

THE ZOOKEEPER'S JOURNAL

By Jon Christie

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DEDICATION

Jon would like to dedicate this play to the original cast and crew. If not for their passion, selflessness, and incredible talent, *The Zookeeper's Journal* would not be where it is today. Thank you all.

THE ZOOKEEPER'S JOURNAL

The Zookeeper's Journal was first performed at the Bath House Cultural Center in Dallas, TX in November 2010. The following are the cast and crew from that production.

CAST

Micah John Collin – Zookeeper
David Swanner – Grizz
Keven White – Chip
Justin Howell – Gib
Shannon Walsh – Z
Michael Whinery – Spider
Jake Shanahan – Raph
Octavia Thomas & Betiel Michaels – Zoe
Ana Diaz – Spike
David Cuellar & Ivan Jasso – Iggy
Cyndee Rivera – Camille

CREW

Jon Christie – Director
Josh Jacobs – Stage Manager & Set Design
Joe Nagel – Lighting Design
Brittany Hunt – Costume Design
Jon Christie & Josh Jacobs – Fight Choreography
Cherami Leigh - Assistant to the Director
Monnika Young – Box Office Manager
Andrew Bryan – Props Master
Sri Chilukuri & Rachel Vance – Running Crew

THE ZOOKEEPER'S JOURNAL

ACT 1 SCENE 1

The action takes place in a zoo, a zoo like any other. But in this particular zoo, there are four cages of significant importance. The first cage, on the stage right side, contains a tire swing and, oddly enough, a poker table with four chairs. In the cage next to it sits an easel, a sofa, and an exercise bike. The next cage in line contains a recliner chair, a record player, and an end table with a lamp. The final cage on the stage left side appears to be unoccupied, as there's nothing inside worthy of mention except for a framed photo hanging on the wall. Bars and gates separate the cages from one another. Trash litters the downstage area.

ZOOKEEPER enters and begins to sweep up the floors, whistling as he goes. He is dressed in a blue worker's jumpsuit, and he pulls a supply cart behind him. After a while, he looks up and addresses the audience as he cleans.

ZOOKEEPER. Oh, hello there. Don't mind me. I'm just doing some last minute cleaning before I head home. Now I know it doesn't look like much. It's a common zoo, one you'd find just about anywhere. *(He stoops down and picks up an empty bottle.)* Twenty-two years and I'm still amazed people would pay five dollars for a bottle of water. *(He throws it away and resumes his sweeping.)* Now I know what you're probably thinking. Twenty-two years is a long time to be cleaning up after people for a living. Well I don't just clean up after people, I clean up after animals too. Yep, that's right. I'm the zookeeper, the animal caregiver, the glorified pooper-scooper, call it what you will. It's a thankless job, the pay is small, and the uniforms are certainly not going to win any fashion awards; but believe it or not, I love what I do. I've had an affinity for animals ever since I was a child. I spent hours upon hours reading animal encyclopedias, learning everything I could on every animal ever discovered. It's pretty remarkable to think of all the many different species of antelope or tree frog there are, and how different each kind is. The animal kingdom is quite diverse, much like we are. It's a shame so few people are aware of just how similar we are to these creatures. Working so closely with them, I've been privileged to catch a glimpse into their personal lives. *(Beat.)* It breaks my heart

sometimes to see them caged up the way they are, like they've done some horrible wrong to society. But society deems that their place is behind bars, and I'm not really in a position to change that. *(He sweeps up the last of the trash.)* So instead, I do my best to treat them right, feed them good food and make sure they're as comfortable as animally possible. *(He pulls out a book and begins to write in it.)* Don't mind me. I'm just writing down a few things. This is my logbook. I'm required to have it with me so I can make notes on what I observe throughout the day: maintenance updates, animal behavior, stuff like that. *(Beat.)* Heh, as embarrassing as it sounds, I kind of view this as my own personal journal. These animals are my life, and I don't want to miss a single moment. *(He reads an entry in his journal.)* August 9th, 2009...

SCENE 2

The zoo animals enter to their respective cages. CHIP, Z, GIB, and SPIDER fill the stage right cage, RAPH and ZOE enter the cage next to the monkeys, and GRIZZ resides in the next adjacent cage. No words are heard, only loud animal noises; but slowly, over time, the animal sounds fade out and are replaced with people talking. They are all talking over one another, appearing very agitated.

ZOOKEEPER. Summer's almost over and people flock to bring their kids to the zoo before they head back to school. This of course means that the animals are a bit...stressed.

GRIZZ. Hey all of you shut up! Can't a bear get any peace and quiet around here? It's a zoo, not a circus!

ZOOKEEPER. Some of them are a little more stressed than others. It's now 12:05PM and it's time to feed the animals which, with some, is not an easy task. *(He pulls his supply cart over to the monkey cage and pulls out bananas.)* Here you go, fresh off the tree. *(The monkeys grab the bunch of bananas. Chip does not seem pleased with his meal.)*

CHIP. Hey pal, I've told you a hundred times I like my bananas half green and half yellow. There's way too much green in this banana! What are you colorblind or something!

GIB. Take it easy, Chip. Here, mine's half and half. We'll trade. *(Chip looks at Gib's banana.)*

CHIP. Get it right next time, old man! *(He swaps bananas with Gib and joins the other two monkeys.)*

GIB. *(To Zookeeper.)* I like green better anyway. Save the environment, right? *(Gib joins the group.)*

ZOOKEEPER. *(To audience.)* Chip's a good guy, he's just a little temperamental...emphasis on temper. But as bad as you think Chip is, I'd much rather put up with him than-

RAPH. So are you going to help me or not?

ZOOKEEPER. *(Sighs.)* No Raph, I'm not going to help kill you.

RAPH. Why not!?

ZOOKEEPER. Because I'd get fired for one! Besides, I don't understand why you're so eager to die. *(Chip shouts from across the cages.)*

CHIP. Hey there skyscraper! How's the weather up there today? Hey, I left my deck of cards up in my tree. I'd climb up and get them myself but I figured, since you're already up there, you wouldn't mind helping me out. How 'bout it pal?

RAPH. Bite me, pal!

CHIP. Whoa, easy there big guy. Sounds like somebody's got a chip on their shoulder. *(He laughs. Raph glares at Zookeeper.)*

ZOOKEEPER. Being tall is a good thing. Plenty of animals would kill to have your height.

RAPH. Yes, and I'd gladly let them. Thanks for nothing. *(Raph crosses to behind his easel and begins painting.)*

ZOOKEEPER. *(To audience.)* Raph struggles with depression, he had a pretty rough childhood. Every day he asks me for prescription meds or a tranquilizer and every day I have to try and talk some sense into him. Now I know what you're probably thinking: how can this guy just talk to animals? Well it's not all that hard, really. Animals have their own language and you just have to take the time to learn it, same as you would with French or Spanish.

ZOE. How's life, Mr. Zoo?

ZOOKEEPER. *(To audience.)* It's a little nickname some of the animals call me. *(To Zoe.)* Oh I've had better days. The birdcages are a mess and I just heard that Helga got herself stuck again.

ZOE. Helga the hedgehog?

ZOOKEEPER. Helga the hippo.

ZOE. Oh.

ZOOKEEPER. Yeah. It's going to take the entire staff to help her out. But before I do that, I've got two salads with your name on them. *(He pulls two salads from his cart.)*

ZOE. Thank you. Aw! You took the twigs out of mine!

ZOOKEEPER. Well I know you aren't as crazy about them as Raph is.

ZOE. You are so thoughtful. *(To Raph.)* Hey Raph, I've got your salad here.

RAPH. Does it have the arsenic I asked for?

ZOE. *(Sighs.)* No Raph.

RAPH. Then I don't care.

ZOE. *(To Zookeeper.)* Don't worry, he'll eat it.

ZOOKEEPER. Thanks Zoe.

ZOE. Have you found out anything?

ZOOKEEPER. No, no leads yet. But we're still looking.

ZOE. Okay...thanks anyway.

ZOOKEEPER. Of course. *(Zookeeper addresses the audience as he walks to the final cage. Grizz is reading the paper.)* Zoe asked about her parents again, and again I had no news to tell her. I don't have the heart to tell her it's a lost cause. Any hope, even a false one, is better than none at all. *(Beat.)* Yep it's a busy day at the zoo, plenty to do and not a whole lot of time to slow down. But occasionally, I try to take a little extra time during my rounds. *(To Grizz.)* Hey there Grizz.

GRIZZ. What do you want?

ZOOKEEPER. I have your lunch.

GRIZZ. It better not be more fruit and berry shit.

ZOOKEEPER. It's salmon, your favorite. *(Beat.)*

GRIZZ. Just leave it over there. I'll eat it later.

ZOOKEEPER. You got it. *(He sets the fish in front of the cage, yet doesn't leave. He lingers. Grizz slowly looks up from his paper.)*

GRIZZ. What are you waiting for, a tip?

ZOOKEEPER. How are you feeling today?

GRIZZ. Same as I feel every day.

ZOOKEEPER. Would you tell me if you started feeling worse?

GRIZZ. *(Condescending.)* I feel fine, Doc.

ZOOKEEPER. Alright then. Have a good day Grizz. *(To audience.)* Grizz shows no symptoms today, but that doesn't mean he's not experiencing them. It doesn't matter if it's a good day or a bad day, he always says he's fine. It's only a matter of

time before I'll finally have to... I wish there was more I could do for him. I wish I could spend more time with him. But then a hippo goes and gets herself stuck in a watering hole. Well, I've put it off long enough. I hope no one's fed her yet.

(Zookeeper takes his supply cart and exits. We now see the animals go into their daily routine. The monkeys lounge around playing poker, Raph paints while Zoe reads on the sofa, and Grizz sits alone. First, we take a look at a day in the life of the monkeys. Chip, Z, Gib, and Spider sit from left to right. They eat a bowl of nuts as they play. They are in mid game and the atmosphere is tense.)

Z. I'm out.

GIB. I'll call. How many you want Spider?

SPIDER. Three. *(Gib deals him three cards.)*

GIB. Chip?

CHIP. One for me. *(Gib deals out one.)*

GIB. Dealer takes two. *(He deals himself two.)* Bet's to you Spider.

SPIDER. *(Checks his hand.)* I'll bet fifty. *(Throws chips in.)*

CHIP. *(Chuckles.)* Spider, you have the worst poker face. I can call your bluffs a mile away. I see your fifty, and raise you one hundred more. *(Throws chips in.)*

GIB. Dealer folds.

SPIDER. You know Chip, you talk a pretty big game, but I think you're full of it. I'll see your hundred, and raise you a hundred more.

CHIP. *(Laughs.)* The only one who's full of it is you. Let's see you put your money where your mouth is. I'll see your hundred and raise you five. *(Gib and Z react to the high bet.)* What do ya say, Tinkerbell? You in or out? *(Spider hesitates, but then throws in the chips.)*

SPIDER. Call. What do ya got?

CHIP. *(Lays his cards out.)* Straight, ace high. *(Spider pauses, and then finally tosses away his hand.)*

SPIDER. You got me. *(Chip gleefully gathers his chips as Gib picks up the cards.)*

CHIP. Haha, I knew it! I can call his bluffs a mile away, right Gib?

GIB. Sure can. It's just too bad you're not as lucky with the girls as you are with the cards.

CHIP. Hey! I do just fine with the ladies.

GIB. Oh really? Cause the last time you tried grooming a female she took an elbow to your testicles.

CHIP. It's called a love tap, Gib.

Z. That's called rejection, Chip.

CHIP. Whatever. Money talks sis. They'll come around.

GIB. They'll come around. That's turning into your catchphrase.

CHIP. Speaking of ladies, I hear you're no stranger to them Spider. How many girls have you had?

SPIDER. I've had my share.

CHIP. Oh come on, don't be so modest. How many have you had? Four? Five? Baker's dozen?

SPIDER. None of your business.

GIB. You have first bet Chip. *(Beat.)*

CHIP. I'll start off with ten. *(The monkeys continue to make bets and play until...)*

GIB. People! *(The monkeys all then start acting like... well, monkeys: making loud noises, jumping on furniture, throwing things, basically behaving very primitively. Finally the "people" leave and the monkeys resume behaving normally. They talk over one another as they attempt to get things back in order.)* Alright, whose bet was it?

SPIDER. Mine. I'll call it.

CHIP. These nuts are still good, right? Five second rule?

Z. Whose cards are these?

GIB. Maybe we should just re-deal.

SPIDER. I mean I'll still eat them. I don't care.

Z. Yeah, that's probably a good idea.

CHIP. I had a lousy hand anyway. *(By this point, everything should be back to normal with Gib collecting cards to shuffle.)* Guys, I don't know about you, but I am fed up with pretending to act like we are nothing but stupid, oblivious primates who do nothing but eat our own fleas and throw our own shit.

GIB. Hey, watch your language. There is a lady present. It is feces. And besides, we do do those things. *(He and Spider realize what was just said and laugh.)*

Z. Are you serious? How old are you?

GIB. You're never too old to laugh at a poop joke.

Z. Who told you that?

GIB. My grandpa. He was so wise...

SPIDER. Not to mention that whole poop throwing thing is a myth.

GIB. Yeah, I mean we only do it at weddings at bat mitzvahs.

Z. You two are disgusting.

SPIDER. Ah, lighten up **Z.** Don't tell me you're too good for a little dirt humor?

Z. Well excuse me for not laughing at every crappy joke you guys come up with.

GIB. I don't see why you wouldn't. We're very "fecetious."

CHIP. Come on Gib, be serious for a second. Aren't you tired of being treated like a chump?

GIB. Actually, I think I'm being treated just fine. I've got good company, good food, and a tree over my head. What's to complain about?

CHIP. How about self-respect and pride?

GIB. I didn't even know monkeys had those.

CHIP. Humans think they're such geniuses...with their big fancy computers and high-tech weapons...any moron can pound on a keyboard and blow stuff up. What makes them better than us?

GIB. They have more money. *(Sighs as he deals out the cards.)* Wake up and smell the potpourri, men have all the power. They always have, and there's not a single thing we can do to change that. We could all graduate from Harvard with honors and each earn a bachelors in electrical engineering and it wouldn't change their minds about us. They'd just chalk it up as a one in a million coincidence. Oh sure we'd get our fifteen minutes, maybe book a commercial or two, and then get sent right back here. To them we are monkeys, significantly lower on the intelligence scale and that's where we'll always be. All we can do is play the hand we're dealt and make the best of it. *(He throws in some chips.)* I'll bet twenty. *(The monkeys continue to play as the action shifts to the next cage. By this point Raph has gone offstage, leaving Zoe alone reading a book on the sofa. Raph enters carrying a large rock and sets it down next to Zoe.)*

ZOE. *(Without looking up from her book.)* No.

RAPH. Why won't you help me?

ZOE. Because all this will do is give you a bump on your head and a migraine.

RAPH. That's why you need to hit me multiple times.

ZOE. The last time I tried helping you in your little suicide trip was four months ago. I hit you once and seem to recall you saying something like, "Ow. Ow. Oh my God. Ow. That really hurt. Oh God my head. I think I'm bleeding. Ow. Ow. Ow."

RAPH. *(Flustered.)* Well if you had hit me harder the first time, I would have been knocked unconscious and wouldn't have felt anything.

ZOE. This is completely ridiculous. If you really want to kill yourself, then do it yourself. Just be aware that if you decide to do it today, you might want to wait

until after the zoo closes. It would be considerate of you not to force people to listen to your screams of death. *(Zoe nonchalantly moves to the exercise bike and begins riding it. Raph pitifully goes to his easel and resumes painting.)*

RAPH. I don't understand why you feel the need to exercise all the time. You look fine.

ZOE. It makes me feel good. If I don't exercise, I feel fat and lazy. Plus it's a good way to take my mind off things; which is probably the same reason you like to paint.

RAPH. Yeah. It also helps me express myself and everything I'm feeling.

ZOE. So that explains the paintings of blood, explosions, and severed heads. *(She smiles.)*

RAPH. Is that your way of saying I'm some sort of depraved lunatic?

ZOE. *(Jovially.)* Maybe. *(Raph is unamused.)* Come on, I'm kidding. What are you painting now?

RAPH. *(Sarcastically.)* Blood, explosions, and severed heads. *(Zoe gets off the bike.)*

ZOE. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. Will you please tell me what you're painting?

RAPH. No. A painting cannot be revealed until it is finished. Didn't you know that?

ZOE. Well yeah, but I figured it couldn't hurt to give me a little sneak peek.

RAPH. The answer is no. *(Dramatic.)* I will not break my sacred artistic vow.

ZOE. Fine, big party pooper. I'm gonna see if the laundry's done. *(She exits. Raph calls across the cages to Grizz.)*

RAPH. How are you today, Grizz? Dead yet?

GRIZZ. No. Are you?

RAPH. No, not yet. But all in due time.

GRIZZ. Well you've got a lot of catching up to do if you plan to beat me to the underground.

RAPH. Well you had an unfair head start. I predict I'll kill myself any day now.

GRIZZ. Well you've been saying that for years and it hasn't happened yet.

RAPH. I'm merely waiting for the right moment.

GRIZZ. What are you waiting for, a meteor to fall from the sky?

RAPH. No, the next meteor shower isn't for another three years. That's simply too long to wait. *(They laugh, enjoying each other's good company.)*

GRIZZ. How's Zoe?

RAPH. A pain in the tailbone, as always.

GRIZZ. You tell her how you feel about her yet?

RAPH. Not yet. I'm waiting for-

GRIZZ. -waiting for the right moment. Talk about waiting too long.

RAPH. Grizz, it's not that simple. I can't just walk up to her and say "Hello Zoe. How are you today? I know we've been friends for the last six years, living in the same cage and all that, but I just thought I'd give you the heads up and tell you that I think I'm in love you!" A girl like that could have any animal in the zoo. She couldn't possibly be into me...look at me, Grizz. I'm a freak. I spend most of my time looking like a hunchback just so I don't bump my head on low hanging décor.

GRIZZ. That's all part of your charm.

RAPH. You make this all sound so easy.

GRIZZ. That's because it is.

RAPH. Look, maybe you've never dealt with rejection before, but I have. It's not exactly something I look forward to when I wake up in the morning. I've been shot down more times than I can count. What makes you think this time will be any different?

GRIZZ. Because she loves you.

RAPH. Oh really? And how do you know that?

GRIZZ. Because love would be the only reason she puts up with your suicidal shenanigans day in and day out. Now if I were you I'd tell her how you feel before she comes to her senses and realizes what a crazy head case you really are.

RAPH. Thanks for the pep talk, Grizz. You're so encouraging. *(Zoe enters with a laundry basket of black and white clothes. Grizz moves back to his chair.)*

ZOE. People can say what they want about my taste in clothes, but it sure makes it easy come laundry day. Raph, can you help me fold these?

RAPH. Why certainly *(Zoe and Raph sit on the couch and start folding clothes. Raph sees Grizz motion for him to talk to her. Flustered, Raph picks up a skirt.)*
This black skirt looks new.

ZOE. Yeah, it is.

RAPH. Feels like cotton.

ZOE. Yeah, I really like cotton.

RAPH. Oh me too. *(Beat.)* I also like wool.

ZOE. Oh, I could never wear wool.

RAPH. Yeah me neither.

ZOE. I'd feel like I was wearing a distant relative or something.

RAPH. Right! Talk about awkward! (*Awkward silence. Grizz gestures more fervently.*) Zoe, we've been friends for a long time...

ZOE. Uh-huh, almost six years.

RAPH. Has it been that long? Wow, that really is a long time huh?

ZOE. Yep, long time.

RAPH. That's almost as long as my neck. (*He laughs to himself.*)

ZOE. Don't do that.

RAPH. Do what?

ZOE. Make fun of yourself.

RAPH. Why not? Everyone else does. I'm merely beating them to the punch.

ZOE. Are you talking about the monkeys? Raph, their job is to make fun of everything. You can't take what they say personally.

RAPH. It's not just the monkeys. When I was younger, I was constantly harassed; getting called names like Daddy Long Neck, Riff Raph, and TT, which is the abbreviation for Too Tall. I grew sick of it, so I thought if I made fun of myself then everyone else would leave me alone.

ZOE. You don't need to keep doing that to yourself, Raph. I don't make fun of you.

RAPH. (*Under his breath.*) That's because you're perfect.

ZOE. What?

RAPH. I said I bet these pants fit you perfect. What are they, a size six?

ZOE. They're a size four.

RAPH. A size four? Really? Wow, look at you losing weight. Good for you.

ZOE. Don't think you can change the subject just because you're complimenting my new figure.

RAPH. I'm sorry.

ZOE. I have lost ten pounds in the last two weeks, thanks for noticing.

RAPH. You're welcome.

ZOE. Anyway, my point is you don't have to keep killing your self-esteem. That's probably why you want to kill yourself.

RAPH. No, that's not why.

ZOE. Okay, then why?

RAPH. ...I can't tell you.

ZOE. You can tell me anything, Raph.

RAPH. *(Touched.)* Really?

ZOE. *(Serious.)* Really.

RAPH. Okay. Zoe...

ZOE. Yeah?

RAPH. *(Completely flustered.)* I...I...I love folding laundry. Yes, I really feel a special sense of accomplishment after I finish folding a large load of laundry. I'm going to go fold mine right now. Ta-ta! *(Raph exits, bumping and blundering into the furniture as he goes. Grizz shakes his head. Zoe goes back to the couch and begins putting the folded laundry back in the basket.)*

ZOE. One of these days I'll figure out what's going on in that giraffe brain of is, and when I do, I'm probably gonna wish I hadn't. *(Zoe takes her laundry basket and exits.)*

SCENE 3

Zookeeper casually enters. Crickets chirp as Zookeeper reminisces.

ZOOKEEPER. August 13th, 2009. It's 11:55PM and I'm heading home to bed, but I'm in no real hurry to get there. It's a beautiful night and there's not a cloud in the sky. It's so peaceful. The crickets are out in full force, playing their famous symphony. It reminds of me when I was a young man fresh out of college. School had just ended and my fellow college graduates and I went out for drinks to celebrate. I wasn't much of a drinker so I stayed outside in the parking lot. I remember sitting on the hood of my car, listening to the sound of the crickets, feeling the breeze on my face, looking up at the stars...when suddenly I felt the car shift its weight. It was Angela... Angela was that friend you'd known for a long time and always had funny feelings for but never did anything about it. She and I met our sophomore year and got to know each other pretty well over our last two years of college. But that night...we talked for hours about anything and everything...and everything around us seemed to fade out and become blurry until she was the only thing in focus. Now I know what you're probably thinking: romantic mood, the two of us alone together, surely sparks were about to fly. Well, that's exactly what happened. At one point we looked at each other, and I said, "You've got something in your eye." And as I went to brush her hair out of her face...I kissed her. Now we didn't go any further than that. We didn't need to...that

kiss was all we needed to start a relationship...a relationship that ended up lasting a lifetime. So now whenever I hear crickets, I remember that summer night on the hood of my car. Animals are no stranger to romance either. They just go about it a bit differently... (*Zookeeper fades away. Z sits alone, stargazing. Zoe enters carrying a book.*)

ZOE. Penny for your thoughts?

Z. Huh? Oh, hey Zoe.

ZOE. It looked like you were off in another world. What were you thinking about?

Z. Life I guess.

ZOE. That's a pretty heavy topic.

Z. What are you doing up so late?

ZOE. Oh I love reading late at night, especially during the summer. It's so peaceful. (*Offstage a thud is heard.*)

RAPH. (*Offstage.*) Ah damn it!

ZOE. (*Calling.*) Did you hit your head on the showerhead again?

RAPH. (*Offstage.*) ...yeah.

ZOE. (*Calling.*) Give me a second. I'll get you an ice pack.

Z. I bet he goes through a lot of ice packs.

ZOE. Not really, he's normally careful about bumping his head into things.

Z. So have you told him how you feel about him?

ZOE. I don't know what you're talking about.

Z. Yeah you do.

ZOE. (*Beat.*) I don't know Z...I want to tell him that I care about him...that I love him, but...

Z. Are you about to use the "I don't want to ruin the friendship" excuse?

ZOE. It's not just that. I mean yeah, I am worried that a relationship could mess up our friendship, but it's more than that. Giraffes and zebras aren't supposed to be together. We're not "compatible," all the books say so.

Z. Screw what the books say. Screw what anyone says! What does your heart say? (*Beat.*)

ZOE. Thank you.

Z. Come on, what are girlfriends for?

ZOE. Enough about my love life, what about yours?

Z. Ha! What love life?

ZOE. Oh please, there must be some monkey who's caught your eye.

Z. Well... *(Spider enters behind Z.)*

SPIDER. Hey **Z.**

Z. Hey Spider.

ZOE. I should go get Raph that ice pack. *(She smiles at Z and exits.)*

SPIDER. It's nice out tonight.

Z. Yeah, the stars are out. Don't get to see them very often.

SPIDER. Crickets are out tonight, too. *(Spider looks around and finds a cricket. He offers it to Z.)* Hungry?

Z. No thanks, I had one earlier. *(Spider eats the bug and sits next to Z.)* It really makes you think, doesn't it?

SPIDER. What?

Z. Looking up at the stars and thinking about just how small and insignificant we are.

SPIDER. I try not to dwell on it too much. Don't really see that doing much good

Z. I feel it gives me a healthy perspective on things. Thinking about how small we are compared to the entire universe kinda makes everything we experience pale in comparison, which I guess for me makes it easier to deal with.

SPIDER. I'd like to think we're just as important as the stars. Even though we might not be as big physically, we should at least have just as big a purpose for being here as anything else. If we don't, then why are we even here ya know?

Z. Wow that was actually kind of deep. I didn't know you were capable of deep.

SPIDER. I'm capable of a lot of things. *(The two share a look.)* You've got a, uh, bug on your head.

Z. I do?

SPIDER. Yeah. Oh, there's another one. Let me get 'em for you.

Z. Thanks. *(Spider begins to groom Z.)*

SPIDER. So what was your life like before you ran away and joined the zoo?

Which by the way let me point out that you're living every child's fantasy.

Z. Oh, lucky me. No, I didn't get the luxury of choosing to be a part of this "fantasy." Chip and I were living in Africa; we had a home in one of the biggest trees in the northern part of the rainforest. Mom and Dad decided to move deeper in to avoid the incoming logging companies, but Chip wanted to stay put. He said he wasn't afraid of any "two-bit, brainless lumberjack" and told me that whatever happened, we'd fight through it together. Two weeks later the loggers came. While the other monkeys evacuated, Chip refused to leave. He didn't want to run away

like a coward, and I couldn't leave him there by himself. Finally, our tree was cut down. Some workers found us and took us to a nearby animal clinic. Next thing we knew, we were here. That was eight years ago.

SPIDER. How old were you?

Z. I was three.

SPIDER. So Chip's the reason you two are stuck here? *(Z clutches a small star necklace.)*

Z. Yeah...he's changed so much...back home we were so close and now...we hardly spend any time together any more.

SPIDER. And the Brother of the Year award goes to...

Z. Don't think that way about him Spider. I know he feels guilty about everything that happened and he just doesn't know how to make it right.

SPIDER. So instead he takes his guilt out on everyone else. Swell.

Z. What do you mean?

SPIDER. I don't know if you knew this, but your brother is using me as his own personal self-help therapy.

Z. What did he do?

SPIDER. Let's see, yesterday he tied my tail to the tire swing for "looking at him funny," and today he punched me in the arm because I was breathing too close to him.

Z. *(Laughs.)* Maybe you just had really bad banana breath.

SPIDER. Ha ha, very funny.

Z. Well if it's any consolation, I don't hate you.

SPIDER. Well that's good cause I think my arm's bruised enough already. *(They laugh together, but soon the laughter dies down and they stare at one another.)*

Z. You've got a, uh, bug on you.

SPIDER. I do?

Z. Yeah. Here, let me get it for you. *(Z begins to groom Spider.)* So we've talked a lot about me, what about you? Where'd you come from? How'd you get here?

SPIDER. There's not much to tell. I spent most of my life in the rainforest too, only I hail from South America. Yeah the Amazon was awesome, plenty of bugs to go around, but after a while it got kind of boring. Aside from the occasional boa constrictor trying to eat your face there just wasn't anything dangerous or exciting going on. I needed a change, I needed some excitement, ya know? So when I was nine I traveled to the biggest jungle I could think of: New York City. Stowed away

on countless trucks and trains, almost got caught a couple times. Before long I found myself in Texas. I figured I'd stay in Austin for a while and relax, but man that town knows how to party! *(Beat.)* I would have stayed longer but I had my sights set on New York, so I packed up and moved again. I got as far as Tennessee before Animal Control finally caught up with me. When they found out I hadn't escaped from any zoo, they sent me to this one. The rest is history.

Z. Well, would you care to give me a history lesson?

SPIDER. What?

Z. You conveniently left out the part about all your girlfriends.

SPIDER. Oh yeah right, them. *(Spider gets up and goes to the tire swing.)*

Z. Uh-huh. *(Z follows him.)*

SPIDER. *(Hesitates.)* It's really not that big of a deal.

Z. Uh-huh...

SPIDER. Look, I'm not proud of it, okay?

Z. Just tell me how many you've had? *(Beat.)*

SPIDER. Seventeen.

Z. Seventeen?

SPIDER. Yeah. No, wait... No it was fifteen. I had to count two of them out. They only went out with me because I lied and said I was the monkey from "Ace Ventura."

Z. *(Laughs.)* Are you sure that's all?

SPIDER. *(Hesitates.)* Yep, that's all.

Z. Well that's quite the high score. I'm surprised you haven't mentioned this before at the poker table. I thought guys loved to brag about stuff like that.

SPIDER. I'm trying to put that lifestyle behind me. Fresh start.

Z. Why would you want to do that? Sounds like you had the perfect set-up, girls fawning all over you. Why in the world would you give that up?

SPIDER. Because I wanted something more substantial.

Z. Really? Like what?

SPIDER. Like love. To have someone who cares about me, even the parts of me that are screwed up. And also because I want to have someone to love, really love; to hold them and protect them from anyone and anything. I've never found something like that.

Z. You think you ever will? Find something like that?

SPIDER. Maybe... *(Both monkeys are now lost in each other.)*

Z. Is there another bug on me?

SPIDER. No. Is there one on me?

Z. No... *(They both go in for a kiss.)*

GIB. *(Offstage.)* Hey, has anyone seen my earplugs? *(Gib enters.)* Chip snores louder than a howler monkey. I can't get to sleep without them. *(Beat.)* Am I interrupting something?

Z. *(Simultaneous.)* What? No, you weren't interrupting anything. Nothing's going on. Yeah, Chip is definitely a snorer, can't shut him up awake or asleep. Good idea, Spider. I'll go check the bathroom. Goodnight Spider.

SPIDER. *(Simultaneous.)* What? No, nothing's going on. Why would you think that? You said you can't find your earplugs? Have you tried checking the bathroom? Z, how 'bout you check the bathroom. I'll look around out here.

Goodnight **Z.** *(Z exits while Spider searches for the missing earplugs by the poker table.)*

GIB. Lot of stars out tonight.

SPIDER. Oh yeah, a plethora.

GIB. Uh-huh, yep. Lots of stars, full moon, crickets chirping... pretty romantic wouldn't ya say?

SPIDER. Huh? Oh yeah, sure.

GIB. Hey, you've got a bug on you.

SPIDER. No there's not, Z got 'em all. *(Gib smiles.)* Oh wipe that stupid grin off your face, will ya? Nothing happened.

GIB. Nothing happened cause I showed up.

SPIDER. Nothing was going to happen.

GIB. Liar. You two were about to go ape on each other.

SPIDER. No we weren't.

GIB. Gonna get wild and freaky.

SPIDER. Knock it off! *(Gib begins to sing "Discovery Channel.")* Shut up, alright!?

GIB. Dude, why are you stressin' out? This is awesome! I'm glad you two are hookin' up.

SPIDER. Yeah, well I think you're forgetting one minor detail.

GIB. What's that?

SPIDER. Chip.

GIB. Oh.

SPIDER. Yeah.

GIB. Dude, Chip's gonna kill you.

SPIDER. I know Gib.

GIB. No, I mean he is literally going to end your life.

SPIDER. Got it. Thanks.

GIB. He's gonna beat your face in until-

SPIDER. Alright, I got it! Chip's gonna go bananas on me. Don't you think I know that?

GIB. The only thing Chip cares about more than himself is his sister. I would know because the first thing he told me when we first met was "If you so much as look at my little sister, I'll choke you with your own tail." Needless to say I brought sunglasses back in style.

SPIDER. What am I supposed to do Gib? I think I'm fallin' for her, but I don't want to wear my own tail as a necktie. Shit man!

GIB. Hey, you know how I feel about that kind of language. The politically correct term is feces.

SPIDER. Come on! Help me think! *(They pace and contemplate.)*

GIB. I got it!

SPIDER. What?

GIB. We'll stick a clothespin on his nose.

SPIDER. ...how does that possibly help me?

GIB. It doesn't, but at least I'll be able to sleep later.

SPIDER. Come on, this is serious!

GIB. Okay okay alright, how about this: let me feel him out about the situation. I'll throw out a hypothetical scenario and see how he reacts to it.

SPIDER. Well don't jump the gun here, Gib. I don't know if Z will even go for me. Let me feel her out about it first.

GIB. Oh yeah sure, I'll let you feel Z as much as you want.

SPIDER. You know what I meant.

GIB. Alright, I'll wait awhile so you guys can fall in love and then I'll throw Chip the hypotheticals. *(Spider appears uneasy.)* Hey don't sweat it, okay? We've know each other for eight years. We're as thick as thieves! He won't suspect a thing.

SPIDER. Gib, you can't breathe a word about what's really going on.

GIB. Spider, subtle is my middle name. I'll be as discreet as a baboon's buttocks.

SPIDER. They're not discreet at all, their butts are hot pink.

GIB. Yeah I know, but it was really fun to say. *(Spider exits.)* Oh come on! That was clever! *(Gib follows him out. Zoe returns with her book. She sits on the couch and reads. Raph enters holding an ice pack to his forehead.)*

RAPH. What are you reading?

ZOE. Oliver Twist.

RAPH. Is it good?

ZOE. Very.

RAPH. What's it about?

ZOE. Well, Oliver is an orphan who has to find his way in the world on his own, and he comes across all kinds of despicable villains and thieves. But no matter how horrible his circumstances were, he still had hope, and he found happiness in the end.

RAPH. Sounds like this isn't the first time you've read it.

ZOE. Yes, I've read this a few times. I feel it has a lot of personal meaning.

RAPH. Some night out, huh?

ZOE. Yeah, I've never seen so many stars. *(Raph sits next to Zoe. Grizz enters his cage, though unbeknownst to the other two.)*

RAPH. I've never heard so many crickets, either. They're so annoying.

ZOE. I actually kind of like them.

RAPH. Really?

ZOE. Yeah, it sounds like they're singing.

RAPH. Ah! Well yes, I like them too. What I meant to say before was that they can be annoying sometimes, but on a night like tonight they're nice. Very nice. *(Grizz turns his record player on. A slow dance is playing. Raph and Zoe look at Grizz.)*

GRIZZ. What? It helps me sleep.

ZOE. How strange? I've never heard him play music to get to sleep before.

RAPH. Maybe he's sleepwalking! *(Grizz shoots a quick glare at Raph and exits.)*

ZOE. Sleepwalking? I didn't know Grizz did that.

RAPH. Oh yeah. Yes as a matter of fact he was the one who made that racket out here last night.

ZOE. I thought that was you screaming because a nightmare scared you.

RAPH. ...no no, it was Grizz.

ZOE. Huh...

RAPH. Seems a shame to let a good song like this go to waste.

ZOE. Are you asking me to dance?

RAPH. What? No, no that's ridiculous. Me ask you to dance? Don't make me laugh, hahahaha...haha...if I was would you say yes?

ZOE. Of course I would. *(Zoe offers her hand to Raph. He takes it and they slow dance. After a while, Raph gently spins her.)* I didn't know you were such a graceful dancer.

RAPH. Well you know I do what I can.

ZOE. Well what other things "can" you do?

RAPH. If you must know, I've been told I have quite the singing voice.

ZOE. Really?

RAPH. ...uh-huh.

ZOE. Well let's hear a little something right now?

RAPH. Right now?

ZOE. Yes, is there something wrong with right now?

RAPH. Oh no, right now is fine. Right now is great, perfect. *(Raph clears his throat. He opens his mouth to sing, but stops himself.)* You know it's just that I haven't warmed up yet and I would hate to strain my vocal cords.

ZOE. Uh-huh.

RAPH. No honestly, I could seriously permanently cause detrimental injury to my voice if I attempt to sing right now. I'm merely trying to be a good steward of my instrument.

ZOE. I think you're just full of crap.

RAPH. Okay...well you called me a good dancer, and you can't take that back.

ZOE. *(Laughs.)* You are so ridiculous.

RAPH. Well you know I do what I can. *(They continue dancing.)*

ZOE. *(Laughs.)* Do you remember how we first met?

RAPH. Haha, yes...

ZOE. You were completely covered in honey. You told me you were hoping that all the bee stings would cause you to have a reaction and pass out.

RAPH. Yes...and then you said if I covered myself in flowers it would make me seem more appealing.

ZOE. Haha, yeah! And that's when the bee stung you.

RAPH. I remember that. Yes, that little bugger hurt like hell.

ZOE. You totally cried.

RAPH. I did not!

ZOE. Yes you did! Don't deny it!

RAPH. Okay fine, but you cannot make fun of me because those were pain tears.

ZOE. I'll make fun of you if I want to. (*Raph groans.*) After you got stung I remember helping you put the ointment on. And as I was rubbing it in, all of a sudden I felt this connection from you...like I'd known you all my life.

RAPH. You did?

ZOE. Yeah I did. Raph, I've wanted to tell you something for a long time.

RAPH. Say what, Zo?

ZOE. I just wanted to tell you...how much I value your friendship, and I don't ever want that to change. And-

RAPH. (*Disheartened, he stops dancing.*) Oh...yes. Thank you Zoe. You've been a...a great friend too. The best friend any animal could ask for.

ZOE. Raph, what's wrong?

RAPH. Nothing... (*Grizz coughs offstage.*)

ZOE. Grizz?

RAPH. (*Calling.*) Grizz, are you alright? (*Grizz enters wearing a robe, coughing profusely.*)

GRIZZ. Yeah, I'm fine. It's just a coughing spell. Comes and goes all the time.

ZOE. Do you want me to go call the Zookeeper?

GRIZZ. You'll do no such thing. I just need a glass of water and I'll be fine. Now go to bed.

RAPH. Go on, Zoe. I'll make sure he's okay.

ZOE. Alright. Goodnight Grizz, try to feel better. Goodnight Raph. Thanks for the dance.

RAPH. Anytime. Good night. (*Zoe grabs her book and exits.*) Could you be more obvious?

GRIZZ. What? I thought it was a nice touch.

RAPH. Ah yes, the only thing you were missing was a giant heart descending from the ceiling.

GRIZZ. I tried getting one, but it was on back-order. (*He laughs, which causes him to cough heavily.*)

RAPH. It's getting worse, isn't it?

GRIZZ. ...yes.

RAPH. How much longer until...

GRIZZ. I don't know, let me check my calendar.

RAPH. Grizz...

GRIZZ. I don't know. Zookeeper said a month or two, but there's no real way to tell.

RAPH. I'm sorry.

GRIZZ. We all know it's coming Raph. It's just a matter of when.

RAPH. At least you were able to get some sort of timetable. Blake didn't have that luxury.

GRIZZ. What have I told you about bringing him up? Don't! Don't talk about Blake, ever!

RAPH. I'm sorry.

GRIZZ. That should not have happened. That was a mistake.

RAPH. I know it was.

GRIZZ. *(Softly.)* It should have been me. He was healthy; I was the one who was sick.

RAPH. You can't keep blaming yourself for that, Grizz. It wasn't your fault. It was just his time.

GRIZZ. Well time made a mistake! *(Beat.)* I don't give a damn about time. It never gave a damn about him. *(Grizz exits. Raph looks up to the sky.)*

RAPH. If there's anyone up there, you're not giving me a lot of reasons to want to live. *(Raph exits.)*

SCENE 4

Zookeeper rushes on carrying a box of supplies.

ZOOKEEPER. August 21st, 2009. 3:00PM. Vans are just now pulling in with this week's shipment order. Once every week or so the zoo receives fresh supplies of food and medicine; but today's shipment is bringing something else very special. Now I know what you're probably asking yourselves: What could it be? Well, I'll let that be a surprise. *(He exits. Gib and Chip are playing cards. Zoe reads on the couch.)*

GIB. And that's how my uncle got the nickname "Screwball."

CHIP. Wow. One minute you're minding your own business, hanging upside down eating a mango and the next-

GIB. An orangutan comes up and twists your primate parts. You always think it'll never happen to you...full house.

CHIP. You're on fire today, Gib.

GIB. It's about time I had a good day. Now I can finally pay back my mom.

CHIP. Gib? Can I ask you something?

GIB. Yeah, sure.

CHIP. Do you think I'm a good brother to Z?

GIB. Sure you are. She's really lucky to have you in her life.

CHIP. Yeah well, I just feel like if it wasn't for me she could've-

GIB. Dude, how many times do I have to tell you? Enough with the guilt-trip. You can't keep thinkin' like that.

CHIP. That's easy for you to say...if I weren't so damn hard-headed she wouldn't be stuck in this sideshow.

GIB. Well look at the bright side, you've got all this time to really reconnect with her. When was the last time the two of you just hung out and talked?

CHIP. Too long.

GIB. Take my advice, spend the afternoon together. Get her a banana split or something. You'll laugh, you'll make funny faces at the humans, you'll have a great time.

CHIP. That's a good idea. Thanks man.

GIB. No worries.

CHIP. Where is Z, anyway? I haven't seen her much these last few days.

GIB. Oh I'm sure she's just doing girl stuff like painting her nails or taking a mud bath.

CHIP. And where's Spider? I haven't seen his sorry ass lately either.

GIB. (*Flustered.*) Well I'm sure he's just off doing guy stuff like...farting or...masturbating. Hey, I've got a hypothetical scenario for ya. Hypothetically, what would you say if your little sister had herself a little...boyfriend?

CHIP. I wouldn't say anything.

GIB. Really?

CHIP. Nah, I'd just kill him.

GIB. Oh. Okay. But what if this boyfriend was someone you knew? A good friend of yours? Hypothetically.

CHIP. It's not you, is it?

GIB. Me? No, don't be ridiculous.

CHIP. Good.

GIB. I'm talking about Spider.

CHIP. What!?

GIB. Hypothetically!

CHIP. I'd sooner sleep with Z myself before I'd ever let Spider even close to my little sister!

GIB. Dude, did you just hear yourself? That's disgusting. You're pretty hard on the kid. What do you got against him anyway?

CHIP. If you heard even a fraction of the things I have about him, you'd feel the same way.

GIB. What things?

CHIP. Like the fact he's impregnated half the monkeys in the southern hemisphere. He probably has more bastard children than fleas on his back, and my sister is not gonna have any part of that.

GIB. That's gotta be an exaggeration. You can't put too much stock into rumors like that.

CHIP. Well even if it was just one, that's too many.

GIB. Come on, I'm sure that was a long time ago. He seems like a good guy now.

CHIP. They always seem like good guys, don't they?

GIB. Give Spider a chance Chip. I'm sure he's not as bad as you think if you got to know him.

CHIP. Since when did you join his fan club? *(Beat.)*

GIB. Well you know, I'm just- *(Chip stands.)*

CHIP. And since when did you start messing with hypothetical scenarios?

GIB. I mean I like to think I'm fairly imaginative-

CHIP. Gib, do you know something?

GIB. Well hypothetically- *(Chips makes fists.)*

CHIP. Do these look hypothetical to you?

GIB. No, those look very un-hypothetical.

CHIP. Then I suggest you stick to the literal unless you want to end up like uncle Screwball. *(Raph enters with a rope tied around his neck. He looks around the room before approaching Zoe.)*

ZOE. *(Without looking up.)* Forget it. *(Frustrated, Raph searches the room for a proper perch to hang himself. Finally he settles for the exercise bike and ties the rope to it. Realizing the stupidity and futility of this plan, he sits down in an attempt to make himself shorter. No success. He then slowly sinks lower and lower until finally he lays flat on the floor.)* Raph, you know that every time you try to hang

yourself you get a rope burn, and then who has to put on the antibiotic ointment?
Me. (*Raph gets up, unwraps the rope from his neck, and sits next to Zoe on the couch.*) Did you try hanging yourself from the tree in the backyard?

RAPH. Yes. The branch broke.

ZOE. I've been telling you for months you should exercise more. If you'd go running once in a while, you might drop a few pounds. Give it a chance, before you know it you'll be fit as a fiddle for the next time you try to hang yourself. (*Raph crosses to his easel and begins painting. Silence.*)

RAPH. Maybe I'd go running if you weren't on the bike all the time.

ZOE. I'm not on the bike right now. So go on it now.

RAPH. Well maybe I will.

ZOE. So then do it.

RAPH. I will.

ZOE. Okay.

RAPH. Okay! (*Raph gets on the exercise bike.*)

ZOE. So how's the painting coming?

RAPH. Wonderfully. It's coming along wonderfully.

ZOE. Still won't give me a hint on what it is?

RAPH. Nope.

ZOE. Well I just hope it's not another testimony to gore and death.

RAPH. What if it is? What's wrong with that?

ZOE. Well it's just that you always hang your paintings when they're finished, and that's a lot of red on the walls. I'm starting to feel like I live at Quentin Tarantino's house. I hope I didn't hurt your feelings, but I felt like I should tell you, as your friend.

RAPH. (*Miffed.*) First of all, Quentin Tarantino is a brilliant film maker. If you would ever sit down and watch *Inglorious Bastards*, you'd understand. Second, perhaps the red wouldn't stand out quite so much if the overall color scheme didn't look like it came from a 1950's TV sitcom. There's so much black and white I feel like I'm trapped in the Twilight Zone. I felt like I ought to tell you, as your friend.

ZOE. (*Miffed.*) And just what exactly is wrong with black and white?

RAPH. Nothing's wrong with it if you like death. Which, come to think of it, my blood and gore paintings matches perfectly with your grim reaper motif. I'm merely giving it a little splash of color. (*Z and Spider enter holding hands, but let go when they see Chip.*)

SPIDER. *(Simultaneous.)* Hey there guys. What's goin' on? What's up?

Z. *(Simultaneous.)* Hi big brother. How are you? What's up?

CHIP. We were just playing a friendly game of poker. Say! Why don't you join us?

SPIDER. *(Simultaneous.)* We can't, we were actually on our way to- I mean I was going somewhere and she was going somewhere else-

Z. *(Simultaneous.)* We can't, I was planning on going somewhere with- actually I was going to take a nice, quiet walk by myself and no one else-

CHIP. Oh, but I insist. *(Chip puts his arms around them.)* It's been too long since we've all just hung around and talked and played our favorite game as a family.

SPIDER. *(Simultaneous.)* No really, we're fine-

Z. *(Simultaneous.)* No really, we're fine-

CHIP. *(Sternly.)* Sit.

SPIDER. *(Simultaneous.)* Well I guess we can play one game of poker. I mean, it has been a while. Hey Gib, how's it goin'?

Z. *(Simultaneous.)* Yeah, of course we'll play. I mean when have we ever turned down a poker game right? Hi Gib. Good to see you. *(All monkeys are now seated at the poker table. Grizz enters and turns on his record player. Classical music plays as Grizz relaxes in his recliner.)*

CHIP. Deal the cards Gib. *(Gib deals out the cards.)*

ZOE. Well if it bothers you so much, you are more than welcome to change it. Feel free to redecorate whatever you want. Oh, but that would require you following through and actually doing it. Not exactly your strong suit, now is it?

CHIP. So how are you sis? I haven't seen you in a while. What'cha been up to?

Z. Oh you know, this that and the other.

CHIP. Oh come on, tell me. I want to know what's going on in your life, even the little things.

Z. That's interesting. You've never seemed to take an interest in my life before. *(Beat.)*

CHIP. Well I am now.

Z. Alright, if you really want to know, I've recently started to learn how to juggle.

CHIP. Really?

GIB. Juggle huh? Hey Spider, don't you juggle? *(Spider shoots Gib a look.)*

SPIDER. Yeah. Yeah, a little bit.

RAPH. While we're on the subject of black and white, I took the liberty of removing your laundry from the dryer earlier and I couldn't help noticing you had a

rip in one of your jeans. Perhaps you should consider moving up a size. As your friend, I wanted to make you aware as I would hate for you to be put into an embarrassing situation.

ZOE. For your information, I've had those jeans for a really long time and that rip you are referring to is probably the result of me wearing it all the time. Clothes get worn, they wear out, it's not unusual.

RAPH. The rear is such an unfortunate place for it to have "worn out." (*Zoe and Raph continue to argue as the monkeys talk.*)

CHIP. Well Z, if you had just told me you were interested in juggling, I would have taught you.

Z. Actually I-

SPIDER. Actually she already has a teacher.

CHIP. Oh really? And who would that be?

SPIDER. Me.

GIB. Who needs a card? Anyone need a card? Chip? Z? No? Well I sure could use a few, how 'bout you Spider?

CHIP. You are. Well then I certainly hope you're better at juggling than you are at poker.

SPIDER. Oh don't worry. I'm a very hands on kind of teacher.

GIB. Oh look, people! (*Gib starts acting like a monkey, but no one joins him.*)

GRIZZ. Can you all keep it down? How's an old bear supposed to relax around here.

ZOE. You are the last person to be talking about embarrassing situations. You bump your head on everything!

RAPH. Oh now we're getting into the height jokes! How original!

CHIP. I don't think you'll be giving my sister any more lessons.

Z. Chip, I don't think it's your choice who teaches-

CHIP. Z, I said I don't want him teaching you and that's final! (*To Spider.*) I'll be teaching her from now.

SPIDER. Well then I hope you're a better juggler than you are a brother.

Z. Spider!

CHIP. That's it! (*Chip lunges at Spider, but Gib intervenes.*)

GIB. Guys, chill out! Let's settle this like monkeys... rock, paper, scissors. (*The monkeys all begin an intense struggle.*)

RAPH. You always wear black and white! What, are you afraid of color or something?

ZOE. It's better than wearing puke yellow!

RAPH. I've told you before, it is ochre!

GRIZZ. Hey shut up!

CHIP. Stay out of this grandpa! *(All the animals are now yelling and fighting. Zookeeper enters.)*

ZOOKEEPER. Hey! Knock it off! *(Zookeeper blows his whistle, which stops the fighting.)* Now I don't know what you're all fighting about, but we just received a special delivery that you all might be interested in, especially you Grizz.

GRIZZ. The only thing I'm interested in is peace and quiet. *(Zookeeper gestures to the empty cage.)*

ZOOKEEPER. We now have a new animal exhibit! They'll be here any second. So what do you say we give them a nice warm welcome, eh? *(Silence. The animals resume their arguing.)* Hey come on, knock it off! *(He blows his whistle again, but to no avail. All of a sudden, strange Latino urban music begins to rise above the chaos. Everyone stops their fighting and focuses on the unfamiliar sound. Finally the source of the music appears. A male figure, Hispanic in appearance, enters carrying a boom box. He is followed by two females.)*

HISPANIC MALE. Hola a todos! Ya llego la fiesta! *(Silence.)*

GIB. Who invited the three Caballeros? *(Blackout.)*

INTERMISSION

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS, ORDER A COPY ON AMAZON.COM USING THE FOLLOWING LINK:

http://www.amazon.com/Zookeepers-Journal-Acting-Jon-Christie/dp/194086559X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1443918712&sr=8-1&keywords=Zookeepers+journal