

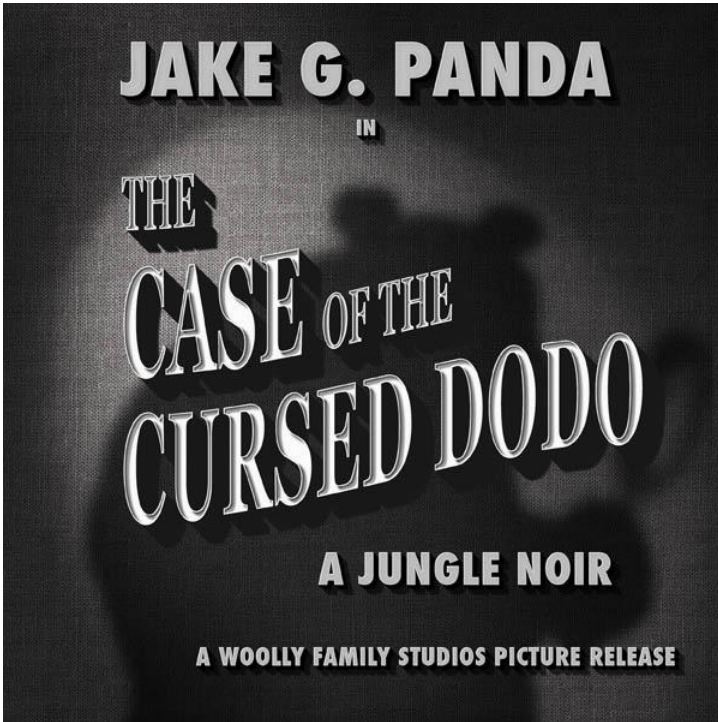
THE **ENDANGERED FILES**

no. 1

**JAKE G. PANDA**  
IN

**THE**  
**CASE OF THE**  
**CURSED DODO**

**A Jungle Noir**



**Filmed on location in**

**ENDANGER'D SCOPE**

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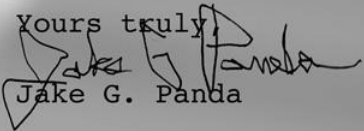
## A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

*From the desk of*  
**JAKE G. PANDA**  
HOTEL DETECTIVE

Dear Readers:

This is not your garden-variety book. It's actually a long-lost movie. And the story's written in a rare film format called **ENDANGER'D'SCOPE**. That means it might read a little different than what you're used to. Don't be alarmed. Think of yourself as a brave explorer, venturing into an uncharted type of fiction. Something I'm calling **Jungle Noir**. Now grab yourself a bucket of popcorn and kick back. The show's about to begin...

Yours truly,

  
Jake G. Panda

## A PRELUDE TO PROBLEMS



We FADE IN on the Sahara Desert. It's sizzling hot. Sand dunes stretch off in the distance like waves on a huge ocean. A small figure cuts a path across the desolate landscape.

As the figure gets closer, we see that he's cloaked from head-to-toe in traditional

Bedouin garb. Every step is a struggle against the harsh desert wind. But strangely, this figure is not walking. He's hopping. Two short ears stick out the top of his head wrap.

He stops abruptly, spotting something half-buried in the sand in front of him. It's a tattered and weathered suitcase.

The figure loosens his headscarf, revealing the puzzled furry face of a hispid hare, a rare bunny from the Himalayas. He looks out through thick spectacles. His nose wiggles wildly, sniffing the air for danger.

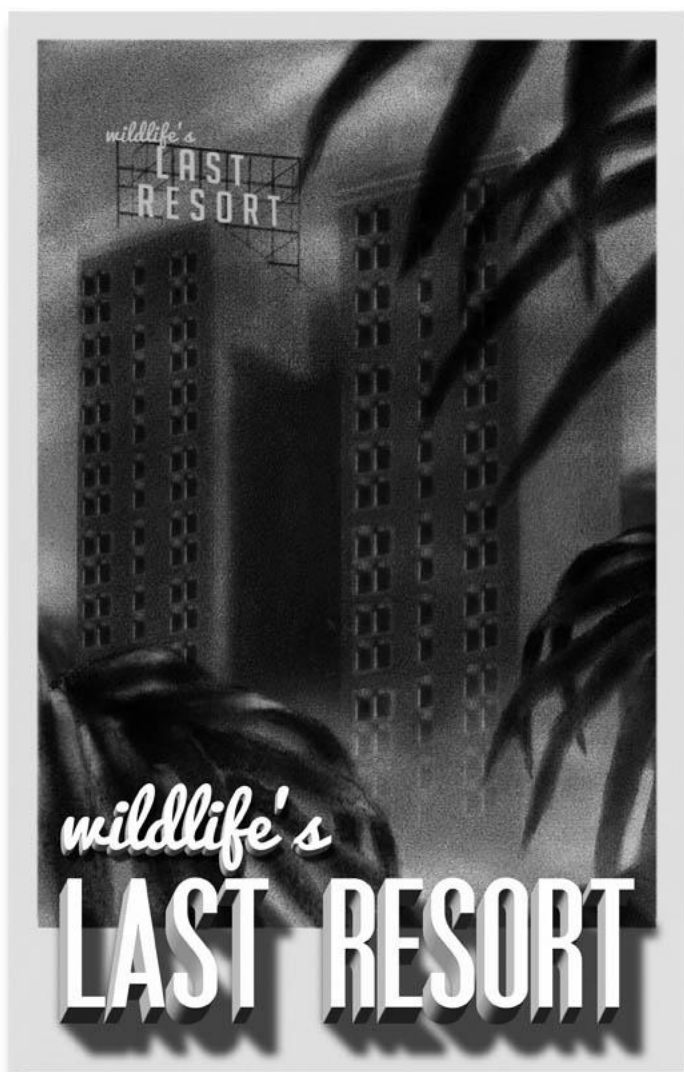
The hare cautiously wipes away the layers of sand covering the suitcase, exposing a number of brightly colored luggage stickers.

Suddenly his nose stops wiggling. His small eyes fix on one of the decals.

It's the image of a hotel silhouetted against a jungle backdrop. Across the bottom it reads: WILDLIFE'S LAST RESORT.

The Sahara winds seem to rise up and swirl around the hare as he lifts the suitcase from its desert grave. The noise of the

blowing sand grows to a crescendo as we  
CUT TO BLACK.



## CHAPTER ONE: WHEN TROUBLE CALLS



We FADE IN on a holding pen deep in the Moroccan forest. CUE the sound of crickets. It's a quiet night. A distant monkey *screeches*. And then we hear a loud *chomp* come from a nearby cage.

A giant panda in a loosened tie steps into view. He looks out through the bars, finishing off a stick of bamboo. CUE the hard-boiled voiceover:

*Lookin' for trouble? Well, you've found it. Found it in spades. The name's Jake G. Panda, and trouble seems to follow me wherever I go.*

Jake flops down on a wadded-up blanket in a corner of his cage.

*How'd I get in this jam? It has somethin' to do with a lost suitcase, a green bird, and a bunch of double-crossing animals. But I'm gettin' ahead of myself. I guess I should go back to the beginning. Back to where this all started. At a roomy little joint called the Last Resort.*

Jake closes his eyes and folds his stubby arms across his chest as we DISSOLVE TO:

A jungle skyline. It's a picturesque sunrise. Two white Siberian cranes fly against the

orange sky. They soar past a building rising up from the jungle. Atop the structure, a neon sign flashes -- *Wildlife's Last Resort*.

It's the same building pictured on that luggage decal. Stucco-sided. Dotted with windows. And strangely at one with the rich green foliage that surrounds it.

The cranes circle around, setting down in front of the hotel.

A western grey kangaroo bellhop springs out to greet them. She takes their travel bags and leads them inside. A sign over the entrance reads: *Rooms Available -- Endangered Welcome*.

*Times were tough. Lots of us animals were in a tight spot. And the Last Resort was the perfect place to hide out. It was a flophouse for animals in trouble.*

The hotel lobby is crawling with exotic wildlife. The cranes twist their heads from side to side, taking in the lush surroundings.

The new guests follow the bellhop across the lobby, past the elevators, and to the front desk.

The bellhop's joey, wearing a matching maroon cap, pops up from inside his mom's pouch like a jack-in-the-box and rings a desk bell. The clerk, a big Mexican grizzly bear, lumbers from a back room and begins checking in the bird couple.

We PAN back to the elevators. There's a muffled *ding*. The doors slide open, and Jake steps out, adjusting his deco-patterned tie.

*That's where I come in. I work in the protection racket. I'm the Last Resort's house dick. The hotel snoop. The resident fuzz. It's my job to keep the guests safe and outta harm's way.*

Like most gumshoes, Jake is one cool cucumber. He passes a couple of female Tibetan antelopes and nods hello. They giggle like schoolgirls as he continues across the lobby toward an open doorway. A sign

on the wall reads: The Bamboo Room Coffee Shop. Beneath it, scrawled on a chalkboard, are the daily specials.

The Bamboo Room is a greasy spoon diner complete with vinyl booths and a stool-lined counter. Rose, a Hierro giant lizard waitress in heavy make-up, is behind the counter wiping up.

One of her animal patrons points to his plate. "Hey, Rose, there's a fly in these scrambles."

Without missing a beat, she turns toward him. Her tongue snaps out and snatches the offending insect from his plate.

"There. Problem solved," she says in a gruff voice.

Jake presses up against the counter. "Good morning, Rose."

"Yeah? What's so good about it?" she grumbles back.

Jake hesitates for a moment, scanning the counter. Long-faced animals sit slumped over their breakfasts. There's a Himalayan

tahr. A Chinese alligator. A Thompson's gazelle.

*She had a point. I mean, look at these sad sacks. These were guys on the brink of extinction. For most of them, a good day was a distant memory.*

Jake turns his attention back to Rose. She pours him a mug of bamboo tea.

"Sister, you read my mind," he says as she slides the steaming cup across the counter.

"It's not too hard. Same boring thing everyday. Bamboo tea straight. No cream. No sugar."

"What can I say?" Jake grins. "I'm a creature of habit." He takes a sip and shakes off the taste. "Whew! This stuff'll put hair on your chest."

"Even your crummy joke's the same," she says, waving him off. "Go on. Get outta here."

A makeshift newsstand sits in a corner of the hotel lobby. A Round Island day gecko

named Timmy stands to the side of a pile of newspapers, trying to stir up business.

"Extra! Extra! Big Top Break Out! Read all about it in the *Daily Roar*!"

Jake approaches, mug in hand. "What's the scoop, Timmy?"

"Some animals broke free from a traveling circus last night." The tiny lizard signals for Jake to come closer. Jake leans down, bending an ear. "They might've had help from the Endangered Underground."

"Really?" Jake says with a raised eyebrow. He slaps some change onto the table and grabs a copy, scanning the headlines. A high-pitched voice causes him to cringe. It's the Mexican grizzly working the front desk.

"Jakey dear. You forgot your mail," she playfully grrrs, waving a pawful of letters in the air.

*That's Gloria. A dizzy grizzly who runs the front desk of this bunkhouse. She's a one of a kind dame.*

"Thanks, Gloria," Jake says, taking the letters. She gives him a big wink.

"Anytime, Honey."

*I wish she wouldn't call me that. It makes me feel all sticky. Besides if there's one thing I ain't, it's sweet.*

Jake sorts through the pile of mail. He stops on a photo postcard of a familiar looking hispid hare standing in a crowded Middle Eastern marketplace.

Jake flips it over. The message written on the back simply reads:

*Having a jolly good time. Wish you were here. -- The Professor*

Jake notes the postmark and chuckles, shaking his head. "Morocco? I wonder what that bunny's gotten himself into now."

*The Professor's a hotel regular. When he's not here, he's hopping the globe, trackin'*

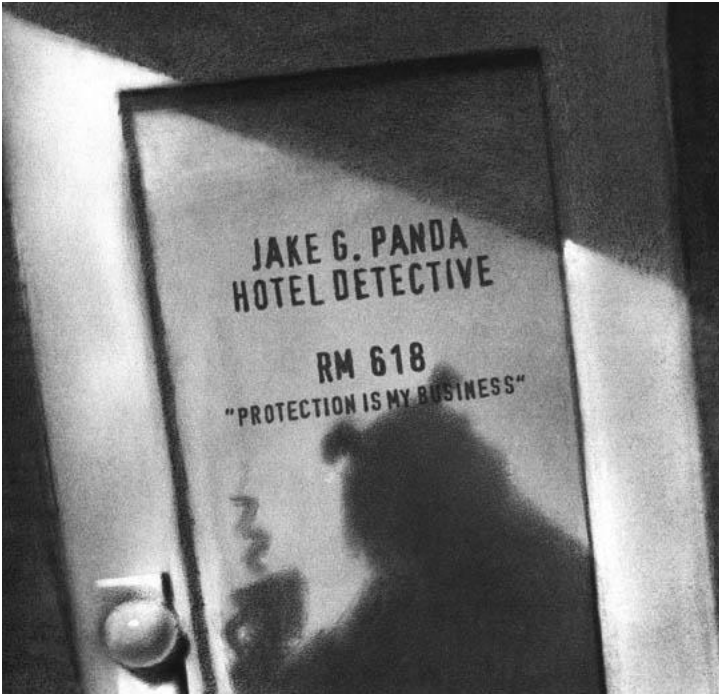
*down endangered artifacts for the Last Resort's collection. And usually stumblin' into trouble along the way.*

Jake steps into the elevator. At the controls is a long-nosed proboscis monkey.

"Sixth floor, Sam. No stops."

Sam yanks the control crank with his tail, and the elevator lurches up.

Jake strolls down a sixth floor hallway lined with palm-patterned wallpaper. He stops outside a glass-paneled door. The pebbled glass reads:



Jake flips a sign hanging on the knob from *Off Duty* to *On Duty* and opens the door. The *clack, clack, clack* of a typewriter comes from inside.

*If any of these animals get in a jam, they know right where to go. Room 618. That's where I hang my hat . . . if I wore one.*

Eddie, a small woolly mountain tapir in a bowtie, looks up from his Underwood typewriter. He gives Jake a hi-ho salute and then goes back to his typing, furiously hunting and pecking.

*Eddie's my associate. What we in the business like to call a silent partner. He doesn't talk much. Which suits me just fine 'cause I'm not one for chit chat. Basically, I do the legwork. And he does the paperwork.*

Jake spots a potted bamboo plant sitting behind the desk. His expression softens. The tough guy exterior is gone. His voice goes up a few octaves as he talks to the plant like a cherished pet.

"Hell-looo, my widdle pookie. Are you firsty?" He picks up a ceramic jug, sprinkling water on the plant. "Oh, I know you are. Dwink up."

Jake notices that Eddie has stopped typing and is staring at him. Jake clears his throat. The tough guy exterior is back. "Ahem. Looks

like she's got a stray branch here. Better take care of that."

He grabs a pair of trimming shears and snips off one of the stocks. Then he proceeds to carefully trim the rest of the plant.

Eddie goes back to typing.

Jake chews on the clipped-off piece of bamboo as he settles into his chair. He kicks his feet up and flips open the newspaper. Sunlight filters in through the blinds.

*Yep, it was starting to look like a typical morning . . . until the phone rang.*

CUE the black rotary on Jake's desk. *BRRRING!* He lifts the receiver. "Jake G. Panda. House Detective."

We CUT TO a busy Moroccan marketplace. The Professor stands inside a cramped phone booth, his whiskers pressed against the glass. Behind him, animal shopkeepers haggle with their wildlife customers. The Professor has to yell to be heard over all the noise. "Hello? Jake?"

"Professor. How's it going?" Jake replies. "I got your postcard this morning."

The hare thumps his hind foot nervously. "Jake, I think I'm in a bit of trouble."

Jake sits up concerned. "What kind of trouble?"

The Professor anxiously looks around. "I don't know, but I'm being followed."

"Where are you?"

"I'm at the Critter Bazaar outside of Marrakesh. Listen, I found something buried in the desert. A suitcase." A shadowy figure creeps up behind the Professor as he talks. "There was a sticker on the side for the Last Res--" The Professor's suddenly yanked from the phone before he can finish his sentence.

On the other end of the call, Jake reacts to a loud *click*! "Hello? Professor? Are you still there?" The line goes dead.

Jake cradles the phone. He grabs the postcard, studying the Moroccan postmark and jumps into action. "Eddie, I need you to hold down the fort for a coupla days. The Professor's in trouble."

Eddie simply nods and continues typing. Jake checks his watch and hurries into a connecting room.

He unfolds a set of louvered doors, pulling down a Murphy wall bed. Jake reaches under the mattress for his passport and flips it open.

Inside, stamped in red block letters above his ID photo is the word: *ENDANGERED*.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Visit the [Endangered Files](http://www.endangeredfiles.com) to get your paws on the rest of the story.

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