

## Aping around at the Zoo

A gorilla who had just arrived from Africa was talking to a chimpanzee in flawless English. Charlie the Chimpanzee was saying:

“I hope you don't mind me asking, but what is the secret of your gorgeous shiny coat? I've been watching it glisten in the light all day.”

Gigi the Gorilla would have blushed if she could,

“Perhaps it is because I eat a lot of fruits and greens, rich in iron and all essential vitamins?”

Charlie said, “Impossible! You must eat some meat!”

Gigi replied, “No, it's a common misconception, I prefer to eat bamboo shoots, they are delicious. It's also very sustainable because it grows back so quickly; some species grown 36 inches in 24 hours.”

Healthy eating was Gigi's favourite subject.

"If you don't mind me mentioning, I have seen you eating over the last few days, there isn't much else to do here, really, and I have noticed your energy levels fluctuate wildly because you tend to binge on heavy meals."

Charlie shrugged, "But all of us get sleepy after meals."

"I'm always energised after I eat," said Gigi.

“I have noticed that,” Charlie said, thoughtfully. “Are you saying you look and feel like this because you eat plants, fruits and vegetables? What are you? Some kind of trendy fruitarian or vegan? I hope you don't mind if I seem sceptical. Where would I get my protein?”

Gigi the Gorilla wasn't used to boasting about her diet, but she could see that if she summoned the courage to speak up now, she could help her new friend change his habits for the better.

“These muscles I have are the result of all the stems and shoots I eat. I do have cousins in other species who like eating termites, but I don't think that is an ethical practice, I would never tear open someone's nest to eat their larvae.”

“You're a silverback aren't you? Just how strong are you?”

“I think I can lift around 2,000 kg, which is the same weight that thirty humans could lift. But enough about me, tell me about this place.”

Charlie the Chimpanzee said, “Of course, you’re a newcomer here! You fit right in! How did you integrate so quickly?”

“As a newcomer, I want to learn as much as I can about my new home. I am looking forward to all the new tastes and experiences I will encounter. I hear the gorillas here even eat pumpkin!”

Charlie was amazed at her optimism.

“You have such a positive attitude! You will soon be part of our community! Hey did you read the Zoo blog? The alpha male here, Kukumba, escaped the enclosure in 2016, and drank five litres of undiluted blackcurrant juice before he was returned to his den. It was all over the Guardian and the BBC!”

1. What is your diet? Do you reflect on what you eat? Are you getting enough minerals?
2. What can you do to change your diet or eat healthier food?
3. What is a misconception?
4. To learn more about the funny things gorillas get up to in London:  
<https://www.zsl.org/blogs>

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