

Armed and Dangerous



If ever the phrase “armed and dangerous” applied to a chimpanzee, it was now, today, a quarter to nine in the morning outside the entrance to the summer home of the Flederer Family Circus in Chipper, Wyoming, for Mr. Jinks was packing a Browning hi-power semi-automatic “Rambo” and he didn’t have skeet shooting on his mind. Oh, Mr. Jinks hadn’t really been mistreated there. In fact, he had his own dressing room, personal masseuse and a sous chef named Flossie whom he really liked. No, his gripe was with *Mrs.* Jinks – or rather, the absence of her. He’d been promised a mate two long years ago. Why, Dr. Beezer had even arranged with Chimp World in République démocratique du Congo to trade a juvenile *Pan troglodytes vellerosus* hottie for the circus’s animatronic Komodo dragon (with optional fire-breathing module). But then the circus’s accountant, the miserly Mr. Mazer, factored in a raft of dubious additional expenses that upkeep of a female chimp entailed – such as a banana pastry-cook and grooming physiotherapy – and concluded that the Flederers couldn’t afford another ape on their payroll. Perhaps with a steady growth in circus attendance and marketing of Flederer brand products, the deal could be reconsidered in three years. Or four, more likely. *Four years?! That was like a bleedin’ eternity* in chimpdom, and Mr. Jinks would not stand for it. More to the point, Mr. Jinks *and Rambo* wouldn’t stand for it. Which is why they both now stood by the circus gate anticipating the arrival of Mr. Mazer’s Mazda. At precisely eight-fifty, the rusted-out rattletrap rounded the corner and wheezed down Main Street, and a scowling Mr. Jinks aimed Rambo at the driver’s side windshield. But before he could squeeze the trigger, Mazer’s parsimony towards car maintenance altered the story’s dénouement. Instead of paying to have the car’s oil changed, he sent the thirty bucks to a Nigerian minister in hopes of claiming half of \$85 million stashed in a bank in Oakland. Desperate for lubricant, the car exploded, hurling its driver into the air on a trajectory that landed him in the shark tank one unlucky minute before feeding time. On the plus side, the assistant accountant was a chimpanophile, who, upon assuming his late predecessor’s position, immediately consummated the dragon-troglodyte trade. Mr. Jinks was happy as a clam – that is, until the Missus began to get under his skin. But that’s another story.