

Taunting the Tiger

by Daniel Curzon

a beast fable

I was not in the best of moods — true. I was downright resentful — you're right. I was flicking my long tail and pretending not to care that I was locked up in a goddamned zoo for stupid human beings to gawk at. Yes, my fur is beautifully striped and I have a head for which the word “magnificent” was created. Still, who wants to be stared at and heckled every day of your life?! The night before I'd even overheard the commandants of my prison talking among themselves, saying they were going to get me knocked up by another Siberian tiger from some other freakin' zoo. Did they ask me? NO! So I was even more agitated than *usual*. BFD. I'm a tiger, for god's sake.

So when these three thuggy punks came into the Big Cat House and started with their macho crap, no, I was not about to take it. They were wearing black hooded sweatshirts and baggy tan pants with the top of their underwear showing. They slapped at each other, thinking they were so “cool.” At least two of them were drunk. Oh, and they were “minorities.” Whoopee! Like that somehow excuses them. “Poor me. I'm a minority, so I have a right to give everybody, including locked-up animals, a hard time.” What a bunch of self-serving, whiny SHIT!

Listen, I was used to people calling out to me: “Here, kitty, kitty!” and “Me-Oww.” All the usual human “fun,” about as original as a herd of zebra! They'd even bring in these van loads of “Disabled” losers and parade them around in front of me as if I'm supposed to be thrilled they got out of their stupid houses to bother me. They'd even hold up some of the little ones and let them hiss at me. Was that supposed to be a joke? Where I come from “disabled” means lunch.

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What I'm saying is that I can take a joke as well as the next tiger. But you have to draw the line somewhere. Well, I drew it — on Christmas Day. Now I don't celebrate the holiday myself, but these zoo “patrons” do— did. Isn't it about some magic baby and peace on earth and good will? Oh, that's right, it's good will toward *MEN*. Okay, I can respect favoring your own species over other ones. Why not? You think antelope don't look out for their own? We tigers are pretty much loners, but I can fit in with lions in a Las Vegas night club act if pressed.

But after a lady and her two babies departed, two of the three punks got out their goddamned slingshots, and I confess I was more than a little pissed. I think my ears even twitched and my paws itched. I certainly strode back and forth in my “enclosure,” giving them the greasy eyeball. They kept strutting up to the far side of the waterless moat between us and mocking my snarl. Usually a snarl is enough to make people pause, but these guys, I guess, felt protected and started shooting stones and god know what else with their slingshots. I'm not very good with a slingshot or I might have taken them on.

“Hey, pussy!” the oldest one shouted as he let fly a ball bearing that hit my hind flank. When he scored the hit, he jumped for joy like a hyena getting away with somebody else's kill. The punk did a high-five with his buddy, who shot a rock at me too — only this guy missed. He hurriedly shot off another rock because he was being taunted by the older one for being a lousy shot. This time the rock caught me in the butt. Yeah, it stung. What do you think I'm made of — stone?

I noticed that the youngest one of the three punks, who was maybe seventeen or so, looked pretty sheepish, even embarrassed. I caught his eye a couple of times. He seemed to want to make his “buddies” stop, but they kept making fun of him because he wasn't

throwing or shooting anything at me. The most common word they used was “faggot.” I distinctly heard the oldest one say, “You can't go out with us anymore! I don't give a fuck — or did he say “fig”? — if your mother asks us a million times to help you grow up!” The youngest kid then threw a rock at me, but it landed in the moat. Yeah, right, I was all broke about his failed ‘rite of passage’.

I was headed back inside my den since these creeps just wouldn't stop and thought they were the most hilarious creatures on the face of the earth, and I was afraid, to be honest, that one of their missiles might hit me in the eye. That's when I noticed what I'd suspected for some time. The wall of the enclosure wasn't as high as everybody seemed to think. In fact, it was a good meter shorter. More than once I had thought about trying to scale it. Now seemed an even better time.

One of the “buddies” was dangling his legs over the wall on his side, happy as a chimp on fermented berries. Boy, you should have seen the look on his face when I leapt up and grabbed his leg and used it to propel myself right up his body and out of my prison cell. He fell over backwards and starting whimpering. I was about to run out the nearby exit, but this was too good an opportunity to miss. I ran back and got that ugly sucker by his arm and was going for the throat when the youngest punk rushed over and yelled at me to leave his “buddy” alone. I confess it startled me, and I went all red in the head and left the punk on the ground and went for the standing one. He was slighter than the other two and barely had to time to cry out before I pulled him to the ground in front of the café and slashed his throat open. He was dead before he could close his eyes. He was the best of the bunch, I suppose, but that wasn't saying much.

It was starting to get dark by this time, but luckily I saw the other two punks running away down a path. They hadn't bothered to try to stop me gnawing on their so-called friend even though it was

his distraction of me that had saved their lives. I caught up to those chickenshit fuckheads in no time and got one of them down and was going to finish the job when I noticed some flashlights — big ones — shining in my eyes. The figures looked like cops, all scared and waving these objects all over the place. I was surprised they didn't shoot each other. I knew in my gut that this was not going to end well for me. But I took another chomp out of the asswipe on the ground. Then I felt some sharp pains in my body, maybe in my brain, and then everything went, as they say, dark.

Do I have any regrets? Sure. That I'm not still on earth in my prison? Give me a break! After all, I'm in Tiger Heaven now, and I'm getting my seventy-two male virgins any time now for killing my enemies. Oh, I do have one regret — that I didn't take more assholes with me when I died. Maybe in my next life.

The End

