

Trigatipede

The days were growing shorter and the project's failure was becoming apparent. My crew and I had been researching on a little island just south of Australia for over three months, and we were making little progress. I was hired as the team leader for this excursion by a private investor from some breakthrough zoo. The investor, a man by the name of Henry Shrinton, asked me along with my crew to go down under to find new, unknown animals. I found this request very unusual simply because my formal education had been in DNA research, not biological hunts. Nevertheless, my grant from the University had run out so I desperately needed funding. We had only found a new species of butterfly, and I feared my return to the states with nothing to show of our three month stay. Our time was up, however, and the crew and I left Australia disappointed and empty-handed.

At the airport in New York, I was greeted by Mr. Shrinton and a few of the other zoo investors. They quickly hurried me into a stretched limousine, and then my life changed forever. The investors asked me quite plainly if I would be willing to create their zoo for them. At first I was unclear of the meaning, but quick clarification had me realizing the enormous biological disasters such a project would generate. They wanted me to chemically produce hybrid's of different animal species.

My first thought was that such a thing was impossible, but they showed me research and experiments done by the government that proved it was possible. The investors sensed my unwillingness and placed a briefcase in my lap. I opened it and found stacks of neatly wrapped bills. It had to have been at least ten million dollars. I was informed that the briefcase was merely an incentive and if I was able to successfully create one of their creatures, then the payoff would be even larger.

I reluctantly agreed, still doubting my ability to do any such project. The investors all smiled, shook my hand, and then dropped me off at what would become my home and office. It was a little cabin in the middle of nowhere. As I entered the cabin I was astonished to find at least a 4000 square foot basement that had been totally converted into the most advanced chemical lab I had ever laid eyes on.

I worked day and night on the project, trying combinations of "simple" structured animals. After three weeks of work I had finally made a breakthrough. By chemically restructuring the DNA of a frog and rat I had produced a tadpole with hair. I was very pleased with the results, as were the investors. They informed me, however, that

such a animal wouldn't attract enough visitors. They told me that the creatures had to be larger and more unusual. Before they left, a white van pulled up to the cabin, and the driver began unloading cooler after cooler. The investors said that they had brought the DNA of certain animals and wanted them to be combined into one animal.

As I unpacked the coolers I found the labeled DNA very disturbing. There were five coolers in all, labeled with each different animal. There was a Bengal Tiger, an African Tree Frog, an American Fruit Bat, a centipede and a biohazard cooler labeled radon.

As I sat at my computer, trying to find possible matches to string all these animals together, I began to imagine what the creature would look like, but I wasn't able to find a suitable picture in my head. After two weeks I finally had found the necessary chains in the DNA to combine the four creatures into one. I assumed that the Radon was the substance that would best incubate the specimen during growth because the previous experiments by the government also used a toxic chemical to speed up the mutation process.

Once I combined the restructured DNA with the Radon, I placed the embryo with the new DNA into a reinforced steel cage, and sealed it with a clear plastic, developed by NASA for use in the space shuttles. The cage was built at the request of the investors by a former NASA engineer. I expected an incubation period of at least a month, which was the average gestation period of the four animals. Quite horrifically though, the creature became full grown in just six hours. It was the most revolting creature I had ever seen, and it's odor was almost as bad as it's appearance. I was quite intrigued, however, with the manner in which all the animals had combined into one. The head of the animal was a triangular shape with the chin coming to a point. It had two eyes on the top of it's head which I attributed to the frog DNA. It's ears were pointed and were placed on either side of the two frog eyes. Since the ears were quite hairy and pointed, I imagined that they were the result of the bat DNA. The mouth sat just above the chin and was filled with huge carnivorous teeth, much like a tiger's. The nose was one of the only features that couldn't be explained. It was positioned correctly on the head, but it was very similar to the snout of a pig. My only theory was that some of the DNA strands were contaminated with other animals. Strangely there was also a single eye, about the size of the mouth, centered on the forehead just above the nose. I imagined that this was the result of the toxic material. The head sat on top of a huge tiger

body that was supported by three pairs of legs. The multiple number of legs was the only evidence that the centipede DNA successfully combined with the others. The usual black tiger stripes were replaced with deep red stripes that seemed to encase the body. Even it's tail took on these unusual markings. This, I believed, was a combination of the normal tiger markings and the markings of the African Tree Frog. On it's back was a huge pair of deformed bat wings. This was far beyond anything I could have imagined.

After observing it for a while, I determined that it predominately took on the tiger's characteristics. It's walk was that of a predator, and the additional legs seemed to add to it's agility inside the cage. It's frog eyes searched desperately for insects, but continually failed at convincing it's tiger tongue to catch them. I was curious as to whether the batwings were functional or not, but I found their deformity far too severe to be able to function as wings of flight.

Once the investors arrived at my lab they were as disgusted by the creature as I was. They decided that such a creature would be far too repulsive to display, and asked that I terminate the creature, along with my other experiments, immediately. I understood their concerns, and frankly, was relieved with the prospects of once again enjoying a normal life. I couldn't, however, discern how I should go about killing this creature that just 8 hours ago had been nothing more than data on my computer. I determined that filling it's cage with lethal gas would be the easiest way to kill the animal while avoiding actual contact. The investors stood by as I allowed the toxic fumes to engulf the creature in the cage. It quickly fell to the floor. After fifteen minutes I began to clear the cage of it's fumes. As soon as the gas was cleared the creature darted to top of the cage and with one big swipe with it's arm, tore open the cage and flew out. My assumptions about the deformed wings had been wrong. The wings had just not had time to dry out, much like a butterfly's wings when it first emerges from it's cocoon.

The investors and I ran to a small lab in the back of the larger laboratory. We sealed the door shut and looked at each other with astonishment. I stared passed the investors, into the laboratory, in time to see the creature breakthrough the basement window and fly towards the forest.

Mr. Shrinton was the first to break the silence. He declared that the best way to handle the situation was to simply destroy any evidence that it ever happened. The other investors nodded in agreement and breathed sighs of relief. I, on the other hand, began to

realize what I had done. The surrounding eco-system would be destroyed in a matter of days if the creature were to be allowed to just kill freely. It's genetic make-up allowed for a diet of nearly anything; rodents, bugs, cows; anything that a tiger, centipede, frog or bat would eat, this creature would eat as well. Still, I was sworn to secrecy about any of the experiments and their results.

I regret to say that my cowardliness, coupled with the extra 50 million dollars given to me by the investors, has kept the truth from the world for over ten years now. Recently, though, I have read reports of similar creatures being seen in the surrounding forests. I fear that this creature may have somehow reproduced. If this is the case, then all people must be warned of it's capability. Unfortunately, I only have a few months to live due to the high doses of radiation I exposed myself to during the experiments. Please inform the public of this creature. They deserve to know. I can't keep this a secret anymore.