

THE PIGEON WAGES WAR

by

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Chapter 1

The pigeon life is not a great one. One minute, you're waltzing around the warm streets of New York City, the next, you're being tossed around in a whirlwind as cars storm past you at record speeds. And everyone is yelling. What happened to us pigeons? We used to be respected, honored by those around us. I come from a family of messengers, so I've always had a legacy to compete with. But it seems like the opportunities for pigeons have shrunk in recent years. And on top of that, growing dangers have threatened pigeon populations like never before. Lack of habitat, harsher climates, crackheads. They all pose serious threats to us pigeons.

Now, I was thinking about all our growing dangers as I stood peacefully on a New York City sidewalk, but for some reason, in my mental rant about what threatened us pigeons, I had forgotten something very important. I had forgotten our biggest threat, worse than anything else in existence, and I realized this as I noticed one of them walking up the sidewalk. Charging towards me.

The toddler. With every step it took, the ground shook beneath me. It would howl with horrific, high-pitched laughter. Its legs were fatter than anything I had ever seen, and like a disfigured Frankenstein it struggled to lift them with every step it took. The toddler was wearing a horrifying polka-dotted bib around its neck, stained with some bizarre

reddish fluid—the blood of a victim, perhaps. And attached to that bib, some kind of plastic apparatus that the toddler would put in its mouth, suck on, then remove, letting out another horrific laugh.

This toddler was worse than any other I had ever seen. And as it charged towards me, I realized one, deadly thing. This toddler was out for blood.

I didn't even have time to flee. It was too quick to attack. The toddler tried to kick me twice, and I thought I was getting out easy. But then it lifted its fat leg. And as its foot rose, my heart sunk. For in lifting its fat leg, it was initiating an infamous blow denominated the *all-killing bird-shredding world-ending bonk*. Toddlers frequently used the *all-killing bird-shredding world-ending bonk* to obliterate their victims, and using the move, toddlers have viciously bonked thousands of pigeons. If you talk to a pigeon, odds are, they've got at least one relative who died to the *all-killing bird-shredding world-ending bonk*. Mine was cousin Archie. Now we call him Bonked Archie.

I continued thinking about Bonked Archie for a bit, until I remembered that I was currently being attacked by a toddler, and I was doing nothing more than blankly staring at the fat foot rocketing down towards me. Thankfully, I hadn't realized this too late; I still had time to escape. So I spread my wings, tensed my back, and clenched my buttocks. I sprang away just as the toddler's fat foot impacted the ground, sending shockwaves down to the earth's core. I had

flown away. I had escaped.

But, something was wrong. Emotionally, for me. As I flew away, I felt guilt like never before. I was letting my family down, just running away from a fight. My family wouldn't run away. They wouldn't hide in fear. They would stand their ground, even if it killed them. Why couldn't I do that?

I then had an epiphany. Somehow, I was going to find a way to fight back. Destroy the toddlers. Defeat the creatures that have wreaked havoc on us for centuries. Show them that we pigeons aren't to be messed with.

My name is Larry. And I have had enough. Larry the pigeon has had enough.

Chapter 2

Now, the practicalities of a pigeon learning to fight is a topic of great conversation. But I frankly didn't care. I knew I was going to learn to fight. But I didn't know how. So, I spent weeks contemplating, I searched all over for answers, I even smoldered out a couple windows in thought. But I couldn't find anything.

At one point, I was so desperate that I even tried to ask a human for help. Of course, they didn't understand me, and proceeded to punt me halfway down the block. And as my head smacked into a concrete wall, my spirit (and IQ) sunk ever more.

I couldn't give up, though. My family would never. The brave messengers they were, they would fight through ice and fire to get what they wanted. And I would do no different. I had to honor their legacy, make them proud.

So, I opened my wings, and flew around the city. I flew past cars, trains, and cemeteries. I flew down every alley, street, and subway. And as I flew over the Hudson river, something caught my eye. I was curious as to what it was. So I flew in closer. And I realized I had finally found my place to learn.

I had come across Benny's Dojo, a karate clinic under a bridge. Most of the clients there were homeless; they couldn't afford normal wood, so they just karate chopped their cardboard signs instead. But it didn't matter to me, as

long as I could learn to fight, the clinic fit for me. But, not to say I fit in. During classes I felt more out of place than a mankini at a funeral. But I didn't let it get to my head, the negative thoughts, the feelings of inferiority, the strange looks of the homeless guys as they watched a pigeon do a roundhouse kick, I didn't let it get to my head.

Initially, I was doing fine in the class. But, things just slowed, and I got frustrated. I started going home and having fits of anger. I threw a chair against the wall. I punched my mirror so hard it shattered. I began coming back to classes stressed, and more easily frustrated when things didn't go my way. And Benny, my teacher (*Benny's* dojo, remember?), noticed my anger. During one of our classes, I saw him watching me. But there was more to his look than sight. His eyes stared into my pigeon soul, and delivered his message without words. We needed to talk.

As the sun set that evening, me and master Benny walked along the Hudson river shoreline. It had rained just an hour before, so the shore was really muddy and slippery.

"You know, I've never had a pigeon as a student before," Benny said.

"coo," I said.

"But you're a student like no other. You've exceeded my expectations greatly. You've chopped more cardboard signs than I've ever seen." He glanced over, looking me directly in the eyes.

"You deserve to know the true nature—OOUEAH" he dropped

2 feet into the ground, his leg stuck in some deep Hudson shoreline mud.

"Fuck. FUCK. These were my good shoes," he said, shaking his leg wildly.

"Well, my only shoes, actually." He continued trying to free his foot of the mud's knee-deep grip. His leg didn't budge at all.

"Help me!" He said.

I could not. I was a pigeon.

"Damn it," he said. He held his breath, and heaved his foot upwards. It shot out of the mud, and he slingshotted backwards, his back splatting on the shore. He got up, half covered in mud. But, brushing himself off, he took a few deep breaths, and continued speaking.

"What I was going to say, is that you deserve to know the true nature of kung-fu. How it really works. What it really means."

He took a deep breath, bent down, and picked up something from the beach.

"Now, you see this condom?" He asked.

I nodded.

"Most people just see this as a condom. But for me, it's not just a condom. It's a used condom. It's got experience. Spirit. Charm. And it's broken at the tip."

I was slightly confused.

"You see, this condom here, has achieved its destiny. It has done what it has needed to do. And in doing so, it broke.

Just like kung-fu."

I was really confused.

"That concept of breaking, that's what kung-fu is about. Because kung-fu will break you. But it's just part of the journey. For you cannot thrive, before you have broken. Like this condom."

I understood. Not why he needed to use a condom, next to it there was a rose, a cracked mirror, even a diamond, all of which I think could've made for way better metaphors. But nonetheless, I understood what he meant. I felt rejuvenated, inspired, and a little muddy. So I thanked master Benny, flew away, and cleaned myself off in some old woman's bird bath.

Returning to class, I was suddenly finding success. Master Benny's words had worked, and he had shown me the piece I was missing. I started learning so many moves, like:

- the *himalaiako txuleta* (translation: Himalayan chop),
- the *zopa sukaldea* (translation: soup kitchen),
- the *ez itzuli* (translation: fat Jesus),
- the *elikagai osoak* (translation: whole foods),

And last but not least,

- the *hemen* (translation: judgmental dentist wearing pink gloves and star-framed glasses).

I felt whole. I felt ready. To return to the monster. To defeat it, once and for all.

Chapter 3

I returned to the site of the battle. 57th street, in front of the 444 building, ready to fight the toddler again. I was ready. Muscles tense, heart beating, tongue resting on the roof of my mouth, I was ready to fight.

I looked around.

For god's sake, where's the toddler? I'm ready!

Come at me!

Attack me!

Nothing. The street was emptier than a 50-year-old lift operator. I understood. The toddler was trying to play with my head, letting my hope die before it attacked. But I would not let its mind games get to me, I would sit patiently. So I sat, waiting on the sidewalk until the toddler returned.

I did get a bit bored, so I pooped on some windshields to pass the time. That kept me busy for a while, but once I ran out of cars, I got bored again. I had no idea what to do, how to keep things interesting. So I started thinking, pondering, percolating, and I realized something.

The author of this story wrote himself into a corner! I mean, think about it, how was I actually going to fight the same toddler again? It's a huge plot hole! What, I was going to just coincidentally run into the exact same toddler a second time, out of the millions of toddlers in New York City? That's a deus ex machina! And I assume I wasn't going to just fight some other random toddler! That wouldn't make

any sense, I'd just be beating up a random innocent toddler! But I couldn't just run into the same toddler again!

Deep into my entirely meaningless train of thought with absolutely no subtext behind it, I hardly even noticed something approaching me. I just barely saw it out of the corner of my eye, but nonetheless I was pulled out of my thoughts and back to reality. Something was walking towards me. I turned my head to see, and by pure coincidence the exact same toddler that had fought me the other day was running towards me! If this was a plot point in a story I was reading, I definitely would've said it was a massive plot hole! But thankfully, this wasn't a story at all, so this was all completely grounded in reality and therefore incredibly realistic.

I continued staring at the toddler approaching me. It was thundering down the street, viciously holding a stuffed bunny in its right hand. No longer was it wearing that horrifying polka-dotted bib, as the toddler probably realized it had no effect on me. It had changed strategy, using the limp stuffed bunny to show me it has killed once already, and would not hesitate to kill again. Terrifying.

Watching the toddler thunder down the sidewalk, memories came flooding back to me. Terrifying memories of our vicious brawls. But I wouldn't let those memories control me, I wouldn't let the toddler get to my head. So I clenched my fist, and prepared my first move.

For my first attack, I spun across the sidewalk with my

wings outstretched—I was going for the *txerri hanka* (translation: poor man's Dyson). The toddler's counterattack was perfect, swinging its fatty leg to uppercut my beak, and sending me flying backwards into a bus stop. I immediately got up and flew back as fast as I could, faster than any pigeon had ever flown before, flying straight into the toddler, hitting it square in the chest, the impact releasing a mushroom cloud of gas onto the streets of New York City. It was as if a nuclear bomb had just exploded in the middle of America. But this wasn't the Manhattan project, rather something much more monumental, the sheer force of pigeon-on-toddler impact sending a crack all the way down the earth to its moist core.

The toddler took a step back, the impact throwing it off balance, and I saw another opportunity to attack. I ran at the toddler, curling my pigeon body up in a ball except for my legs, which stuck out at odd angles, and jumped upwards using my toes to collide with the toddlers forehead—I had chosen the *ama gizena* (translation: Celtic golf ball) and it had worked to its maximum potential. The toddler was knocked completely unconscious, falling back onto the rugged sidewalk in seemingly slow motion, a boom echoing through the earth as the toddler's soft shoulders met hard concrete. There was a pause, a moment of silence, of shock, quickly broken by a lone Fiat driving down the street. And then 20 other cars. After all, this was New York City. Silence never lasted more than a moment.

Regardless, I had done it. I couldn't believe it. My life was complete, I had finally slayed the toddler. I had never felt more powerful, more fulfilled, more like I had truly achieved my destiny. I was happy. So I blindly flew away in joy and was hit by a speeding car and died.

THE END