

## Tales of the Truly Grotesque – Book 2: Hook, Lion, and Stinker

### PROLOGUE – The Chicken King of the Jungle

Many moons ago, in a small town outside of Guadalajara<sup>1</sup>, Mexico, a grotesquely overweight man twisted his black, walrus moustache until fat beads of sweat dripped out of it. He used the salty liquid to try to plaster his last, few remaining strands of greasy hair onto his pock-marked forehead. This man, born Juan Delacruz Dejavu Delasoul<sup>2</sup>, but known to the world as JD-Cubed, owner/ringmaster of JD-Cubed's Circus Loco<sup>3</sup>, was always perspiring, even in the winter. However, at this moment, JD-Cubed had a good reason to sweat; his future had just been derailed.

Yes, JD-Cubed's string of seventeen vibrantly painted<sup>4</sup> circus train cars which held the entire contents of his Circus Loco had just been knocked off-track. The train had been chugging along peacefully toward Guadalajara when it unexpectedly slammed into a stalled Volkswagen Beetle on the train tracks. Painted in day-glo orange and green, the Beetle was filled with a flock of feral<sup>5</sup> circus clowns who

---

1 Pronounced by Americans as "Gwada-la-hair-a," although, many of the people in Guadalajara have absolutely no hair-a and it really should be called Guadala-jara-and-balda. In other words, in Spanish and Mexican, the "J" is pronounced like an "H," and is never silent, although sometimes it is pretty quiet, especially on week-nights in the winter.

2 Yes, this is his real name. In fact, it is a shortened version of his real name which is really so long that it would take the whole book to write and then, there would be no room left for the story. So, let's just be satisfied with this abridged version of his name. *Muchas gracias*

3 Loco means crazy in Spanish and Mexican and let me tell you, JD's circus was totally crazy. Totally. So, this was not false advertising, by any means.

4 In what else, but day-glo circus pink and purple.

5 This is a fancy word for wild, untamed and usually, uncouth.

claimed to be migrating south for the winter<sup>6</sup>. At the moment of impact, seventy-seven clowns were thrown out of the compact car and sent flying through the air. Like a punctured balloon, the car belched out a string of clowns who were hurled across the sky.

The crash site was a sickening spectacle. All the dead desert grass and prickly cactus in the area were splattered with thick, white clown make-up and dark red blood. For years to come, burnt pieces of large floppy shoes and shards of red nose-bulbs were found in the dry sand within a 7-mile radius of the accident site.

The inhabitants of the lead circus train car did not fare much better than the clowns. They too were tossed, bumped and hurled into the air as the train smashed into the VW Beetle, jumped off the tracks and landed in a nearby, old chicken coop. The largest and most ferocious of the lead train car's inhabitants, Shakira the Talking Lion, happened to be breast-feeding her liger (half lion/half tiger) quintuplets<sup>7</sup> at the moment of impact.

Shakira had recently given birth to five baby ligers as a result of the fact that last summer, train car #2 had a broken wheel. Thus, its largest and most ferocious inhabitant, Tremendoso the Talking Tiger, was temporarily housed with Shakira in the lead car. By the end of that summer, JD had sensed there was something going on between Tremendoso and Shakira, so he sold Tremendoso off to a Costa Rican circus. Yet by then, the damage had been done. Shakira

---

<sup>6</sup> Most likely, they were driving to the Gulf of Mexico to board a ship and become low-down, dirty feral circus clown pirates.

<sup>7</sup> They were actually a five-pack of cubs, but quintuplets sounds much more dramatic.

was already madly in love with the smooth-talking Tremendoso<sup>8</sup> and only a few weeks after Tremendoso had been shipped off, Shakira was clearly pregnant with a brood of ligers.

For those who have never seen a "LIGER" before, they are big cats with characteristics of both breeds. These creatures most definitely do exist and are not just a fictional figment of some deranged professor's imagination. They do not naturally occur in the wild since lions and tigers are top-of-the-food-chain predators who do not usually share territory<sup>9</sup>.

Yet, ligers can be found all over the world in big cat animal rescue shelters, zoos, circuses and the family entertainment mecca -- Las Vegas, Nevada<sup>10</sup>. It is in these locales that lions and tigers have come to cohabitate<sup>11</sup> in captivity and thus, baby ligers have been produced. Unfortunately, if a baby liger were ever released from captivity into the wild, there is a good chance that neither lions nor tigers would accept them. So, essentially, ligers are modern freaks, the dispossessed others, the unwanted outcasts of the big cat world.

Now please note, just before the big collision, Shakira's baby ligers were not considering returning to the wild; they were obsessing over milk. (More specifically, the sweet creamy fluid that poured forth out of their mother's mammary glands.) Yes, four of the five quintuplets were sucking hard and fast onto a nipple with their tiny

---

<sup>8</sup> Tremendoso was such a good talker that he was able to sweet-talk Shakira into falling in love with him even though she had always vowed never to love a male, especially a male tiger.

<sup>9</sup> Thus, they don't ever have the opportunity to bump into each other and fall in love

<sup>10</sup> In fact, since getting a marriage license is so easy in Vegas, that is where most lions and tigers go if they fall in love and want to have a non-contested, inter-species marriage

<sup>11</sup> See, this is a good precedent for those of us with differences learning to get along and live together in harmony

needle-like<sup>12</sup> teeth as their train car flew off-track. In fact, since they were sucking so hard and fast, upon impact, they did not get thrown out into the open, but they remained safely attached to their mother and thus, safely ensconced inside their train car.

However, the fifth newborn cub, a little male with black chocolate-chip cookie-shaped markings<sup>13</sup> on his golden fur, had already ingested so much milk that he had unattached himself from a nipple, and he was now busily burping and ridding himself of excess gas. As a result, instead of finding purchase<sup>14</sup> on a nipple like his brothers and sisters, he flew right out of the train car and into the old chicken coop.

Fortunately for this gassy, young, male liger cub, he did not crash into the hard, dry earth of the chicken farm or even into a soft pile of chicken manure. Instead, he landed on top of the soft, mossy surface of a warm chicken nest and right below the buttocks of an aging, unwed chicken yearning for a child of her own<sup>15</sup>. In fact, this mother hen was so desperate for a child of her own that having a 10-pound furry feline cub under her buttocks did not annoy her; instead,

---

12 It's true. If you ever meet a baby liger and you let them bite your face, you will surely attest to the needle-like qualities of liger cub's teeth.

13 Some ligers have stripes like tigers, others have pure gold fur like lions, but this young liger was the only one in the world to have dark chocolate-chip cookie-shaped markings all over his body.

14 This word sounds like it has something to do with buying something, which it does, but it also has to do with getting good leverage which keeps one from slipping off a nipple and losing one's lunch.

15 Sure, she tried rapid dating, internet dating, even singles night at the eggery, but she just couldn't seem to find a good rooster

it thrilled<sup>16</sup> her, filling her with a warm, fuzzy maternal feeling of goodwill toward all of God's creatures

Meanwhile, a groggy, but unhurt JD-Cubed emerged from the third train car. Fortunately for JD and the other members of his Circus Loco, the VW Beetle, the feral circus clowns and the lead train car had sustained the most damage and all sixteen of the other train cars seemed to be relatively unharmed.

JD-Cubed gathered his crew and led them all over to the lead car which had punctured the chicken coop and was now sprawled out on its side. A nervous JD was praying that Shakira and her cubs had survived. When he was finally able to peek through a window and view the inside of the car, he was relieved to see that Shakira and her little ligers appeared to be unharmed.

However, in his excitement, JD-Cubed overlooked an important fact. Quintuplets are usually comprised of five youngsters not four. Yes, one of Shakira's cubs was missing<sup>17</sup> and even though Shakira the Talking Lion did have the verbal ability to inform JD about this, she never did.

After several hours, JD, his entire crew, four gorillas and two elephants succeeded in tugging the lead train car back onto the track and re-attaching it to the other sixteen cars. As soon as all the train cars were back on track, they took off and chugged on to their next

---

<sup>16</sup> You would have to be an aging unwed mother to truly understand.

<sup>17</sup> To JD-Cubed's credit, it is very hard to notice a missing liger cub when it is hidden under the buttocks of a nesting chicken.

performance venue. Life in Circus Loco went on as usual, and Shakira never once mentioned her missing cub to anyone<sup>18</sup>.

Meanwhile, inside the chicken coop, the newborn male liger enjoyed life under the warm buttocks of the unwed chicken. As the weeks passed, the young male liger grew too big to remain stuck under a pair of Mexican chicken buns. He also grew thirsty for sweet, creamy, mammalian mother's milk and went in search of a viable nipple to suckle. But alas, every nipple the young cub attempted to suckle was attached to a creature who did not desire to feel the sharp bite of his needle-like teeth. Thus, the cub remained nipple-less<sup>19</sup>.

Feeling rejected, the young cub gave up and resolved to only eat chicken feed just like all the other baby chicks he lived with on Farmer Pedro's Certified Organic Farm. The chicken feed wasn't as tasty as mother's milk, but it did provide the cub with the needed sustenance<sup>20</sup> for him to quickly grow big and strong.

As the months passed, the young liger never once thought of himself as anything other than a chicken. A huge, mutant-looking, freakish, furry-butted chicken with chocolate-chip cookie shaped markings, but still, a chicken never the less. All day long, he would cluck and cackle, "Ricka-ricka-ricka."

---

<sup>18</sup> The point is very clear here. Even though she was a talking lion, Shakira chose to keep her lips sealed. True, she could have alerted the authorities. The fact that she never did has led her son to believe that she never really loved him, or didn't love him as much as his four brothers and sisters. Either way, he never really got over this loss and as a result, still is in therapy and has abandonment issues to this day.

<sup>19</sup> Not to be confused with action figures who have no nipples, such as Nico Nipple-less. "Nipple-less" here means to have nothing to suckle.

<sup>20</sup> Sustenance is food that doesn't taste good, but nourishes you never the less. So, if you go to an all-you-can-eat buffet, avoid the sustenance and go straight to the ice cream sundae bar.

Yet, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't ever really cluck right. And he snored so loud, he wasn't allowed to sleep in the coop. And of course, he ate so much chicken feed that he was the single most unpopular chicken in the whole coop.

In fact, over one long holiday weekend<sup>21</sup>, he even tried sitting on a nest and laying eggs, just like his mother had for so many years. The young liger was certain that if he could just produce an egg or two, then he might be better liked by the other chickens. But alas, no eggs ever poured out of his bottom

Or if he could fly, then, yes, the other chicks and hens might not laugh at him so much. But every time he tried to fly, he always fell on his wet black snout and got dirt in his nostrils that made him sneeze and sometimes even cough up this brownish-yellow gooey stuff.

And so that's how things went for the next year. The young liger kept growing bigger and bigger and yet, the whole time, he kept feeling more and more sad, lonely and ridiculous. All the other chicks, the farmyard animals and even Farmer Pedro made fun of him constantly. The only thing that kept the young liger going was that he had a loving chicken mother who was always kind and supportive of him.

By the following summer, the young liger was now over 200 pounds<sup>22</sup>, but still, the others picked on him. There was a group of teenage roosters and chickens who spent their entire lives devising

---

<sup>21</sup> It was Labor Day weekend and as an experiment, he vowed to go into labor all weekend and produce at least one yummy egg by Monday night.

<sup>22</sup> See, even a steady diet of chicken feed can be nutritious.

more and more devious tricks to play on him<sup>23</sup>. This made the liger angry, and every time he got angry, a weird thing happened inside of him. His stomach would growl loudly, saliva would pour down his sharp ivory fangs, and he would feel this deep, primeval hunger. A blood-lust would rise inside of him and he would feel deeply attracted to the hens and roosters that he had grown up with. Not attracted like he wanted to marry them, but attracted like he wanted to bite onto their necks, munch on their flesh and then, when he was through, use their small, hollow bones as toothpicks. This blood-thirst upset the liger so much that he decided to run away before he lost his mind and did something he might regret<sup>24</sup>.

So, the year-old liger kissed his loving chicken mother good-bye and marched out of the farm. His chicken mother cried and cackled loudly as she watched him go, but he refused to look back over his shoulder at her or even shed a tear, though he really wanted to bawl like a baby.

For days, the liger wandered around the mountains of Mexico. He wasn't exactly sure what he was searching for, but he was convinced, he would know it when he found it

Eventually, he stumbled upon an old poster for JD-Cubed's Circus Loco that was nailed to a scrub oak tree. He ripped the poster down and stared at it. There was something about the poster that mesmerized him. He couldn't stop looking at it. Somehow, deep inside,

---

23 Such as fitting him against the infamous Chinatown Chicken in Tic-Tac-Toe. And everybody knows, (that is, except for baby ligers) that nobody, and I mean, nobody, ever beats the Chinatown chicken in tic-tac-toe.

24 Like devouring one of his cousins in a single bite

he felt like this poster might just be the key to what he had been looking for.

He couldn't take his eyes off the poster's central image -- a photo of Shakira the Talking Lion. The young liger didn't know that Shakira was his real mother. He only knew that he was transfixed by the power and beauty of this gorgeous lioness.

Finally, the young liger rolled up the poster and stuck it under the strap of his fanny pack<sup>25</sup>. He was hot. He was thirsty and he needed to find a body of water to quell<sup>26</sup> his thirst. As he traipsed through the underbrush, he spotted a deep, still blue lake in a valley only a few hundred yards away. He ran down the mountain to the lake and bent over to take a drink. As he did, he saw his reflection in the lake for the first time in his life, and he was stunned by it.

He didn't look at all like the other chickens that he had grown up with in his coop. At first, he thought he was repulsive. Instead of a cute little beak, he had a big furry snout with wet black nose. And instead of a smooth feathery head, he had awful, furry golden skin with chocolate-chip cookie markings, big furry ears and the beginning of a big, hairy mane.

He was a truly grotesque chicken, a freak of nature, a monstrous, misshapen mistake. He was sure no one could ever love him, and he could never find a home. He collapsed onto his butt and cried a river of tears. As the tears flowed, he felt something flat and hard jutting into his rear end. The poster of Shakira the Talking Lion

---

<sup>25</sup> It is a commonly known fact that when ligers go on long journeys in search of themselves, they wear leather fanny packs across their midsections.

<sup>26</sup> To quell is similar to quenching, but not as final as quashing.

was poking into this backside. He pulled the poster out from his fanny pack, unrolled it and stared at the picture of Shakira the Talking Lion once again.

Shakira did not look at all like a freak. She looked like a proud, strong, magnificent creature and the young liger thought that when he saw himself in the water, he, well, he kinda looked a little bit like her. The young liger kept staring back and forth - at his image in the lake and then, at the image of Shakira on the poster.

Finally, he knew what he had to do. He grew certain. He had to find Shakira the Talking Lion and learn why he looked more like her than like any chicken, hen or rooster he had ever seen.

As he thought more and more about this strange resemblance, a powerful wave of air filled his midsection. The air traveled through his throat and reached the back of his mouth where it escaped into the air, echoing all the way across the valley floor, "RRRRROOOOOOAAAAARRRR!!!"

He wasn't a freaking grotesque, monstrous chicken. He was a liger, the most ferocious predator to prowl the jungle-like faux environments of zoos and big cat rescue centers around the globe! His days of eating chicken feed were over. He was no nature-loving, tree-hugging vegetarian chick<sup>27</sup>. He was a carnivore. He yearned for the thrill of a kill, to sink his sharp fangs into fresh meat, to taste warm blood and to swallow chunks of raw flesh. Yes, it was time to stop

---

<sup>27</sup> Actually, many chickens are not vegetarians and are fed the putrid, rotting, meaty remains of a vast area of dead farm animals, but the chickens on Farmer Pedro's Certified Organic farm were all strict vegetarians.

being a certified organic chicken and start killing and eating something or someone.

He roared once again for good luck and stalked off into the Mexican forest in search of a bloody good dinner and the elusive, infamous Circus Loco