



THE UNTITLED NBC ANIMAL VEHICLE

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FADE IN:

EXT. ZOO/GORILLA CAGE - MORNING

We're tight on a GIANT SILVERBACK, a 600 pound gorilla who is contentedly chewing the bark off a small twig. Something catches the gorilla's eyes. He looks off in the distance and follows the moving object.

We cut to the GORILLA'S POV: He's watching two men as they slowly drive a golf cart through the zoo, carefully navigating its way around pedestrians.

INT. GOLF CART - CONTINUOUS

ARNIE, early 60's, the Zoo Director, is driving. He is dressed in a suit. Next to him is JIM DONNELLY, early 30's, the Head Zookeeper. He is dressed in khaki's.

JIM

This is the type of thing we should have done a long time ago, Arnie. It could be a real turning point for the zoo.

ARNIE

We are not selling little dolls of you in the gift shop, Jim.

JIM

They're not dolls, they're action figures. I come with a rope.

ARNIE

Nobody's going to buy a doll of a zookeeper.

JIM

(insulted)

Head zookeeper. I have a very identifiable presence here. I am what they call my own brand. I'm branded.

ARNIE

No doll.

JIM

I am the host of this park's most popular show.

ARNIE

Animal Idol isn't popular because of you. It's those animals, they're so damn talented.

JIM

You think it was the flamingos' idea to put on Sonny and Cher wigs?
(points to himself)
It wasn't. That was me.

The golf cart stops in front of a large building that says RESTRICTED ENTRY.

INT. BREEDING PENS - MOMENTS LATER

The interior of the building houses a large open pen. In the pen are two OKAPIS who are just standing there, staring at each other. They are small, giraffe-like animals with zebra-striped legs (see cover page). Jim and Arnie enter. A bored handler, MARGARET, looks on.

ARNIE

What's the problem, Margaret?

MARGARET

They've been like this for six hours. There's no mating, nothing's going on.

ARNIE

Well you better get something going on. I just spent twenty thousand dollars to have this male shipped in from Atlanta. And I'd like to get a little bang for my buck...
(realizing)
...so to speak.

JIM

Okapis are very shy animals. In the wild it could take the female up to six months to select a mate.

ARNIE

I don't have six months. He has to be back in Atlanta on Monday. Margaret, tell them it's last call, the bar is closing and it's not getting any better than this.

Jim walks into the pen, approaches the female okapi, and scratches her neck.

JIM

Hang on.

(to the okapi)

I know what your problem is, Patty. We've taken away your selection process.

(to Arnie)

In the Congo she'd have her choice of males, then she'd be able to pick the one she wanted.

MARGARET

You do realize there's not another okapi within fifteen hundred miles.

JIM

Are you in my face, Margaret?

Margaret looks at Jim.

JIM (CONT'D)

Here's what we do. We bring in our camel, let the two males stand next to each other, then she'll pick the okapi and mate with him.

ARNIE

What if she picks the camel?

JIM

Have you seen our camel? He's heinous.

Arnie and Margaret stare blankly at Jim.

JIM (CONT'D)

He's got that horrible overbite and his hump is just...

(indicates with hand)

...gone.

MARGARET

Everyone's so excited about Dave being back. He looks great, Arnie.

ARNIE

Thank you, Margaret.

JIM
(stunned)
What? Dave's back?

ARNIE
Yes, Jim. My son's back at work.
Do you have a problem with that?

JIM
(obviously lying)
No. I think it's great.
(then)
What are you looking at, Margaret?

EXT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

It's a small, two-story building located near the zoo entrance.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

LUENELL, 45, an African-American woman, is sitting in a chair, eating a candy bar. Next to her, in a large cage, is a CRESTED RINGNECK PARROT. Luenell notices that the bird is looking at her.

LUENELL
(to the parrot)
You're that bad bird people are talking about. You know, if you had better manners, they'd put you back in the aviary where you could play with the other birds.

The parrot lets out a string of expletives that have to be bleeped. Luenell looks at the bird, stunned.

LUENELL
You little feathered...
(BLEEPED EXPLETIVE)
Get your own damn candy bar.

ANNE, early 20's, an assistant, comes over.

ANNE
Missy's ready for you.

LUENELL
You know what that bird just said to me?

ANNE

I told you not to talk to it. He's
the bad bird.

INT. MISSY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MISSY, early 30's, attractive but conservatively dressed, is
at her desk. Luenell enters.

LUENELL

You wanted to see me?

MISSY

Yes. Yes I did, Luenell. Thanks
for coming in.

LUENELL

(dryly)
Mmm-hmm.

Luenell sits down and notices a glass figurine on the desk.

LUENELL

What is this?

MISSY

It's a glass squirrel. It was hand
blown by an artisan who was born
blind.

Luenell looks at the figurine, then at Missy, then back at
the figurine.

LUENELL

So he's never seen a squirrel.

MISSY

(defensive)
No, but... I'm sure he must've felt one.

LUENELL

(a beat)
The horns are nice.

MISSY

(delicate)
I have a little bit of a sticky wicket.

LUENELL

I really don't feel comfortable
hearing about that.

Missy looks at Luenell oddly.

MISSY

You know those newsletter meetings
you and the girls have every
Wednesday night at Bennigan's?

LUENELL

(suspicious)

Yeah.

MISSY

I'm afraid I can't keep reimbursing
you for your expenses.

LUENELL

Those Wednesday night meetings were
the only reason I agreed to do the
newsletter.

MISSY

And I can understand why. Last
week you, Peggy and Benita had...

(picks up receipt and
reads)

Ninety-four dollars worth of
margaritas, loaded skins, and something
called a macho nacho burrito.

LUENELL

Joanne never said anything about
our newsletter meetings.

MISSY

You know what, I've been hearing a
lot about the way Joanne did things,
which I really appreciate, but I'm
the director of zoo operations now
and I have my own policies.

LUENELL

(coolly)

Weren't you her... secretary?

MISSY

Yes. Yes I was. But she's not
here anymore and I... am.

LUENELL

Mmm-hmm.

INT. ARNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Arnie is sitting at his desk. Across from him is his son DAVE, early 30's, who's wearing a Brooks Brothers suit. He's thin, neat and has a sense of entitlement about him.

ARNIE

We all missed you around here, Dave. I can't tell you how good it is to have you back.

DAVE

Well it's good to be back, Dad. Although I suppose everyone knows that I was away at New Horizons dealing with my problem.

ARNIE

And that's nothing to be ashamed of. You had the courage to face your dependency on alcohol. You're the first one in the family to throw a shoe at that beast.

DAVE

I accept full responsibility for my drinking problem but I will tell you this. Being the only person handling public relations for this entire zoo didn't help.

ARNIE

Of course it didn't.

DAVE

I just want to put this all behind me and get back to being groomed to take over the zoo when you step down next year.

ARNIE

Absolutely. Oh, one thing. The grooming's off.

DAVE

The grooming's off?

ARNIE

Would you groom a booze-hound to take over a zoo? Because I wouldn't.

Dave is stunned. Jim enters, holding up his action figure. It is dressed in a pair of khaki pants and a brown safari vest. Dave quickly composes himself.

JIM

I just got the prototype, Arnie.
Look how ripped I am.

DAVE

(coolly)
Hello, Jim.

JIM

Oh, hello, Dave.
(condescending)
Still in the grip of the grape?

Jim places his action figure on Arnie's desk.

DAVE

No, I am not.

ARNIE

Straight and narrow like an injun's
arrow.

JIM

So just like that he's getting a
second chance?

ARNIE

You got your second chance, Jimmy.

JIM

(defensive)
Excuse me. My second chance was a
very different situation. I was a
victim.

DAVE

A victim? You got fired from the
San Diego Zoo for slapping a
panther in the face.

JIM

That panther was from the wrong side
of the tracks and I stood up to him.
And he respected me for it.

DAVE

You're lucky that panther didn't
claw your fat face off.

JIM
(highly insulted)
There is not an ounce of fat on my
face.

ARNIE
My point, Jim, is that nobody else
would hire you but I felt you
deserved another shot.

Dave picks up Jim's action figure.

DAVE
What's this doll?

JIM
It's not a doll, it's an action
figure of me. And I'd appreciate it
if you didn't hold me by my hair.

Jim snatches the action figure from Dave and walks out.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Missy is walking down the hallway. She sees Jim.

MISSY
Can I please talk to you for a
second?

JIM
(hushed tones)
Absolutely. Do you want to go
somewhere, you know, a little
more...

MISSY
You have to stop calling me.

JIM
(lying)
I didn't call you.

MISSY
You called my house at one in the
morning last night and hung up. I
have caller ID.

JIM
I did not call your house last --
oh wait a minute, hang on.
(under his breath)
(MORE)

JIM (cont'd)

Last night was Tues... I picked up
my dry clea... made some lasagn...
(feigning a revelation)
Yes. Yes I may have called you
last night. But it was job
related, it wasn't personal.

MISSY

Okay, what did you want to tell me?

JIM

(direct)

I've been picking up a sexual
energy between us.

MISSY

Excuse me?

JIM

It's clear we're sharing a vibe, a
heat... whatever you want to call
it. You should know I just ended a
relationship and normally I would
take a little more time before I --

MISSY

I have a boyfriend, Jim. His name
is Glenn and he lives in Seattle.

Awkward silence.

JIM

I guess what I'm trying to say is
I'm not ready to get into a
relationship with you. Not right
now. I want to move slow. Let's
just see where things take us, okay?

Jim walks away, leaving Missy staring blankly.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

People are filing into the conference room. Dave sees Missy
and eagerly approaches her.

DAVE

Hello, Missy.

MISSY

Hello, Dave. Welcome back.

DAVE

I want you to know I couldn't be happier about your promotion. My father called me several weeks ago to ask my opinion of it and I was very supportive.

MISSY

Your father called you in rehab to ask you if you thought I should be promoted?

DAVE

Uh... I had actually called him. My socks were being stolen on a nightly basis, but your promotion definitely came up.

MISSY

(uncomfortable)

We should probably get to our seats.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

A meeting is underway. Arnie is sitting at the head of the table. Jim is next to him. Missy, Dave, Luenell, HELEN, RON and others sit around the table. Arnie is speaking.

ARNIE

I'd like everyone to know that the park has been reserved on March 20th for the Orange County Gay and Lesbian Society.

RON

(quietly)

Yes!

The group turns around and looks at Ron. He realizes he's accidentally outed himself and stares at his shoes.

JIM

I love it when gay homosexuals come to our zoo. They ask great questions. They're enthusiastic and smart. I say this year we really bend over backwards for them.

A man and a woman at the end of the table share a "what did he just say?" look.

HELEN

Excuse me, Arnie, I think we might have another rat in our break room. I found several droppings under the sink.

ARNIE

Thank you, Helen. The droppings are noted. Missy, why don't you call that nice exterminator Joanne used and have him come out with one of his traps and...

(excitedly)

Snap it's neck!

It's clear Missy doesn't like being told to do things the way Joanne did them.

MISSY

(assertive)

I'm sorry, Arnie, I'm the new director of operations now and I have my own policy regarding... rat removal.

Luenell and some of the other women at the table look at each other and roll their eyes.

ARNIE

Alright, what is it?

MISSY

Um, well... because we're a zoo I think we should have respect for all animals, even a rat.

RON

My cousin Dwayne had a rat in his house once. It got into a bag of baker's yeast and fell asleep on top of a radiator --

ARNIE

(cutting him off)

Thank you, Ron.

JIM

(whispering to Ron,
amazed)

What happened to it?

Ron indicates with his hands that the rat got really big and just floated away. Jim is in awe.

MISSY

What I think we should do is catch it
and take it outside and release it.

DAVE

(enthusiastically)

That's the most humane thing we can
do. Missy is absolutely right.

Missy makes eye contact with Dave and subtly smiles at him,
appreciating his support.

ARNIE

Okay fine, catch and release it is.

MISSY

(regaining composure)

Thank you.

ARNIE

Now if there's nothing else --

DAVE

I'd like to say something.

ARNIE

What is it, Dave? What?

Dave stands up.

DAVE

It's no secret that over the last
few years the zoo's attendance has
been on the decline.

JIM

Wait, I thought that was a secret.

DAVE

I'd like to take some steps to
change that.

ARNIE

What do you have in mind?

DAVE

What I'd like to do is increase the
zoo's visibility. I don't know if you
know this but Joan Embery of the San
Diego Zoo just had major hip surgery
and had to cancel her appearances on
the Conan O'Brien Show.

JIM

Good. That woman is a media whore. Did you see her on Larry King after Steve Irwin was killed? That should've been me.

DAVE

You didn't know Steve Irwin.

JIM

I didn't have to. I'm a member of the zoo community. We're a family. That stingray didn't just take away someone I never met. He took away... my brother.

DAVE

I heard you went to down to the boat ramp and started screaming at the lake.

JIM

That's right. I felt the need to lash out.

ARNIE

That's enough, you two. Dave, what does Joan Embery's hip have to do with our zoo's visibility?

DAVE

Well, I took it upon myself to contact the Conan people and suggest they use Jim to do the animal segments.

JIM

(excited)

Me on Conan? Oh my god, what did they say?

DAVE

They're going to talk it over with Conan and let us know by four o'clock.

Tight on Jim's face. He can barely contain his emotions.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Arnie is talking to Dave.

ARNIE

I'm very impressed, Dave. This whole Conan thing could be exactly the shot in the arm the zoo needs.

DAVE

Well, I'm just trying to show you that I'm back on my game and that I'm a genuine asset here.

Jim enters, anxious.

JIM

Did they call?

DAVE

Not yet.

JIM

It's off. I know it.

ARNIE

It's not off. Relax, Jim.

Arnie gets up and walks towards the door.

ARNIE

(to Dave)

Let me know when you hear something.

Arnie exits.

JIM

Someone at this zoo bad-mouthed me. That's what people around here do. Anytime something good's about to happen to me, I get it...

(indicates "stabbed in the back")

...right in the back!

Margaret enters holding a wig on each hand.

MARGARET

Hello, Dave. Which one of these --
(noticing Jim)

Oh. Never mind.

Margaret exits. The phone rings.

JIM
(panicked)
Oh God. Here it comes. It's off.
I know it.

Dave answers the phone.

DAVE
(into phone)
Hello... hey, Paul. Thanks for
getting back to me.

Jim lurches out of his chair and presses the speaker-phone
button.

JIM
Hello, this is Jim. I just picked
up. Who am I speaking with?

PAUL
(on speakerphone)
Oh hi, Jim. This is Paul.

JIM
Hey, Paul. How are you? Is Conan
there?

PAUL
(on speakerphone)
No, Conan's not here.

JIM
(whispering, to Dave)
It's off.
(indicates "stabbed in the
back")

DAVE
So, Paul, what do you think?

PAUL
(on speakerphone)
Well, I'll be honest with you. We
started asking around about Jim
and... we heard that a few years
ago there was an incident.

JIM
(flummoxed)
Uh...
(then, resigned)
All right then. Thank you, Paul.

DAVE

Look, that incident got blown way out of proportion. What you should know is that Jim Donnelly is the most incredible animal handler I've ever seen. His knowledge is unparalleled, he's strong and in command, yet accessible and funny. And he's not just great with animals. People love him.

JIM

(grasping)

And for the record, that panther was off his meds.

DAVE

Someone's going to be smart enough to put Jim on network television and if it's not you, it's going to be Leno. They called twice last month to check on his availability.

There's a long silence. Jim just stares at Dave.

INT. BREEDING PENS - DAY

We're tight on the male okapi. He's bored and chewing on a piece of straw. The camera pans left to the male camel, who's also standing there, bored.

We reveal the POV shot is coming from the female okapi who is standing a few yards away, looking at her choices. Margaret is standing next to her.

MARGARET

(to the female okapi)

You like the way they're ogling you, don't you? The desperate little bastards. You already know which one you're gonna have, but you're making them wait. That's smart. Why don't you walk it around a little bit. That's what I would do.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. BREAK ROOM - NEXT MORNING

SEVERAL WOMEN from the office are singing happy birthday to BENITA, a Latina woman in her 30's. At the center of the group are Luenell and PEGGY, early 30's. There is a cake with a lit candle in the middle of the table. Missy enters.

LUENELL AND THE WOMEN

(singing)

...Happy birthday to you...

Missy sees what's going on, and joins them in song.

MISSY AND THE WOMEN

Happy birthday dear...

Luenell, Peggy and the rest of the women realize that Missy has joined in and they stop.

MISSY

Benita...

(running out of steam)

...Happy birthday to you.

Luenell blows out the candle and pushes the cake in front of Benita.

LUENELL

Cut your cake, Benita.

Missy realizes that everyone is staring at her.

MISSY

I just came in to see if we caught
our little rat.

Missy crosses over towards a cabinet under the sink, opens it up and pulls out a small, cage-like trap. It's empty.

MISSY

Hup, he did it again.

Missy opens a cupboard above the sink and takes out a cookie.

MISSY

He's so sneaky. He keeps stealing these little peanut cookies I've been leaving without triggering the trap.

Missy loads another cookie into the trap.

BENITA

(cold)

Why don't you get a real trap and kill it. It's just a rat.

MISSY

(direct)

Because, Benita, my policy is that rat will live.

Luenell walks over to Missy and takes one of her cookies.

LUENELL

Yeah, well, you know what I'm going to do if I see that rat? I'm going to take my shoe off and kill it.

Luenell takes a deliberate bite of the cookie.

MISSY

You're not going to touch that rat.
(in her face)
And you know it.

Missy looks around the room. She's made her point.

CUT TO:

A TIGHT SHOT of Jim sitting on a couch with LEWIS, a young orangutan, on his lap.

JIM

A fascinating thing about the orangutan, Conan, is that in the wild the male will court the female by spending up to six hours combing through her hair looking for insects.

Reveal we're:

INT. ARNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Arnie is at his desk eating a sandwich. Around the office are Ron, several other animals and a few ANIMAL HANDLERS.

ARNIE

If my date had insects in her hair
I'd get the hell out of there.
Unless, you know, she had big
boobs.

Ron and one of the animal handlers try to suppress a snicker.

JIM

Why can't you people treat this
seriously? The whole thing is on my
shoulders. If it goes well Conan will
have me back and that's a big win-win
for all of us.

ARNIE

Alright, calm down, Jim. Stop
being such a drama queen.

JIM

I can't calm down. I'm not eating,
I didn't sleep last night.
(points to lower lip)
Look at this, I'm getting a blister
from all the stress.

ARNIE

Nobody wants you to do well more than I
do. This is a huge opportunity for the
zoo. Just don't be too boring with all
your facts. Have some fun.

ANIMAL HANDLER

He's right, too many animal facts
and I zone out.

ARNIE

If you're lucky, Lewis will start
digging at his monkey junk. That'll
get you invited back. Probably even
get you on the YouTube.

RON

I love YouTube.

Margaret enters.

MARGARET

I need to take Lewis to see the vet.

JIM

Why?

MARGARET

If he's getting on a plane
tomorrow, he needs a shot.

Lewis becomes agitated, lets out several unhappy cries, and climbs on top of Arnie's filing cabinet. Jim goes over to him.

JIM

Lewis, take your shot. And when we get
to New York, you won't have to ride in
the truck with the other animals.
You'll come with me in the limo.

Lewis calmly leans down and climbs into Jim's arms.

JIM

It's called bedside manner, Margaret.
You might want to brush up.

Margaret looks at Jim with disdain.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Jim walks down the hall and passes the crested ringneck parrot (the bad bird) in the cage. The parrot lets out a string of expletives that have to be bleeped. Without breaking stride or making eye contact, Jim gives the bird the finger. After a few steps, he sees Missy.

JIM

Hello, Missy, how you doing?

MISSY

I've been better. A lot of people in
this office don't like me. You know
why? Because I do my job. But
that's okay, I don't care about being
liked. I care about being respected.

JIM

I personally hate people who like me.

Missy and Jim walk into Missy's office.

INT. MISSY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MISSY

You must be excited about flying to
New York and being on the show.

JIM

It's not about me. It's about putting the zoo in the spotlight.

Missy looks closely at Jim's face. She's puzzled.

MISSY

Did you get your eyebrows dyed?

JIM

No, of course not.

Missy keeps looking at him.

JIM

Why? Do you think I went too dark?

MISSY

It looks fine. Are you getting a little...

(points to her lip)

JIM

Yes, it's a blister. I'm under a world of stress.

MISSY

You're sure it's from stress? Maybe it's herpes.

JIM

(insulted)

Oh my god, what kind of whore do you think I am?

(horrified)

A herpe.

MISSY

I have something you can use.

Missy rummages through her purse and takes out a small make up case. Then she unzips the case, pulls out a cover-up stick and hands it to Jim.

JIM

What is it?

MISSY

It's a cover-up stick. Just put a little bit on and no one will see it.

Jim takes the cover-up stick. He's touched.

JIM

Thank you, Missy. This means so much to me.

MISSY

(down-playing)

It's a cover-up stick.

JIM

I think we both know it's more than just a cover-up stick.

MISSY

No, it's really not.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Jim and Dave are sitting in first class. Dave is writing on a laptop. A male FLIGHT ATTENDANT passes by.

JIM

Excuse me. A woman from coach just totally ignored the separation curtain and is using our first class bathroom. She's in there right now doing God knows what.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm sorry. I'll say something to her when she comes out.

JIM

Don't let her know it was coming from me. I don't need the looks at baggage claim.

The flight attendant exits. Dave goes back to writing.

JIM

What are you doing?

DAVE

Writing down some things for you to mention on the show.

JIM

I want you to know I appreciate you getting me Conan. This could really be a big thing for my career.

DAVE

I didn't do it for you, Jim. I did it to show my father that I deserve to take over the zoo when he steps down.

JIM

You don't deserve to take over the zoo. You don't even like animals.

DAVE

(defensive)

That's not true. I love animals.

JIM

No you don't.

DAVE

Yes I do. I love them very much.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR - AFTERNOON

Jim and Dave are sitting in the backseat with Lewis, the orangutan, buckled in between them. Lewis is leaning on Dave.

DAVE

(miserable)

You've gotta get this thing to stop breathing on me! I'm going to puke!

JIM

It's not that bad, Dave.

DAVE

Get him a pack of Mentos or he rides in the trunk.

JIM

Come here, Lewis.

Lewis leans on Jim. Jim takes out his cellphone and turns it on.

JIM

I've got a message from the office.
(for Dave's benefit)
It's probably Missy. I'll call her when I get to my hotel room.

DAVE

(to Jim)

You know, I've been asking around about her boyfriend, Glenn. I don't think he's real.

JIM

(intrigued)

What makes you think that?

DAVE

Well, supposedly he lives in Seattle but from what I hear he never visits her and she never goes up to see him.

JIM

Why would she make up a boyfriend?

DAVE

I don't know, maybe it's her way of putting up a boundary to weed out men she wants nothing to do with.

Jim looks out the window, thinking.

DAVE

I always thought you kind of liked Missy. I'm surprised you haven't asked her out.

JIM

What, me? No. I have a very strict rule, Dave. I don't dance with people I work with. Believe me, she'd cha-cha with me in a minute but I think it's better for everyone if I stay at home and dance with myself.

DAVE

Yeah, well, I've been thinking of asking her out.

JIM

(amused)

No disrespect, but you're not her type. She likes guys like me, you know, real men.

DAVE

I'm a real man.

JIM

A man's man. Someone who's strong.
You know, the kind of guy that
takes his shirt off when he's
digging up a stump.

DAVE

I can hire somebody to dig up a stump.

JIM

But then you'd have no reason to
take your shirt off. I'm confused,
what are we talking about here?

INT. BREAKROOM - DAY

Missy is alone in the room, checking the rat cage. It's empty.

MISSY

I can't believe it, he got another
one.

Missy crosses over to the cupboard.

ANGLE ON:

The RAT sticking his head out from behind the refrigerator.

ANGLE ON:

Missy reaching into the cupboard above the sink to grab
another cookie. She speaks loudly enough so that wherever
the rat is, he can hear her.

MISSY

(frustrated)

You know, if the old director of
operations were here you would be
dead by now. I'm just trying to do
you a favor.

Missy feels something on her foot. She looks down, screams,
and in one swift move stomps her foot down hard. She stares
down, horrified.

MISSY

Oh my God. What have I done!

LUENELL (O.C.)

Looks like you killed the rat.

Missy looks up and sees Luenell standing at the door staring at her.

SMASH CUT:

INT. BENNIGAN'S - NIGHT

Luenell, Benita, Peggy and a few other WOMEN from the Newsletter Committee are having drinks. The camera pulls wide to reveal Missy there, too. She's holding court.

MISSY

(a little tipsy)

I just want people to know that I am not Joanne, you know? I have my own ideas. I'm smart.

LUENELL

(while eating a loaded potato skin)

We know you're smart. You've got very good ideas.

MISSY

Thank you. So should we talk about the newsletter now?

BENITA

Uh... we kinda covered that when you were in the bathroom.

MISSY

Did anyone keep the minutes?

PEGGY

The what?

A WAITER comes over with a plate of food.

LUENELL

Chicken lettuce cups? That goes right here, baby.

INT. LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN - MAKE-UP ROOM - NIGHT

Jim is sitting in the make-up chair. The HAIR LADY is spritzing and fussing with his hair.

JIM

Listen, have you heard anything about the after-show party?

(MORE)

JIM (cont'd)
(off her stare)
You know, for after we wrap.

HAIR LADY
Usually everybody just kind of goes home.

JIM
By home you mean like a house
party? A rave?

She just stares at him. ARNIE enters.

ARNIE
(exuberant)
There he is! My big TV star!

JIM
(shocked)
Arnie? What are you doing here?

ARNIE
I got to thinking, how often is
someone from our zoo on national
television? So I jumped on a red
eye last night and here I am.

JIM
I'm touched, Arnie. It means so
much to me that you're here.

ARNIE
(looking at Jim's lip)
You might want to let her put a
little something on your herpe.

JIM
(insulted)
It's a stress blister.

ARNIE
Either way.
(to hairdresser)
Saw what you did with Tim Russert's
hair last night. First rate.

INT. LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN - GREEN ROOM - LATER

Jim is brushing Lewis, the orangutan. A monitor in the
background displays the show in progress.

JIM

No matter how big I become, Lewis,
I will always be willing to take a
moment to brush out your knots.

Dave enters, holding a shopping bag with the NBC logo on it.

DAVE

I just spoke with the handlers.
All the other animals are set.

JIM

Can you believe your father's here?

DAVE

It's great, isn't it?

JIM

I don't know. If I were you I'd be
insulted. I mean, he clearly came
to check up on you.

DAVE

What makes you say that?

JIM

Nine days out of recovery. Loose
in the big city.

DAVE

Maybe he's here to make sure you
don't screw this up. Did you study
that copy I wrote for you?

JIM

I glanced it. I'm not really on
board.

DAVE

Excuse me?

JIM

I think I'm just gonna free-form
it. You know, talk about my life
and how the animals fit into it.
Creatively I like to keep myself on
a very long leash.

DAVE

I wrote that copy for a reason.
There are going to be five million
people watching.

(MORE)

DAVE (cont'd)

This is our opportunity to get across some very specific information about our zoo.

JIM

I'm not your messenger boy, Dave. I have my own ideas on how to do this. And I'm gonna start by giving Conan one of my action figures.

Jim takes out his action figure.

DAVE

You can't do that. Your action figure is not sanctioned by the zoo.

Dave snatches the action figure out of Jim's hand.

JIM

You've got five seconds to give that back to me!

DAVE

Or what? You gonna slap me around? I'm not a panther, Jim.

INT. LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN SHOW - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Arnie and CONAN O'BRIEN are walking around a corner.

ARNIE

I've always thought you were an original thinker, Conan. An innovator. You remind me of a young Ernie Kovacs with a big red cowlick.

CONAN

I really appreciate Jim filling in at the last minute. If things work out, maybe we can have you back.

ARNIE

Nothing would make us happier.

Conan opens the door to the green room.

INT. LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN - GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Arnie and Conan see Jim slap Dave across the face. Without missing a beat, Dave slaps him right back. Jim is momentarily stunned, then slaps Dave again. Without missing a beat, Dave slaps him back.

ARNIE

What the hell is going on in here?

JIM

It's not my fault, Arnie. Your son wouldn't give me back my doll.

(beat)

Hello, Conan.

DAVE

(to Jim)

Now you're in trouble. Lewis has your herpe cream.

Jim looks over and sees Lewis rubbing Missy's cover-up stick on his lips.

JIM

Dammit, Lewis! Give me that!

Jim tries to wrestle the cover-up stick away from Lewis. Arnie and Conan look on in disbelief.

JIM

Ow! This sonofabitch just bit me!

Conan is speechless. Arnie is mortified.

INT. ARNIE'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Arnie drums his fingers on his desk as he stares at Jim and Dave. There's an awkward silence in the room. Jim tries to say something but words escape him. Finally...

JIM

Animal segments are always the first thing cut when they're running long.

ARNIE

They weren't running long, Jim. You scared the hell out of Conan. He called you unstable.

JIM

Well, I think that's a little harsh.

DAVE

I still feel like I deserve a little credit. We wouldn't even have had the opportunity if it wasn't for me.

JIM

(to Arnie)

I will not work with him anymore. Either he goes or I go.

ARNIE

Maybe you do deserve a little credit, Dave. You came back to work, you saw an opportunity to promote the zoo, and you jumped on it.

DAVE

Thank you.

Jim gets up.

JIM

Well, I see you've made your decision. Now if you'll excuse me, I have ninety-seven animals to hug good bye.

Jim starts to walk out.

ARNIE

Hang on a second, Jim. I've been thinking. How about we give your little doll a shot in the gift shop.

JIM

(amazed)

Are you serious?

ARNIE

I'll order one hundred. We'll see what happens.

JIM

(disappointed)

One hundred? That's not very many. I mean, Gay Day is right around the corner. Homosexuals love me.

ARNIE

(firm)

We're getting one hundred, Jim.

JIM

Thank you.

ARNIE

You're welcome. By the way, I'm taking you off Animal Idol.

JIM

What?

ARNIE

Dave got me thinking and I want you and him to work together on ways to promote the zoo and increase our visibility.

DAVE

I already have another idea.

JIM

(doubtful)

Really? What is it now?

DAVE

I called a producer at the Animal Channel and pitched him a show that involved Jim living with a family of kodiak bears.

Jim just stares at him.

JIM

What do you mean, like in an apartment?

DAVE

Not in an apartment, in the wild. Like Alaska.

JIM

No, I'm not gonna do that. I would be willing to live with one bear in a duplex but I'd definitely want my own bathroom.

ARNIE

If you lived with a bear, you could play up the whole Odd Couple thing.

(MORE)

ARNIE (cont'd)

You know, you could be the messy one and we'll find you a bear that's a neat freak.

JIM

See, I would watch that. Great idea, Dave. I'm in.

Missy enters.

MISSY

You wanted to see me, Arnie?

ARNIE

Yes. It's about your rat. I'm afraid he's dead.

MISSY

(nervous)

What?

ARNIE

I just found him in the dumpster. After you set him free, the poor thing was run over. Looks like he got it pretty good, too.

MISSY

Well... I just released him. I'm not responsible for what happened to him after that.

Margaret pokes her head in, excited.

MARGARET

Arnie. The okapis. It's on.

EXT. BREEDING PENS - DAY

Arnie, Jim, Dave, Missy and Margaret are looking into the pen. (We don't see what they're looking at.)

ARNIE

(emotional)

It's beautiful. Just beautiful.

JIM

It's amazing how high up in the air he gets his hooves.

MISSY

Should the camel really be that close?

ARNIE

I think he's alright. He stopped spitting at them.

DAVE

A baby okapi would be huge. I could do a whole PR campaign around it.

MARGARET

If we put little stuffed okapis in the gift shop we'd sell thousands of 'em.

ARNIE

That's good thinking, Margaret. You've got till May, Jim. Then your little doll is out.

Margaret looks at Jim and smiles. Then she and Arnie walk away.

JIM

You see what Margaret just did to me, Dave?

(indicates "stabbed in the back")

Right in the back!

FADE TO BLACK.