swung back I could see Dad sitting behind his desk. Instead of tapping away at his computer, he was staring into space and drooling.

He had bite marks on his neck, huge ones—

it looked as if he'd been bitten by some kind of animal.

“Dad?” I chuckled nervously, hoping he was playing a game.

Dad didn't answer. He made a strange growling sound and curled his lips like an angry dog.

Huh?!

My brain scrambled to understand what was going on.

I took a step closer to Dad's desk, and stepped on something soft. I looked down and saw Natty's hand.

My eyes nearly popped out of my head in horror. Mom, Grace, and Natty were all lying on the office floor. All as still as stone.

I stopped feeling confused—I felt terrified. Everyone looked dead!

I didn't know whether to puke, laugh, or cry—it didn't seem real.

Behind the thumping sound of my heart I could hear snarling coming from the corner of the room. I looked up and saw Caliban licking his lips. He paced toward me slowly, reminding me of a hungry wolf stalking its prey. He looked larger than I remembered and a whole lot more terrifying.

“Caliban?” I gulped.

Caliban raised his eyes to the ceiling and let out a mega-loud howl. The sound made



my legs turn to jelly and wobble beneath me.

I had no idea what was happening, but whatever it was I just wanted it to stop. But it didn't stop . . . It just got worse . . .

From the corner of my eye I saw Grace pick herself up off the floor. Only she didn't look like Grace—her teeth looked larger, her ears were poking upward from the top of her head, and her nose was twitching like mad.

Surely I must be dreaming? None of this could be happening.

Then thick fur started to sprout all over Dad's face . . .

Er, rewind! Face fur??Yep—face fur!

My brain went into overdrive as I tried to understand what was happening. Was I going nuts? I blinked my eyes like a madman—hoping to wake up from a horrible dream. But I wasn't asleep.