

The Great Leonino and Ringo the Clown

by Chris Rose



I am the Great Leonino. But, of course, you know that. I am the lion tamer with the World Famous Magnifico Circus, but of course, you know that too. Because the World Famous Magnifico Circus is the most famous circus in the world, and I, the Great Leonino am the most famous lion tamer in the world. In the world's most famous circus, of course.

The World Famous Magnifico Circus is mostly famous because of me, the courageous lion tamer, of course, but also for its incredible trapeze artists, its astonishing jugglers, its beautiful dancers, its amazing fire-eaters, its astounding strongmen, and, of course, for its impressive Ringmaster, the Great Eduardo Magnifico.

The World Famous Magnifico Circus is not famous, unfortunately, for its clowns. Some people say that the clowns at the World Famous Magnifico Circus are the best thing about the circus. It is true, the clowns make a lot of people laugh. But being a clown is very easy. Some people say that the clowns are very famous. But it is not difficult to be a famous clown.

I do not think the clowns are funny. Being a lion tamer is much more difficult than being a clown. Being a lion tamer is also much more important than being a clown. People do not come to the circus to watch the clowns. They can see clowns on television. People come to the circus to see the lion tamer. People come to the circus to see me – the Great Leonino.

The clown at the World Famous Magnifico Circus is called Ringo. What a stupid name for a clown! I admit, a lot of people laugh at him, but they are mostly small children and only very stupid adults.

Ringo is also a very proud and arrogant man. He thinks he is more popular than me! Can you imagine it!? He thinks that people come to the World Famous Magnifico Circus to see him, and not me! How ridiculous! Everyone knows that the Great Leonino is the most important thing in this circus.

Ringo told me that he was so good at being a clown that he was better than me.

"Alright", I said to him, "Let's see if you can do my job, and I'll do yours!"

"Very well", he replied. "Let's swap jobs! I'll be a lion tamer for one night, and you'll be a clown for one night! Then we'll see who's better!"

"Agreed!" I said to him. "I'll show you that your job is much easier than mine! Anyone can be a clown!"

"Agreed!" he said to me. "I'll show you that anyone can be a lion tamer, and you'll see that being a clown is very difficult indeed!"

We decided to swap our jobs in one week's time. I had one week in which to become a clown. I was sure that it was going to be easy. All I needed to do was to put on some funny clothes, fall over and tell some stupid jokes. On the other hand, how could Ringo the Clown possibly learn to be lion tamer in one week?

One week later, the day of the challenge came. I was to go first. It was going to be easy. I dressed up in a clown's costume – I drew a big smile on my mouth and put on a green wig, an orange-coloured suit and a pair of shoes that were too big for me. This was easy. I heard the ring master Eduardo Magnifico says, "Ladies and Gentlemen – tonight for one night only! Leonino the Clown!". The people clapped. I walked out into the circus ring. There were hundreds of people there. They were all silent, waiting for me to make them laugh. I walked into the circus ring and fell over in my face. Some of the children laughed. This was easy. I stood up again and told my best joke:

"My dog has no nose!"

“How does it smell?”

“Terrible!”

Nobody laughed. Nobody. The whole circus was completely silent. I decided to tell another joke:

“My wife’s going to the Caribbean for her holidays!”

“Oh! Jamaica?”

“No! It was her idea!”

I laughed and laughed and laughed. I thought this was very funny joke. When I stopped laughing, I realised that nobody else was laughing. The whole circus was completely silent. Then someone began to say “boo!”. This is what people say when they don’t like something. I decided to fall over again. People like that. That is what clowns do. Nobody laughed this time, but a few more people began to boo. Then some more people started, and after a few minutes the whole audience were shouting “Booo!”, “Rubbish!”, “This clown’s terrible! Where’s Ringo?” “Yes, we came to see Ringo!” “We want Ringo the Clown!”

Then somebody threw an old tomato at me. It hit me on the head. I decided to leave quickly.

“Well” I thought to myself, “That wasn’t too bad. Some of the children laughed. I’m sure that Ringo will be a terrible lion tamer.”

I heard the ring master shout “Ladies and Gentlemen – tonight for one night only – Ringo the Lion Tamer!” Everybody in the circus cheered and clapped. Ringo walked out into the circus ring where all my lions were. He was dressed like a cross between a clown and lion

tamer. He was pretending to be a lion tamer – but a clown lion tamer! He was making fun of me! Everybody laughed. Even the lions were laughing.

Everybody clapped and cheered and laughed. “Ringo!” they shouted, “Ringo! You’re the greatest!”

I was so angry. A stupid clown made fun of me – me, the Great Leonino!

“Very well, then” I said to Ringo, “Because you’re so good at this, why don’t you do it next week as well?”

“I’d love to!” said Ringo.

For all the next week I didn’t give any food to my lions. I wanted my lions to be so hungry that they would be angry when Ringo came to them.

One week later, Ringo walked out into the circus ring dressed up as a clown lion tamer again. I was waiting at the side of the circus ring to see what was going to happen, feeling very pleased with myself. The lions looked at Ringo the Clown as he pointed at me and said one word:

“Dinner!”