

# No Lions or Tigers, Thank Goodness

*by niceguyted*

On my hike last weekend I bumped into a bear. I was moving pretty quickly and didn't see him. He turned around and shoved me. "Watch where you're going, dickbag," he said. I thought it was a bit weird that a bear was talking to me, but I excused myself politely and, stepping aside, attempted to pass him on the trail. He stood up, stepped in front of me and called me some unmentionable names, not letting me pass, despite my apologies.

Then he put his paws on my chest and shoved me again and I thought that this was just plain uncalled for, so I drew my knife. The big one. A couple of coyotes were circling behind the bear in a semi-circle, yapping encouragement to him. "Fuck 'im up, the little tramp!" "Fucken 'ikers, ai can't stand 'em. Let's eat 'is bones."

Strange that they'd be speaking Cockney — and a drunken version at that — I thought in the back of my mind, but kept my eyes on the bear and his overlong fingernails. Claws, I guess.

I spread my legs a bit, with my right foot just a bit behind the left, and pointed my forehead — my third eye chakra — at the bear. "Let me pass," I said steadily. "It was an honest mistake and I've no wish to fight you." My left hand was loose and my right gripped the handle of my knife, its point toward the ground.

Wrong thing to say to a bear — don't ever be the first one to mention a fight. Especially not —

"Fight! We've got a fight!" shouted the referee off to my right.

Referee? Seriously?

"Really?" I said. "A referee? In the woods?"

"Yup," said the fucker, "it's on like Donkey Kong; you just fucked with the wrong bear on the wrong trail, and I'm the one who's going to make sure this is a fair fight," continued the referee, "so drop the knife."

Without taking my eyes off the bear, I turned my head toward the referee, then quickly flicked my eyes across its countenance. A fucken panda bear.

Of course.

"I'll do no such thing," I said. "Look at the size of him. And besides, I've admitted my wrong and already begged his pardon. He's been nothing but rude from the get-go and I just want to get by."

At this point, the git coyotes jumped me from behind. One grabbed my left shoulder with his mouth and the other my right wrist. Instead of fighting it, I used their momentum, allowing the inertia to bring me down to my right knee (which landed sharply on my trekking pole — should've dropped those). I crossed my right hand across my chest, aiming the point of my knife just above my shoulder, and let the weight of me and my pack fall as hard as possible on the ribs of the coyote latched onto my right wrist.

The point of my knife missed the coyote on my left shoulder, but it gave him enough of a fright that he let go of me, and so did the one on my right wrist. I heard a couple of that one's ribs snap as I landed atop him, the one on my left now standing on me. I lunged at him and buried my knife in his bony chest, just to the left of his sternum. He jumped back off the knife with a yelp and ran the fuck away. I doubt he made it. The other one sure didn't, because I reversed my grip on the knife and probably stabbed him fifteen times before I got some blood in my eye and jerked back.

"Whoa," said the bear with an astonished look. "You're gonna fucken get it now, sissy-boy."

And he came at me, while I was sitting on my ass, breathing hard and bleeding in two places.

I glanced over at the referee, but he was messing around with his iPad.

I scrambled back a bit and found my feet after untangling them from my trekking poles. Really should have dropped those when this all started. The bear lunged at me with his teeth and I just barely dodged to the left to avoid getting something bitten off. He

probably went another ten yards behind me before skidding to a halt, at which point, I was already high-tailing it down the trail, running as if my life depended upon it (which it did).

Then the goddamned panda referee came out of nowhere and shoulder blocked me into a big-ass pile of rocks along the trail.

At least, it seemed like a pile of rocks.

The pile shuddered and growled. "Watch what you're doing, fuckhead!" it said in the deepest and gratey-est voice I've ever heard. I looked up and yeah, it was a fucken dragon, pissed off with a forked tongue and smoke coming out of its nostrils and everything.

"Shit." I said.

Which was the wrong thing to say — dragons don't like profanity, unless it's them using it (they think they've got some sort of verbal monopoly on cuss words).

"*What* did you say?" the dragon rumbled. I stammered something incoherent as the dragon's eyes flicked over my shoulder at the two bears. "Yo! Rufus! James! Que pasa, fuckheads?"

I turned around and the bears bowed politely. "Just taking care of some business, Nic," they said.

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So yeah, Saint Peter: that's how I got here. Pretty fucked up, don't ya think? Anyway, I'll just be on my way now — I've got to get to work on Monday and I'm supposed to hike with Heather and Tom tomorrow. So yeah, the halo and wings are nice and all, but you can have them back: I just bought these hiking boots and they've been doing me just fine so far. No, I don't think I'll be back anytime soon — most of my friends have appointments downstairs anyway. Peace out, bruvva.

