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...
(OGLEPED 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
da 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
going 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 Luennell 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)
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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)
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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.