Save the Panda

by

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DOWNLOAD PDF MAP

SAN DIEGO ZOO

WALKING THE ZOO

FRONT STREET
20-minute walk / Mild Terrain / Gateways to Discovery Outpost, Lost Forest, Outback, Urban Jungle, and Africa Rocks

PARK WAY
30-minute walk / Mild to Steep Terrain / Gateways to Africa Rocks, Asian Passage, Panda Canyon, Polar Rim, and Elephant Odyssey

CENTER STREET
15-minute walk / Steep Terrain / Gateways to Asian Passage and Outback

EASY STREET
7-minute walk / Mild Terrain / Access to Fern Canyon, Tiger, Orangutan, Hippo, and Monkey Trails

BIG CAT TRAIL
15-minute walk from Center Street to Africa Rocks / Mild Terrain / Access to Kiwi Trail

EAGLE TRAIL
10-minute walk / Steep Terrain / Access to Eagles / Gateways to Polar Rim and Elephant Odyssey

FERN CANYON TRAIL
20-minute walk from Easy Street to Park Way and Center Street / Steep Terrain and Stairs

HIPPO TRAIL
30-minute walk from Easy Street to Park Way / Mild to Steep Terrain

KIWI TRAIL
10-minute walk from Urban Jungle to Park Way / Steep Terrain

MONKEY TRAIL
15-minute walk from Entrance to Gorillas / Mild Terrain

ORANGUTAN TRAIL
15-minute walk from Easy Street to Monkey Trail / Mild Terrain

SUN BEAR TRAIL
10-minute walk from Center Street to Park Way / Mild Terrain

TIGER TRAIL
20-minute walk from Entrance to Tigers / Mild to Steep Terrain

GUEST SERVICES

- Guest Services / Lost & Found
- Bus / Skyfari Ticket Booths
- ATM
- Lockers
- First Aid & Nursing Station
- Restrooms
- Family Restrooms
- Escalator
- Elevator
- Stroller, Wheelchair and Scooter Rental

SHOPPING

1. Outside Information
2. Cinnamon Tree
3. Front Street Photos
4. Rentals
5. KidStore
6. San Diego Zoo Store
7. Sydney's Shoppe
8. Tusker's Trunk
9. Panda Shop
10. GREENZOO Coffee Co.
11. Treehouse Trader
12. Ituri Forest Outpost
13. Arctic Trader

DINING

1. Poppy's Patio
2. Front Street Café
3. Safari Kitchen
4. Flamingo Sandwich Co.
5. Lagoon Terrace
6. Sydney's Grill
7. Canyon Café
8. GREENZOO Coffee Co.
9. Jungle Java
10. Treehouse Café
11. Sabertooth Grill
12. Albert's Restaurant

CATERING

1. Discovery Picnic Area
2. Zoofari Party Area
3. Rondavel Room
4. Treetops Room

Map Locator
Express Bus Stop
Most Accessible Route

The San Diego Zoo was designed in an area with natural hills and valleys, which are inherent barriers to disabled access. The Zoo is making an effort to remove barriers to access; however many are technically not feasible to remove.

Mobility challenges? Shuttle available — contact any Zoo employee.

POLAR RIM
PANDA CANYON
LOST FOREST
ASIAN PASSAGE
ELEPHANT ODYSSEY
DISCOVERY OUTPOST
URBAN JUNGLE
AFRICA ROCKS
OUTBACK

PARKING

SMOKE-FREE FACILITY

www.sandiegozoo.org

by VISUAL MAPS www.visualmaps.dk

INT. HOME DEPOT - DAY

Every aisle is jam-packed with shoppers. The far-too-few WORKERS in ORANGE SMOCKS assist hundreds of weekend-handymen.

In BATHROOM FIXTURES...

MOM
Here! This faucet looks nice.

TEENAGE DAUGHTER
(while texting)
Can we pleeease go?!

DAD
I like this one.

MOM
It doesn't have the "H" & "C" on it. How will we know which is hot and which is cold?

DAD
By touch?

TEENAGE DAUGHTER
This is soooo boring!

MOM
Every time I use the sink?! What if I choose wrong? You know I despise warm toothpaste!

DAD
Here we go! Run your finger under before you stick the brush--

MOM
You're wasting water!

TEENAGE DAUGHTER
How long have we been here?!

As the angry upper-middle class brood make a scene, they're approached by

DANNY MATUZACK- 40's. Husky. Mullet. Bullish. Alpha-male with a lot of bravado but not much intellect.

DANNY
Hi there, folks! Danny Do-It-Yourself from your favorite TV show, "*Give My Sty a Makeover*". And this is your lucky day!

Autographs the teenager's cellphone face.

DAD
Are you talking to us?

Danny waves for his team:

OTIS UPSHAW - 30s. Sweet. Strong. Towering African American. Monster paws that dwarf his small MINI-CAMCORDER.

NICK HENDRICKS - 30s. Thin. Bad posture. Uni-brow. Outdated goatee surrounding a goofy grin. CLIPBOARD in hand.

DANNY
Nick, my producer. And Otis, our cameraman.

The two sidekicks share one brain and it's Danny's.

OTIS
I am rolling this here camera!

NICK
Do we have our family, Dan-O?

DANNY
Just might. Whatcha good people looking to build today?

DAD
Uh- a- we're redoing our bathroom.

DANNY
Howja like it done for free by the Fix-it-Squad?!

MOM
You're kidding?! Is this really happening?!

TEENAGE DAUGHTER
We're gonna be on TV?!

NICK
(into headset)
Alright boys, I believe we've found our stars!

The family hop around like idiots for the camera. They can't believe their luck.

INT. HOUSE BATHROOM - DAY

DANNY
I'm thinkin' jacuzzi tub. Vanity with a stone vessel sink in zebra wood.

MOM
Ooooh. That sounds classy.

OTIS CAM: The family follows Danny around the comically small bathroom like puppies. There's hardly room for one person in here let alone four and a giant cameraman.

DANNY
Okay, this might be a little over the top but how does a butt warming toilet seat sound?

DAD
Very practical.

DANNY
And obviously a 70" plasma television. To pass the time on those nights when the Mrs.' meatloaf ain't passin'. Am I right?

He nudges Dad who nods like a greedy moron.

EXT. MCMANSION - JUST AFTER

NICK
(through megaphone)
Time is money, people!

A DELIVERY TRUCK pulls into the driveway of this gluttonous architectural monstrosity. A seven bedroom house on a three bedroom house lot.

DANNY
(to Otis cam)
Okay Williams family, the men and supplies are here. We've got a lot of work to do.

Dad ceremonially hands Danny the HOUSE KEYS.

DANNY (CONT'D)
So get yer fat keisters out of here for a few hours. And when you return, be ready to have your minds blown!

They hop into their MINIVAN and wave goodbye as they drive away. Otis follows with the camera.

OTIS CAM: His THUMB takes up 80% of the frame.

WIPE TO:

EXT. MCMANSION - FIVE HOURS LATER

Early evening.

The Williams' minivan returns. They casually get out, SHOPPING BAGS in hand. Look around confused.

MOM
The trucks are gone.

DAD
Hmmm. You'd think the television crew would be here to greet us.

TEENAGE DAUGHTER
That jacuzzi tub better be done. I need to shave my legs tonight.

She marches to the FRONT DOOR. Kicks it open.

The girl and her parents drop their bags and their jaws.

INT. MCMANSION - CONTINUOUS

The bathroom's been redone. Call the style "minimalist". No mirrors. No shower. No toilet. Everything has been stripped clean.

Along with the bedrooms, kitchen, family and dining room. Appliances, furniture, dishes and electronics are all gone.

Sparks flicker on loose wires from looted light fixtures.

The family swallows hard. They've just been conned.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKSPUR ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND - DAY

Fourth Graders scale the MONKEY BARS like primates in T-shirts and shorts. Giggling. Happy. Carefree.

Until...

CARSON
Hey guys! Did you know, a group of monkeys is called a troop?

The kids continue swinging. Paying no attention to the weird little freckly boy.

CARSON (CONT'D)
This is so true. Chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans all can catch a cold, but monkeys can't.

CARSON CALLAGHAN - (9). KHAKI SHORTS. Safari PITH HELMET. Pale. Sweet. Talkative. Annoying to most.

CARSON (CONT'D)
HOWLER MONKEYS CAN BE HEARD 10 MILES AWAY!

So can Carson.

He opens a plastic GREEN CONTAINER. About the size of a lunch box. Inside are vintage 70's WILD KINGDOM INDEX CARDS. Old school internet. Color photos of exotic animals on the front, facts and statistics on the back.

A baseball card collection for kids who have no interest in sports.

CARSON (CONT'D)
(reading)
It's common for monkeys to carry hepatitis and simian herpes B.

He looks up to show the card. Unfortunately, he's scared everyone off as if HE carries simian herpes.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. LARKSPUR ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND - LATER

Near the TETHER BALL POLES...

CARSON
Ants never sleep. Also, they don't have lungs. This is so true, deer have no gallbladders...

He strolls the grounds offering his animal expertise to anyone who'll listen. Which is no one.

The lonely pariah stands in the center of the playground talking to himself in an Animal Planet-like narration.

CARSON (CONT'D)
The Carson is a peculiar beast. Unlike the other animals at the watering hole, he is the lone member of his species. No pack. No den. No gaggle to speak of...

BENNY (O.S.)
Hey Carson! Come here!

Oh crap. BENNY (11). Buzz cut. Sleeveless T. Crooked teeth. Two feet taller than his MERRY BAND OF BULLY MINIONS.

BENNY (CONT'D)
I want to talk to you for a sec.

Held back three times. Ya just know this kid will grow up to be a car salesman, gym coach, or Halliburton C.E.O.

CARSON
Hi Benny. How can I help you?

BENNY
Why do you wear that stupid hat?

Knocks off Carson's helmet to reveal a mop of RED HAIR. Damn, this kid never stood a chance.

CARSON
It's a pith helmet found mostly on the Serengeti. Keeps me from getting burnt. If I'm in the sun too long, my skin turns a shade of pink.

BENNY
Ha! Like a flamingo?!

His entourage laugh it up. You're a pink bird! Hee-hee!

CARSON
Exactly! Do you know why flamingos are pink? This is so true. It's because--

BENNY
'cause they eat pink shrimp.

CARSON
Actually-- oh. Yeah. That's right.

Wow. Got beaten to the punch by a kid whose gene pool holds maybe an inch of pond scum.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Do you know why they stand on one foot? Two reasons. This is so true. One, balance. Second, it takes less energy.
(demonstrates)
See? Try it! If you're on your feet all afternoon, this is a way you can conserve energy.

Benny's eye catches a PILE of DOG FECES. Has an idea.

BENNY
Fascinating. Hey Carson, show me that again over here.

CARSON
Oh, sure. Ya see, it's all about equilibrium...

BENNY
No. Stand right here.

CARSON
Okay.

Hops over on one foot.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Something else about flamingos, and this is so true, they can only eat when their heads are upside down. Like this.

Benny pushes Carson. He tips over, landing smack dab on the steaming dookie.

GREG
Epic fail!

GREG, Benny's dim-witted #2, and the other bullies erupt. This is by far the funniest thing they've ever seen.

Hey, they're nine.

BENNY
On the Wiki page for "Gullible" it has a picture of Carson.

GREG
That true?

BENNY
(sighs)
Yeah, you're holding his hand.

Carson dons his helmet and pretends the brown mess doesn't bother him. Tries to save face as they walk away.

CARSON
'least it wasn't elephant dung. Ya know, pachyderms poop over two tons a day.

As Carson wipes away the stain, we

WIPE TO:

A FRAMED FAMILY PHOTO of the Williams clan on vacation.

NICK (O.S.)
That's stainless steel. Ten bucks.

EXT. YARD SALE - LATE AFTERNOON

Nick takes a ten from an elderly BARGAIN HUNTER then saunters over to an attractive FEMALE SHOPPER.

NICK
Those lamps are fifty- no sixty years old. Family heirloom. Passed down from generation to generation... Ten bucks. Five if you include your phone number.

She opens her PURSE.

FEMALE SHOPPER
Here's twenty to leave me alone.

Scattered across the YELLOW LAWN of a rundown STUCCO SHACK OF A HOME, the Williams' stuff is hawked. Pennies on the dollar.

CARSON
How much for the telescope?

Collapsible, leather and brass SPYGLASS.

DANNY
Ten dollars, it's yours.

Carson scratches his chin. Thinking it over.

CARSON
Why you getting rid of it?

DANNY
Don't need 'em. Just bought myself a pair of night vision infrared binoculars. Top of the line.

CARSON
This is so true. Undergrads at Berkeley discovered that polar bears can't be seen with infrared, heat sensing technology...

DANNY
I don't care.

CARSON
It's due to deep layers of blubber and fur.

DANNY
Don't care.

CARSON
Even though their average body temperature is 37°C; they don't give off any detectable heat--

DANNY
I DON'T CARE!

The kid stops yakking. A little spooked from Danny's boisterous voice and bad breath.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Kid, do you want the spyglass or not?

CARSON
Who's Jennifer?

DANNY
What?!

CARSON
Says "Property of Jennifer Williams" here in Magic Marker.

DANNY
That's me.

CARSON
Oh. Well, Jennifer- may I call you Jenny?

DANNY
No.

CARSON
It's a little rich for my blood. Will you take five dollars and eleven cents?

DANNY
No.

CARSON
(sucks air through teeth)
Then I'm afraid I'm gonna have to walk away.

DANNY
Good.

CARSON
It's highly doubtful I'll be back.

DANNY
Let's hope so.

The kid digs through his enormous BACKPACK and waves a

CARSON
Crisp five dollar bill. Right here for the taking.

They stare at each other intently. Neither backing down.

CARSON (CONT'D)
President Abraham Lincoln... Stove pipe hat... Regal beard... Freed the slaves... Daniel Day-Lewis won an Academy Award for his mesmerizing and captivating portrayal.

So much anger in Danny's eyes.

A long uncomfortable beat.

CARSON (CONT'D)
All polar bears are left-handed.

DANNY
Get the hell out of here!

He grabs the money and tosses the scope into the kid's chest.

CARSON
Can I get a receipt for tax purposes?

DANNY
WILL YOU PLEASE LEAVE!?

Carson shrugs then ambles down the sidewalk admiring his new purchase.

Danny watches him go. Still fuming.

DANNY (CONT'D)
And Daniel Day-Lewis is overrated!

EXT. CONDOMINIUM - LATE AFTERNOON

Lugging his backpack, Carson climbs the staircase of this simple but well kept complex.

A KEY hanging from a STRING around his neck opens the two-story condo.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - JUST AFTER

Quick jump cuts of the latch-key kid's after-school routine:

Does his homework on the KITCHEN TABLE as he snacks on HOT POCKETS.

Washes his DISH.

Feeds his pet SALAMANDER.

Puts his dirty CLOTHES in the WASHER.

Bubble bath with plastic ANIMAL TOYS.

Runs water on his TOOTHBRUSH. Brushes.

CARSON
(mouth full)
Elch. Warm toothpaste.

Spits. Reads the back label of his MOUTHWASH.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Benzoic acid... fluoride... <u>alcohol</u>?
Hmmm. Hope I don't get drunk.

Shrugs and gargles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carson's day ends curled up on a faux leather couch with a BOWL of ICE CREAM watching TELEVISION.

"Animal Planet" of course...

TELEVISION
This Joey, or baby kangaroo, was born blind and hairless.
(MORE)

TELEVISION (CONT'D)
But Momma is prepared to keep him safe in her pouch for the next six months.

An adorable baby sticks its head out as Momma jumps about.

TELEVISION (CONT'D)
Even after a Joey leaves the pouch, it'll stay close to his mom. She can have one child suckling in her pouch, a sibling nipping at her heels and a fetus on stand-by. Now that's an ultimate mother!

Tender. Loving.

CARSON
Awesome.

The boy's eyes are not just captivated, they're hopeful. This marsupial's motherly warmth is what Carson yearns for.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - LATER

TV is still on but Carson is fast asleep. His arms wrapped around a TEDDY BEAR.

He doesn't hear the front door unlock and slowly creep open.

A tall, RUGGED MAN enters. 5 o'clock shadow. Cool LEATHER JACKET.

He tiptoes to the HALL CLOSET. Pulls back the coats and jackets to reveal a small SAFE. Spins the dial. Unlocks it.

Nothing inside but a few files.

He removes a PISTOL and GOLD DETECTIVE BADGE from his BELT and locks them inside.

Moves to the couch and sweeps up the boy with his strong arms. Carson's eyes flutter awake.

CARSON
(sleepy)
Hi, Daddy.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN to you and I.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Shhhhh.

CARSON
At birth, baby kangaroos are only an inch long. No bigger than a water bug or a queen bee.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Is that so?

He carries the boy up the STAIRS to...

INT. CARSON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANIMAL POSTERS, MODELS and TOYS fill the room. A MAP of AFRICA. A WILD BOAR PIGGY BANK.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
You brush your teeth?

CARSON
Twice. How many more hours 'till morning?

Dad sighs as he pulls back the LEOPARD PRINT BEDSPREAD and tucks his son in.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Carson, now don't be upset, unfortunately Dad needs to work tomorrow.

CARSON
But the field trip--

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
I know, I know. Promise I'll make it up to ya.

CARSON
Can you at least come for the sleepover?

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
I wish I could, buddy, but we're tracking a really bad guy. I'm gonna be undercover on a stakeout... How about next week we do Sea World? Would you like that? See Shamu?

CARSON
(no enthusiasm)
I guess so. Killer Whales are not whales but a species of dolphin.

Dad moves to the boy's desk. On the computer screen is a live feed from the San Diego ZOO. The PANDA CAM: A baby panda sleeps, curled up with it's mother.

He shuts it down. Kisses Carson on the forehead.

CARSON (CONT'D)
(through a yawn)
Only half of a dolphin's brain sleeps. The awake half makes sure the dolphin comes up for air. It's so true.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Good night, pal.

CARSON
Night, dad.

Off with the GIRAFFE DESK LAMP.

Below, the MOONLIGHT hits a FRAMED PHOTO of a beautiful REDHEADED WOMAN cradling a SLEEPING BABY. Carson's mom.

FADE OUT.

INT. STUCCO KITCHEN - MORNING

In a FRILLY APRON, big Otis fries EGGS as NICK and DANNY count their yard sale earnings on the FORMICA TABLE.

Stacks of HOT MERCHANDISE litter the room among the EMPTY PIZZA BOXES and FAST FOOD BAGS. This bachelor pad hasn't seen a maid for... well, ever.

DANNY
I'm tired of this small-time, nickel-and-dime stuff. We need to think big.

NICK
Bank job?

DANNY
Alarms, armed guards. Too risky.

Otis dishes out scrambled eggs.

OTIS
How about computer fraud? We can fraud some computers. Some computers are really dumb. Like my iPad here.

It's an Etcha-sketch.

Danny Ignores him, consuming his food with prison inmate zeal. Arm draped around the plate, protecting it.

NICK
Blackmail! Oh-- better! How about kidnapping? Rich parents will pay a beaucoup ransom for their child back.

DANNY
True. But kids? I don't know. They suck. Crying and drooling, all the nose pickin'. And when you return 'em, the little monster could lead the cops back to us. That's trouble. I don't like loose ends.

NICK
We kidnap a blind kid! No eyewitness. Course he could hear us... A blind, deaf, mute kid couldn't finger us.

OTIS
Especially if he don't have fingers, neither.

DANNY
Great plan. This severely handicapped child you speak of sounds like a friggin' gold mine.

A story on the MORNING NEWS catches Otis' attention. He ups the volume on the small kitchen TV.

REPORTER
(on TV)
San Diego Zoo's newest baby panda cub, Yun Zi, made his media debut by showing off his bounce back ability.

The CUB falls out of a TREE. Gets up, unharmed and carefree.

OTIS
Awww. He looks so fluffy.

The attractive, FEMALE REPORTER chortles in a TIGHT SWEATER. Totally fake. The laugh and the breasts.

REPORTER
(on TV)
Just part of the learning process.
(MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)
The cub's mother, Bai Yun, was equally unperturbed and looked on proudly as her bubbly baby boy performed for our cameras. Bai Yun is here on a ten-year loan from the Chinese government which costs the city a half a million dollars per year. But with the arrival of this cub, the zoo should see a huge increase in patrons, and profits, all summer long...

Danny stands up, energized.

DANNY
That's it right there! That's who we're kidnapping.

NICK
The hot reporter? I'm up for that.

DANNY
The baby panda. Them critters are nearly extinct. It cost the zoo half a mil a year just to rent one. Plus, if things go south, we don't hafta worry about no hostage blabbing.

OTIS
'Cause pandas don't talk. Especially the babies.

DANNY
And if we need to "dispose" of him...

He twirls the FRYING PAN. A cruel, evil grin.

NICK
We eat it!? Dang.

Danny tosses the pan in the dirty sink and leaves to get ready.

DANNY (O.S.)
We're out of here in ten minutes, ladies!

Nick and Otis ponder this new scheme. A little disturbed.

OTIS
Whatcha think pandas taste like?

NICK
They're black and white... Oreos.

OTIS
Right. Obviously.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO - DAY

We're on a gondola lift called the SKYFARI.

A top view of this enormous 100-acre park. Nine trails to a variety of exhibits. From aviaries to crocodile swamps.

EXT. TOUR BUS LOADING - DAY

A queue of TOURISTS snakes through the maze of CHAINS leading up to a red DOUBLE DECKER BUS.

INT. BUS - BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

ZOE
Hello everyone! I'm zoologist Zoe Fowler and I'll be your tour guide on this wonderful adventure.

(30s) Peppy. Big eyes. A bit dizzy. ZOE would look cute if she'd just run a comb through her hair and a lint brush over all that animal fur on her SAFARI UNIFORM.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Are you all ready to have some F.U.N?!

Hells yeah! Especially the attentive kid in the first seat with his hand straight up.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Question already?

CARSON
Dr. Fowler, this will be fun AND informative, correct?

ZOE
You betcha.

CARSON
Fantastic.

He unfolds his MAP of the park. POST-IT NOTES at key sections. ("Ask about bullfrog diet..." "Mention that black panthers are really black leopards..." Etc.)

ZOE
So without further ado, let's begin our journey through the San Diego Zoo!

The bus lurches forward. Off they go.

INT. BUS - JUST AFTER

ZOE
First and most important question, how many single fellas do we have on this excursion?

Half the hands go up.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Over eighteen?

Nobody.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Well, that's alright. But if any of you have an unattached uncle or teacher or... gardener looking for a green card, let 'em know Miss Fowler is available. You can get my digits at the end of the ride. Or my e-mail... or my home address.

They enter the Discovery Zone. Smaller animals. PARROTS, OTTERS, TURTLES.

ZOE (CONT'D)
We house over 3,700 animals of more than 650 species and subspecies. In the Outpost Insect House on your right--

CARSON
Did you know that a housefly hums in the key of F?

ZOE
I did not.

CARSON
It's so true.

MR. BYRON
Carson. Let her do her job.

Larkspur's 4th grade TEACHER and chaperone for this field trip.

MR. BYRON, (50), has the enthusiasm and love for his students that says "*I hate teaching and wish I invested in that car wash with my brother when I had the chance.*"

ZOE
It's okay, I can always use the extra help.

CARSON
This is so true. Even a tiny amount of alcohol placed on a scorpion will make it go crazy and sting itself to death.

ZOE
I'm the same way after two Long Island iced teas.

To the right, a POLAR BEAR takes a plunge into an icy, crystal blue POOL.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Here at the Arctic Rim, you'll find polar bears, reindeer and many other cold weather animals.

LITTLE GIRL
Are there any penguins?

Carson stands up to address the back of the bus. Now that he's been given carte blanche, he's got this one.

CARSON
Penguins are in fact from the South Pole, not the Arctic. Interesting note, and this is so true, they are monogamous and mate for life.

ZOE
I can't even find a man to call me for a second date, let alone wear a formal tux. Am I right, ladies?

A few partons humor her with a chuckle.

The Bear exits the pool and shakes itself dry.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Polar bears have wide front paws with slightly webbed toes that help them swim.

CARSON
And have been known to swim 100 miles, or 161 kilometers, in a day.
(MORE)

CARSON (CONT'D)
Their fur is not white. Each hair is a clear hollow tube that--

MEAN VOICE (O.S.)
KID, WILL YOU SHUT UP?!

A loud voice booms from the upper level. Carson recognizes it. Could it be.....?

INT. BUS - TOP - CONTINUOUS

Danny and his boys are on this tour, too! Large grey DUFFLE BAGS on their laps. He's not enjoying this ride one bit. The others are. Snapping photos with their phones.

DANNY
Is like every kid in this city an expert on polar bears?

Nick shrugs. Has no idea what Danny's talking about.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

They head down a hill into a bamboo-covered canyon. Gold-colored TAKINS (goat-antelopes) scamper across the rock outcropping.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
Have any animals ever attacked the bus?

INT. BUS - BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

ZOE
Oh goodness, no. Most of these animals are quite docile. If, God forbid, there was an emergency, we keep a tranquilizer gun safely locked-up in the security center.

That answer sounds reassuring enough for the tyke, but Carson adds on just to be thorough.

CARSON
One dart can incapacitate an elephant in less than three minutes. Also, an elephant can smell water three miles away.

The crowd suddenly gets excited. At first, Carson thinks it's for his witty repartee. But no, they're approaching the big ticket item.

WHITE TRASH TOURIST
HOW ADORABLE!

Cameras start flashing.

ZOE
Welcome to Panda Canyon.

INT. BUS - TOP - CONTINUOUS

Danny moves to the other side of the window-free bus. Pushes people aside to get a better view.

ZOE (O.S.)
It looks like Yun Zi is trudging up his favorite tree.

And looks like he's falling out of it, again. THUNK!

The crowd gasps. Danny snorts.

ZOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He's okay, folks. This tyke is pretty resilient.

The baby shakes it off and heads back up the trunk.

NICK
(whispering to Danny)
That thing might just knock itself out for us.

He elbows his partner, who's licking his lips. Thinking about his inevitable big score.

EXT. URBAN JUNGLE - DAY

Now on foot, Carson continues the tour on his own. Acting as the unofficial guide to a group of ASIAN VISITORS. Not sure if they understand him but they politely nod and smile.

CARSON
Ostriches, once known as the "camel bird", can run faster than horses, and the males roar like lions.
(MORE)

CARSON (CONT'D)
This is so true, their brain is actually smaller than their eye.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. HIPPO TRAIL - DAY

His party still in tow.

CARSON
Hippos attract mates by urinating AND defecating.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICA ROCKS - DAY

CARSON
And speaking of poo, hyenas regularly eat the feces of other animals, not just their own.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. REPTILE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

A half-dozen orange and grey-skinned, two-foot-long LIZARDS slither across the red-sanded TERRARIUM. HEAT LAMPS. CACTUS.

CARSON
A hallucinogenic venom is produced through salivary glands in the Gila monster's lower jaw. And this is so true, if it bites you, its jaw locks. It will never let go till the day it dies... Now, over here you'll find the cobras...

Carson sees Danny and his men stealthily passing behind the group. Lugging their duffle bags and looking suspicious.

CARSON (CONT'D)
(distracted)
Their venom comes from the upper... If you'll excuse me a moment. Please enjoy the snakes as they feed on helpless mice.

He hustles off, trying to follow them. It's pretty dark in here and so many people.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Excuse me. Pardon.

Ah-hah! Spots the guys as they slip through the back exit. "*Employees only.*"

The door slams shut before Carson reaches it.

Should he open it? Why not.

CARSON (CONT'D)
As a volunteer tour guide, I'm basically an employee.

EXT. REPTILE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Outside is a big patch of forest. No animals here. Just TALL TREES and piles of DEAD LEAVES.

CARSON
Huh. Where'd they go?

Looks around. All he finds are two of the discarded duffle bags. Empty.

EXT. PETTING ZOO - EARLY EVENING

CARSON
Goat's eyes have rectangular pupils, which allow them to simultaneously graze and watch over their kids for predators.

Carson has moved on to a party of TODDLERS.

BENNY
Yo Weasley! Whatcha doing?

The bullies line up outside the pen. Carson pretends not to hear them.

CARSON
Goats were the first animals domesticated by man in 10,000 B.C.

Benny eyes a KIBBLE DISPENSER. Has an idea.

BENNY
Aren't you a little old for the petting zoo? Come over here. Just for a minute.

Carson reluctantly ambles over to the gang of nine-year-old thugs.

CARSON
What do you guys want?

Benny pays a QUARTER and gets a handful of FEED.

BENNY
Thought your dad was coming.

CARSON
He had to work. He's on a very important stakeout.

GREG
Why didn't your mom just take his place?

BENNY
Doesn't have one. Your mother skipped town the day you were born, right?

CARSON
No. Not exactly on the day.

BENNY
Probably saw what a weird-looking baby she gave birth to and freaked out.

His boys chortle as they fill their palms with kibble too.

CARSON
When a sea turtle hatches, it instantly squirms to the surface and heads to the water. The mother doesn't care for it at all.

BENNY
So?

CARSON
It readies the baby for adulthood immediately. Makes it stronger and more capable--

BENNY
Hold on. You saying you're stronger than us 'cause you don't have a mom?

CARSON
No. God no! Just more self-sufficient.

BENNY
Hmmmm. Well, let's just see about that.

The boys grab hold of him.

CARSON
Wait! What did I say?!

As he tries to break free, the little jerks fill his slacks with the feed.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Let me go!

Benny pushes him to the ground. A few pellets fall out his pant leg. Attracting the GOATS.

Carson tries to scoot away but the hungry animals are right on top of him in seconds. Gnawing at his clothes, trying to get to the food.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Stop! That tickles!

They pull his BELT off. Then the PANTS.

The bullies laugh as Carson bolts from the pen. Wearing only his helmet, shirt, socks and tighty-whiteys.

EXT. ZOOFARI PARTY AREA - DUSK

PARK ANNOUNCER (O.C.)
Thank you for visiting the San Diego Zoo. The park closes in ten minutes.

Parents gather up their children and head for the exit.

MR. BYRON
Larkspur Elementary over here!

Carson's CLASSMATES drag their BACKPACKS and SLEEPING BAGS to the secluded, grassy area.

MR. BYRON (CONT'D)
Benny, have you seen Carson?

BENNY
Yeah, just ran off to the bathroom.

GREG
Must have ate something bad.

Elbows him.

BENNY
Totally destroyed his pants.

Snicker. Snicker.

MR. BYRON
O-K. Go lay out your bags and grab yourselves some hotdogs.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

PARK ANNOUNCER (O.C.)
Thank you for visiting the San Diego Zoo. The park closes in five minutes.

Hiding in a stall, Carson digs through his backpack.

Telescope, animal index cards, toothbrush, mouthwash...

CARSON
Dog poop, goat attack... Note to self, always pack extra shorts.

What to do?

Looks over to the ROLL OF TOILET PAPER. Hmmmmm.

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO - NIGHT

The sun is down and the park is closed. Animals are curled up in their cages, down for the night.

The last of the EMPLOYEES are let out the front gate by the portly SECURITY GUARD.

EXT. REPTILE HOUSE - NIGHT

Quiet. A few animals chirp and squawk in the distance.

SECURITY GUARD
(singing)
In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the lions sleeps tonight. In the jungle, the quiet jungle, the lions sleeps tonight.

The security guard trots down the dirt path.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Hey, hey! Wimoweh, wimoweh--

He's suddenly spooked by a NOISE in the dark woods. Whips around, shining his FLASHLIGHT over the leaf-covered floor.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Hello?... Who's there!?

ROSCO
EROOOOOH!

The loud and strange mewing emanates from a PEACOCK. It spreads its tail-feathers. Proud and regal.

SECURITY GUARD
Hey Rosco. How we doing tonight?

The bird answers by pecking at the ground feverishly.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Find ourselves a bug there?

ROSCO
EROOOOOH!

It's focused on this one spot. The Guard shrugs, goes back to singing and marching merrily away.

SECURITY GUARD
Wimoweh, wimoweh. Ee e e um um a weh!

As soon as he's gone the bird returns to business.

ROSCO
EROOOOOH!

Peck! Peck! Peck! The ground suddenly shifts. That must be one big beetle.

Clumps of brush rise... It's a creepy pest, alright.

DANNY
(quiet)
Get this thing off of me!

Dressed in a bulky GHILLIE SUIT. Loose strips of burlap made to look like leaves and twigs.

NICK
We clear?

His partners rise from their hiding place, also wearing the ridiculous sniper camouflage.

DANNY
(to bird)
What's your problem, princess?

It continues pecking at Danny's shin. Angry.

NICK
Maybe we're near its nest.

OTIS
Wonder why it ain't in a cage.

DANNY
Where's it gonna go? They can't fly.

OTIS
They can't?

DANNY
Naw. They're like penguins. Stupid, flightless--

ROSCO
EROOOOOH!

As if on cue, Rosco spreads his wings and flies into Danny's face. Knocks him on his back.

DANNY
Get it off!!

His men try to help as the bird continues to peck his head.

EXT. KIWI TRAIL - NIGHT

Carson scurries from a DRINKING FOUNTAIN to a TRASH CAN.

His bottom wrapped in toilet paper like a half-mummy.

Hiding behind the receptacle, he canvasses the empty zoo with his telescope.

CARSON
Stripped of his coat and pride, the Carson moves quickly through frigid air searching for safety. Fighting the elements and keeping a watchful eye for predators. For danger is never far away.

Hightails it for better cover.

CUT TO:

Through infrared night vision goggles we see:

A few PUP TENTS. SLEEPING BAGS. HIBACHI GRILLS.

About a dozen kids and a few adults circle Zoe.

The zoologist has a KOALA draped around her neck for the kids to pet.

DANNY (O.S.)
What are they still doing here?

He scans the camp finding a BANNER that explains it all.

"*Roaring and Snoring Sleepover*"

DANNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Great. Just great.

EXT. ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Danny sets down the BINOCULARS. Runs his fingers through his bangs. Distressed.

The criminals are on their bellies, hiding beneath a large ELEPHANT TOPIARY.

NICK
So what do we do? Give up? Come back another night?

DANNY
We can handle a dozen dumb kids.

NICK
I saw a couple chaperones and that kooky zookeeper.

OTIS
Plus the guard.

DANNY
We're here, let's just stick with the plan. 'Sides, if things go sour... now we got hostages.

No arguments from the peanut gallery.

DANNY (CONT'D)
First, the weapons.

They crawl towards the SECURITY CENTER.

EXT. TREEHOUSE TRADER - NIGHT

Carson checks the door to the gift shop. Locked.

CARSON
(to himself)
I can't let anybody see me without pants.
(MORE)

CARSON (CONT'D)
My credibility as a volunteer zoologist would be tarnished.

Takes out his set of animal index cards. Sorts through them.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Scorpion. Classification: Arachnid.

Blech. Shivers. One animal he doesn't care for.

Sticks the card into the door jam. Uses it like a credit card to jimmy the lock.

INT. TREEHOUSE TRADER - MOMENTS LATER

Carson admires his new wardrobe in a full length mirror.

CARSON
(defensive to reflection)
I'm just borrowing it.

Shakes his head disapprovingly at himself.

CARSON (CONT'D)
What?! It's an emergency.

EXT. TREEHOUSE TRADER - NIGHT

The Security Guard notices the gift shop door ajar. Investigates.

INT. TREEHOUSE TRADER - CONTINUOUS

Shines his flashlight through the stacks of STUFFED ANIMALS and TRINKETS.

Past a naked CHILD MANNEQUIN. Holding hands with his PARENT DUMMIES still wearing their SAFARI GETUPS.

His beam falls on Carson.

Spooks him. The kid looks like a deer in headlights.

CARSON
I-- er--

SECURITY GUARD
What are you--

THWACK! A DART sticks into the Guard's shoulder.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Hey! How--

Grabs his arm. Stumbles around. Dazed.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
(groggy)
I think a mosquito bit me in--

Falls on his face. Out cold.

NICK (O.S.)
Totally nailed him. Over

Carson dives for cover before the bad guys enter the shop. Nick talks into his WALKIE-TALKIE.

NICK (CONT'D)
What's next? Over. How about take down a rhino. Over.

OTIS
(into his radio)
I call lion. King of the tundra. Over.

DANNY
WILL YOU PUT THOSE THINGS AWAY!

As they holster the radios and reload their stolen TRANQUILIZER RIFLES, Danny flips over the Guard and takes his gun.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Okay, we should be out of here in less than--

A noise from the shadows!

They redirect their weapons.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Who's there?!

Silence... Then... WWWWIIIRRRRRRRR... CHING! CHONG! CHANG!

A BABY PANDA TOY crawls across the carpet playing the *Oriental riff*, the Western culture's musical stereotype of the Orient.

Danny strolls up to it. Crushes the toy with his big BLACK BOOT.

Inches away, hidden in the CLOTHING CAROUSEL, Carson gulps. Scared but keeping it together.

OTIS
Awww. Whyja have to break it? I wanted a souvenir.

DANNY
Ten minutes from now, you'll have yourself a real one.

They hustle out of the store. We stay on Carson as he contemplates what to do.

EXT. ZOOFARI PARTY AREA - NIGHT

ZOE
The last canteen was down to a few drops. Exhausted. Yet, we couldn't sleep.

Kids and a few adults ring a CAMPFIRE. Roasting DOGS and MARSHMALLOWS. Captivated by the tour guide's tales of adventure.

ZOE (CONT'D)
The desert night was easily ten below. But it was the fear of the Chupacabra that was keeping our eyes peeled open.

The listeners eyes are wide open, too, and so are their slack-jaws.

ZOE (CONT'D)
We had seen the hoof prints and the half-eaten coyote. Miguel, our guide and potential boyfriend, was still in a coma from whatever terror he witnessed.

Murmurs. Could this story be true?

ZOE (CONT'D)
Then we heard it. A deep growl followed by a nasty Hissssssss. Twenty feet into the darkness...

Even the bullies are biting their nails.

ZOE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Heavy breathing. The scraping of sharp claws coming towards--

DANNY
LISTEN UP PEOPLE!!

Danny, waving a pistol, surprises everyone.

BENNY
Aaaaahhhhh!!!!

They all jump from their seats, terrified at the green, moss-covered monster. Mr. Byron literally wets his pants.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Chupacabra!

NICK
Calm down!

Camouflaged Nick and his dartgun only escalate the yelling.

BENNY
There's two of them!!

KIDS & PARENTS
Aaaaahhhhh!!!!

Big Otis barges in.

OTIS
Hey.

KIDS & PARENTS
AAAAAHHHHH!!!!

Sees Greg holding a flaming marshmallow fork for protection.

OTIS
That looks good.

GREG
Please don't eat me!

OTIS
(licking lips)
Let me have a bite.

Greg passes out. It's pandemonium. Panicked kids and adults hide in the tents. Others run for cover under PICNIC TABLES. Screaming. Crying.

DANNY
For the love of-- Settle people, settle!

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - NIGHT

On his belly, Carson watches the chaos. Hidden in the tall grass, narrating the action.

CARSON
The aggressive pride has surrounded its startled prey. Corralling the herd. It's only a matter of time before these predators feed.

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - LATER

DANNY
Come on! Move those little legs or my friends here are gonna break them.

Marching single file, Danny and his men direct the hostages into a generously-sized enclosure. Otis has the unconscious Greg slung over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

OTIS
Find yourselves a comfortable seat.

He lays Greg next to the others on the dirt floor. Lots of sand, wood chips and trees. They're surrounded by stone walls, glass panels and electric safety wires to stop burrowing.

ZOE
Everything is going to be okay. Just cooperate and try to stay quiet.

DANNY
That's good advice, lady.

Nick steps up and pats her down. Whispers in her ear.

NICK
If you really need a man, I can take a five-minute break and help you out.

ZOE
Thank you, but I believe I'll pass.

NICK
Your loss. Ladies say I've got what they call <u>animal magnetism</u>.

He slips his hand into her jacket. Uncomfortable, Zoe swallows hard. Tries to remain cool.

NICK (CONT'D)
Here we go.

He removes a RING of ZOO KEYS. Tosses it to Danny.

OTIS
Listen up, friends! Put all of your cells and tablets and whatever in this here bag. Do not make me tell you twice! Or three times, neither.

The prisoners slowly drop their electronic devices inside the missing third duffle bag. No kid wants to give 'em up.

DANNY
Where's yours?

MR. BYRON
(shrugs)
Sorry, don't have one. Teacher salaries prevent most of us--

THUNK! Danny coldcocks him with the butt of the gun. Knocks him out. The kids gasp.

ZOE
Was that necessary?

Danny ignores her and kneels down to the sleeping teacher. Digs a wet SMARTPHONE out of the guy's underwear.

DANNY
What the-- did he pee on this?

NICK
Anybody else want to be a hero?

The kids rush to deposit their phones into the sack. Including Benny the suck-up.

BENNY
Feel free to use as many minutes as you'd like. My plan has unlimited data.

DANNY
Good for you.

The next kid in line is the little girl from the bus. Her big blue eyes are filled with tears. She hyperventilates trying to get out a sentence.

LITTLE GIRL
(crying)
I- left- mine- in- my- backpack. Please don't pistol-whip me, sir.

EXT. ZOOFARI PARTY AREA - NIGHT

CARSON
As the herd desperately fights for survival, one lone straggler searches for a way to get help.

Back at the camp, Carson digs through everyone's abandoned stuff.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Ah-hah!

A Hello Kitty PHONE in a Hello Kitty BACKPACK. Dials.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)
(on phone)
911. State your emergency.

CARSON
Officer Callaghan. Badge number - 1138.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)
(on phone)
Please hold.

Reggae muzak: Bob Marley "*I shot the sheriff*".

INT. POLICE DISPATCH - CONTINUOUS

911 OPERATOR
He's unavailable right now. Would you like his voicemail?

A tired female (mid 30s). Loose perm. Puffy eyes.

CARSON (O.S.)
(on phone)
Hmmmm. This is his son. I better just report the incident to you. I'm at the San Diego Zoo and it's been seized by terrorists.

She rubs her eyes. Another crank call on a Friday night.

911 OPERATOR
Doesn't the zoo close at seven?

EXT. ZOOFARI PARTY AREA - CONTINUOUS

CARSON
It does. I'm a VIP for a special function. My party is being held hostage.

Carson searches for his backpack.

CARSON (CONT'D)
The ringleader's name is Jennifer Williams. Six feet tall. Two hundred pounds. Dark beard. He and his two men are here to kidnap Yun Zi. I overheard their plans while hiding out in the gift shop.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)
(on phone)
And what were you doing in there?

CARSON
I broke in for pants. Just a loaner. It was an emergency.

INT. POLICE DISPATCH - CONTINUOUS

911 OPERATOR
Child, I don't think you know what the word *emergency* means. There are people who are actually in danger and you're tying up lines.

CARSON (O.S.)
(on phone)
But this is so true.

911 OPERATOR
Why would terrorists kidnap a panda?

EXT. ZOOFARI PARTY AREA - NIGHT

CARSON
Well, I suspect that Jenny is trying to sabotage our good relations with the Far East.

Finds his zebra skin bag. Surveys the contents: Wild Kingdom card case, toothbrush, mouthwash, spyglass.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Yun Zi is on loan to the zoo 'till he turns three. Then he must go back to the Orient. If he doesn't, China, who owns like five trillion of the America debt, will be so insulted, they'll demand their loan to be repaid immediately. When we don't, I think they'll sell American assets to the North Koreans--

Click.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Hello?

INT. POLICE DISPATCH - CONTINUOUS

The Operator shakes her head, chuckling.

911 OPERATOR
(into headset)
If there are any cruisers in the vicinity of the zoo, can you do a quick drive by. Most likely just a prank.

OFFICER MELCHER (O.S.)
(on speaker)
Car Delta-75. At Park and Cypress. We'll take a look-see.

BACK TO:

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - NIGHT

ZOE
Mr. Byron, can you hear me?

The maimed teacher's eyes flutter open as the pretty zoologist cradles his head in her lap. Dabs his brow with a cold compress.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I think you may have a concussion. Do you know what day it is?

MR. BYRON
(groggy)
Fr- Friday.

ZOE
Good. Where are you?

MR. BYRON
Zoo.

ZOE
Excellent. And what is your relationship status?

MR. BYRON
I- I'm happily married.

ZOE
(disappointed)
Fantastic.

She abruptly stands. Byron's head falls off her lap smacking on the hard floor.

ZOE (CONT'D)
How's the other one.

Greg is frozen in the fetal position. Eyes wide open. Mouth agape. A little drool.

Benny pokes him with a STICK. No movement.

BENNY
He's fine.

Climbs a TALL BOULDER, commanding everyone's attention.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Yo yo, listen up! Don't fear. Once again, B-dog is here to save the day!

He proudly presents a shiny RED CELLPHONE. Raising it over his head like a newborn lion prince.

BENNY (CONT'D)
I always carry two phones. One for business, the other for personal relations. Learned that little tip from my pop.
(turns on phone)
Full coverage. Nine... one... one...

Before he can hit CALL, A speedy MEERKAT jumps up, steals the phone and carries it up a tree!

CUT TO:

INT. PANDA HABITAT - NIGHT

Danny unlocks the giant, ornate GOLD GATES of the over-the-top exhibit.

NICK
Where is it?

DANNY
Up that damn tree again.

Yun Zi swings from a branch thirty feet up.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Barely holding on. He-he, Get it?

OTIS
Yeah, funny. 'Cause he don't have no clothes on. He's BARE.

NICK
Give him twenty minutes, I'm sure he'll fall down on his own.

DANNY
We don't have twenty minutes.

He waves Nick and Otis to climb the tree.

OTIS
What about Mama bear? She might attack us.

DANNY
Come on, she's not a real bear. It's not a grizzly. It's a black and white bean bag that poops.

Mamma lies lazily on her back chewing a BAMBOO stick off a nearby tree. No interest in the visitors.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Got no fight. No survival skills. Why do you think they're going extinct?

Nick climbs on top of Otis' shoulders. Chicken-fight style.

NICK
I can't reach.

Otis walks up a LOG laying on a BOULDER. Sitting tilted at a 35° angle.

NICK (CONT'D)
A little closer...

Just as he's face to face with the cub, it sneezes (You've seen the youtube video, it's freaking adorable). The phlegm shoots into Nick's eyes. He falls back.

Otis tries to keep balance... his foot slips...

OTIS
Oooof!

landing on the log groin-first! (And that is your one and only kick-to-the-balls. You know there had to be one.)

NICK
Whoa! Whoa!

Nick drops hard to the concrete floor. Wind knocked out of him.

DANNY
Quit goofin' around!

OTIS
Sorry, Nicky. Let me help you up.

He extends his hand just as, behind him, the cub falls from the tree for the third time. Landing on the high end of the log. It elevates like a teeter-totter.

Catching Otis in the groin again.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Ieee!

(Okay, two nutcrackers)

He doubles over. Falls on top of Nick, pancaking him.

DANNY
Will you- MOVE IT LOVE BIRDS!

He lifts Yun Zi by its back fur. Holds him like a briefcase.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Cripes! Got to be some kind of real idiot to fall out of a tree.

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - NIGHT

BENNY
Ahhhh!

Benny drops from the meerkat tree.

ZOE
Guys, I said be careful.

The devilish little mongoose squeaks. Raising the red phone in triumph. Mocking Benny.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Don't go back up there. We'll figure out another way. Girls, please leave that boy alone!

The Little Girl and her FRIEND apply EYE SHADOW to Greg, the comatose bully.

LITTLE GIRL
We making him pretty.

ZOE
That's nice but he's--

Tap! Tap! She's interrupted by a knock on the wall.

Benny sits up and shakes the dust from his hair to see Carson smiling, nose pressed against the glass.

BENNY
CHEETO-HEAD?

EXT. FRONT STREET - NIGHT

NICK
Gonna buy a Harley with my money. Motorcycle cross-country. From Alaska to Hawaii.

The Matuzak gang proudly marches toward the exit. One duffle bag of guns, one bag holding a baby panda.

OTIS
Gourmet cooking classes. Try to get my three-minute egg under an hour.

NICK
How about you, boss?

DANNY
I'm setting up a charity organization for runaway kids. Ya know, clean 'em up. Get food in their bellies. Find them a safe and loving home.

His men stop in there tracks as Danny continues on to the FRONT GATES.

OTIS
Sarcasm?

NICK
I'm not sure. He's so dang subtle.

Danny digs the zoo keys from his camo outfit when...

DANNY
Duck!

OTIS
Cool. Where?

DANNY
Hide!

The three men jump into the BUSHES. Just missing the SEARCHLIGHT from the PATROL CAR outside the gates!

Turns on its BLUE LIGHTS. Blares the "police presence" SIREN.

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - NIGHT

ZOE
Did you hear that?

Through the glass...

CARSON
No. What?

ZOE
Thought I heard a police siren. Go! Go check it out!

Carson takes off.

ZOE (CONT'D)
AND BE CAREFUL!

BENNY
You're wasting your time with that spaz.
Don't worry, I'll get us out of here.

He chucks a ROCK at the meerkat holding his phone. The stone ricochets off the branch, smacking the kid on the forehead.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Son of a--Aww!!

INT. GIFT SHOP - NIGHT

Yun Zi sits on the carpet chewing the head of the broken panda toy.

DANNY
(whispering)
Must of tripped an alarm.

On their knees. Peeking out the window.

Nick opens the duffle bag of guns.

NICK
We shoot our way out?

Danny thinks. Sees the passed-out Security Guard. Better idea.

EXT. FRONT GATES - JUST AFTER

DANNY
What can I do you for officer?

Squeezed into the guard's uniform, Danny unlocks the gates.

OFFICER MELCHER
Got a report of a disturbance.

DANNY
That's peculiar. Been quiet all night.
Even the critters are fast asleep.

ROSCO (O.S.)
EROOOOOH!

The peacock strolls up and starts pecking at Danny's shin.

DANNY
'cept that one.

OFFICER MELCHER
Anyone else on the premises?

DANNY
Oww! No. Just little ol' me.

Banging from the gift shop followed by the echoes of several toys playing the *Oriental Riff*.

DANNY (CONT'D)
And of course the park rangers.

ROSCO
EROOOOOH!

Peck. Peck. Peck.

EXT. PARKWAY - NIGHT

Huffing and puffing, Carson breaks at a crossroads. Five paths going in five directions. To conserve his energy, he stands on one foot.

CARSON
Which way?

Removes the ZOO MAP and his PEN LIGHT from his backpack.

EXT. FRONT STREET - NIGHT

DANNY
Here they are.

Otis and Nick, wearing the mom and dad mannequin safari outfits, run to join Danny at the gates.

OFFICER MELCHER
You see anything out of the ordinary this evening?

NICK
Nope. Just a regular, run-of-the-mill night. Nothing strange to report.

He shifts uncomfortably, trying to keep his SKIRT from riding up.

OTIS
I am fixing the zoo animals. And giving them bubble baths.

Danny pinches his eyes tight. What an idiot.

DANNY
Dr. Otisstien was recently kicked in the head while giving a zebra a rectal exam.

OFFICER MELCHER
Ahhh.

EXT. FRONT STREET - NIGHT

Carson approaches the main drag to see the bad guys waving goodbye to the cop as he gets into his patrol car.

It's too late. He's too far away to call for help.

Carson isn't sure what to do, when he hears the sounds of a hungry infant coming from the gift shop.

CARSON
Yun Zi?

INT. GIFT SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

DANNY (O.S.)
Get off of me!

ROSCO (O.S.)
EROOOOOH!

Danny kicks the bird away as he and his men hurry back into the shop.

DANNY
Let's jake before we have any other unwanted visitors.

NICK
Hey ah-- Where's the furball?

He holds up an empty duffle bag. They look around. Confused.

DANNY
(through clenched teeth)
And where are the <u>GUNS</u>?!

Otis scratches his noggin.

OTIS
Think the panda took ‘em?

EXT. FERN CANYON TRAIL - NIGHT

Arms full of guns, Carson hauls ass through the park. Fast as those little freckled legs can carry him and his new pal.

The panda’s head bobbles about, peeking out of the backpack.

CARSON
(huffing and puffing)
We need to lose these weapons.

Yun Zi roots through the pack. Finds an animal index card to chew on.

CARSON (CONT’D)
Maybe they’re evil scientists who want to test pharmaceuticals and makeup on you... Whatever they are, I won’t let ‘em hurt you-- or make you look slutty.

Follows the ARROW SIGN pointing to the Reptile House.

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - NIGHT

BENNY
On my count! One... two... THREE!

Together, the entire fourth grade shake the meerkat tree.

The rodent squeaks in panic. Dropping the red phone to the dirt floor.

BENNY (CONT’D)
For the win!

Kids rush to retrieve the cell.

BENNY (CONT’D)
Don’t touch it! It’s mine!

He pushes back his classmates as he casually strolls up. The rock off the forehead has already started a bruise.

BENNY (CONT’D)
What I tell ya... It’s a simple case of mind over--

Before he can grab it, the phone is drawn into the dirt like quicksand.

BENNY (CONT'D)
No, no, no--

Falls on his knees, digging.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Awww! You stupid little--

A few feet away, ANOTHER MEERKAT pops out of his hole holding the cell. ("Looking for this?")

Benny leaps for it, but the critter quickly retreats underground.

BENNY (CONT'D)
GIMMEE THAT BACK!

It bursts from another hole. Taunting.

Benny dives. Misses.

Another hole... Another dive and miss!

BENNY (CONT'D)
AHHHH, COME ON!!!!

The other students giggle as they watch the bully get played in a game of full-scale Whac-A-Mole.

EXT. FERN CANYON TRAIL - NIGHT

NICK
Another guard?

DANNY
No way. I spent a full day casing this joint top to bottom. Definitely a civilian. Maybe a teacher or heroic chaperone from the field trip. He's pretty clever. Probably ex-Navy Seal.

Otis finds something of interest on the ground.

OTIS
(reading)
Hey, did you know Iguanas, Koalas and Komodo dragons all have two wieners?

Danny examines the animal index card. Hmmmmm.

NICK
Probably very popular with the ladies.

OTIS
Wonder if they hafta pee twice as much.

Danny scans the grounds. Sees another card sitting at the entrance to...

INT. REPTILE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The gang cautiously enters the dark reptile cave. Danny's flashlight finds one of the duffle bags. Empty.

NICK
Where are the weapons?

OTIS
I see 'em.

Shines his light into the Gila Monster terrarium where SIX mini-dinosaurs creep over the dart gun and the guard's pistol.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. REPTILE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Otis turns on the overhead fluorescents. Illuminating the entire exhibit.

Danny drags a stepladder to the Gila tank.

DANNY
Hop in.

NICK
Me? Why me?

DANNY
You lost the guns.

NICK
So did Otis!

DANNY
He's too fat to fit.

OTIS
Hey! Words can hurt.

DANNY
Come on, most of 'em are sleeping.

Danny pushes Nick up the ladder. He carefully lowers himself inside. Like entering a hot bath.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(taps glass)
Right there!

NICK
SHHHH! Don't disturb them.

He crawls softly across the RED SAND. Tosses the dart gun out.

Slowly reaches for the pistol... Fingers wrapping around the handle...

SNAP!!

A black and orange lizard BITES down on his ARM!

NICK (CONT'D)
Ahhhh!

Falls backwards. His head hits the dirt floor.

SNAP!! Another one latches on to his EAR!

NICK (CONT'D)
Aaaahhhh!

OTIS
Get out of there!

Nick scrambles for the top of the tank. Swings one leg over. The other foot hangs like dangling lunch. SNAP!!

NICK
AHHHHHHH!!

Nick instinctively aims the gun at the lizard and squeezes the trigger.... Click... Click.

DANNY
Empty? Where are the bullets?

OTIS
Over here.

He taps on another tank where a Python is coiled around the scattered ammo.

EXT. PANDA HABITAT - NIGHT

Carson tugs at the gold painted side gate. Secured. No using an index card on this industrial lock.

He moves to the front of the exhibit where he can easily hop over the GUARD RAIL. The problem lies with the giant MOAT keeping them from the sleeping Mama bear.

Eight feet down. Half-filled with murky, black water.

He slips off the panda-pack.

CARSON
Here's the plan. I'm gonna toss you over this moat. Then you crawl out of the bag to your mother. Good?

Yun Zi isn't so convinced. He whines and fusses, trying to escape the pack. A few more animal cards fall out.

CARSON (CONT'D)
It's okay, I got a strong arm. Won a ribbon in the "Softball throw" on field day. It says 'participant' but you know, it's still an award.

The bear digs his little claws into the back of the kid's jacket. He isn't going anywhere.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Ouch. Okay, okay, okay. Jeeesh. I'll jump it.

Surveys the chasm. A good five yards across.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Didn't ribbon in the broad jump but I do play a mean game of hopscotch.

He secures the cub in the pack. Stretches. Does a few squat thrusts.

CARSON (CONT'D)
The Carson readies to leap the canyon. He should have no problem. His dexterity and soaring capabilities have been compared to that of an orangutan.

Looks back to the cub.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Though uncommon, the orange primate can jump up to 20 feet in the air. It's so true.

Boy that's a long way down. Starting to rethink this.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Orangutans have 32 teeth. Same as humans.

Yun Zi growls as if to say, "Enough stalling!"

CARSON (CONT'D)
One... two... THREE!

Leaps....

..... It's not even close.

He hits the slope of the moat and slides down the algae-covered concrete. Splashing in the muck!

INT. PANDA HABITAT - CONTINUOUS

The kid lifts the backpack over his head trying to keep the cub above water. Though standing on his tiptoes, Carson's chin barely breaks the surface.

The cub panics and tries to wiggle out.

CARSON
HELP! SOMEBODY! PLEASE, HELP!!!

Swallows a mouthful of disgusting sludge. Yun Zi cries, too. They're moments from drowning.

VOICE (O.S.)
May we be of assistance?!

Up top, inside the exhibit, Danny and his men peer down. Otis rips off a bamboo stalk and lowers it into the moat.

Carson has no choice but to grab hold and be lifted to safety.

DANNY
I'll take that.

Snatches the panda pack and tosses it to Nick, who still has three Gila monsters locked on his body.

Danny leans in. Gets right up to Carson's filthy face.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Well, if it ain't my inflamed red pain in the ass.

NICK
You know this kid?

CARSON
I like your earring.

The Gila latched on Nick's earlobe.

CARSON (CONT'D)
You should really get those lizards off ya. Their poison can cause dangerous hallucinations.

NICK
Sounds fun.

DANNY
This little brat's from the neighborhood. Has a thing for bears.

OTIS
Isn't that cute.

CARSON
All animals, actually. Well, I'm not that fond of scorpions and certain species of cockroaches. But I'm a card-carrying member of the Teen Conservation Club, PETA and the Wildlife Protection Society.

OTIS
Impressive.

CARSON
And as a member of WPS, I'm afraid I'm going to have to detain you for poaching an endangered animal. Be prepared for fines of up to $20,000 and ten years in jail.

NICK
Oooooh. I'm so scared.

Danny runs his dirty fingers through his greasy hair. Thinking.

DANNY
What are we going to do with you? Now that ya know who we are and where we live.

NICK
Maybe we should feed him to the pandas.

Elbows Otis.

CARSON
They're herbivores.

OTIS
Exactly. You'll be their herbivore. We'll even stick those little toothpicks in ya!

Danny and Nick try to decipher what the hell he is talking about.

CARSON
Herbivore means 'plant-eater'. I believe you were thinking of hors d'oeuvre.

OTIS
Hors d'oeuvre? Oh, yeah. That's what I meant. My Spanish is a little rusty.

Danny picks Carson up by the lapels of his slime-covered safari jacket. Stares the kid down with evil eyes.

DANNY
How about we toss him into the alligator swamp.

NICK
Yeah. They like soft and tender milk-fed meat, don't they?

Carson swallows hard.

CARSON
(truly scared)
I- I- I'm not sure. I know they can't move backwards. That's a-- a little interesting tidbit.

DANNY
I hunted 'em back in Florida. Ya know, they don't chew their food. What gators do is pin down their prey and twist 'em rapidly in whatcha call a 'death-roll'.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
Tearing off chunks of flesh that they swallow whole.

The boy searches for a way out. His mind is racing.

CARSON
Just don't put me in with the baby bunnies. That would be truly awful. Those powerful buck teeth and razor sharp cottontails. Horrific.
(he trembles)
It's so true.

Even if he was a good liar nobody would buy this "Uncle Remus" move.

DANNY
I think we'll stick with the gators.

Drops the kid. His ass hits the hard ground.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Now, you and--

MAMA BEAR
RWAAAAA!

The panda mother jumps Danny. On top of him in a matter of seconds!

Danny cries out in high-pitch screams, curling up in a ball as the bear bats him about.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM - NIGHT

A sweet little SIX-YEAR-OLD IN PIGTAILS sits in bed watching the zoo's Panda-Cam on her IPAD.

PIGTAIL GIRL
Mommy! The mama panda is mauling a hillbilly!

MOTHER (O.S.)
Sweetie, I said time for bed!

Shrugs. Puts the tablet away and jumps under the covers.

BACK TO:

INT. PANDA HABITAT - NIGHT

DANNY
GET IT OFF!!!

Otis and Nick make wild sounds, trying to scare the animal.

OTIS
Hey bear, over here!

With the villains occupied, Carson scoops up the panda pack and hauls ass through the now unlocked gates.

EXT. PANDA TREK - CONTINUOUS

Carson goes as fast as his pudgy legs will carry him. He may not be able to jump, but he sure can run, even with a 20-pound cub in tow.

INT. PANDA HABITAT - CONTINUOUS

Nick aims his dart gun at the bear's ass.

His POV: Dizzy. Out of focus. The effects of the lizard poison. The furry butt expands like a balloon.

He takes the shot. Bull's eye!

MAMA BEAR
WRAAAAAA!

It turns around. Gets on its hind legs and growls.

OTIS
Shoot it again!

NICK
I only have one more dart!

Before the bear can attack, her eyes roll back into her head. Groggily stumbles and faints.

Landing right on top of Danny. OOOF!

DANNY
(muffled)
I can't breathe.

Otis and Nick suppress their laughter.

NICK
Got your own lovebird there, eh boss?

DANNY
Get this sack of bamboo blubber off of me!!

The men roll the creature off and help their leader to his feet.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I got it-- I'm fine!

His guard uniform is shredded but otherwise that's true.

DANNY (CONT'D)
That kid's dead.

And the chase is on.

EXT. ESCALATORS - NIGHT

The escalators, covered in a clear plastic tube, and currently inoperative. So Carson must hoof it up the steep, zigzagging staircase that scales the lush landscape to the highest point of the zoo.

He looks down to see the bad guys are in hot pursuit and gaining ground.

EXT. AVIARY - CONTINUOUS

The top of the hill houses hundreds of TROPICAL BIRDS in an open-air sanctuary.

A waterfall. Multicolored flowers. Beautiful. But the boy has no time to take in the scenery. He needs to lose these guys. Problem is, it's a dead end.

No trails that lead down the back of the steep mountainside. Only way out is the way he came in. But that would lead him straight into their waiting arms.

DANNY
(out of breath)
Nowhere to go, kid!

Carson looks around for inspiration. <u>A TRASH RECEPTACLE!</u>

Digs through only to find empty snack bar CONTAINERS and discarded DIAPERS. Gross.

Thinking quickly, he flips over the top of the trash LID. Sits inside it like a mini sled.

As the men reach the top...

CARSON
Hold on!

The kid pushes off. Otis just misses snatching hold of the panda pack!

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The two youngsters ride their makeshift vehicle like professional tobogganers. Skipping over stones and weaving through trees.

EXT. AVIARY - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
Don’t let ‘em get away!

He pushes Otis, who falls end over end.

OTIS
Whoaaaaaa!

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Otis tumbles down the hill like an out-of-control boulder. So fast that he passes Carson.

EXT. AVIARY - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
If that little twerp thinks--

Danny looses his footing on the soft mud and falls but not until grabbing on to Nick for support.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The two wildly careen downhill. Lizards still holding on to Nick.

The handgun slips from Danny’s grip and disappears beneath the LEAVES.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

Otis finally comes to a stop at the base of the mountain.

A second later, the kid's sled banks off of Otis' bald skull before skidding onto the dirt road. Carson hops out and continues running.

Dizzy, Otis gets up to follow but is bulldozed by his partners.

EXT. SKYFARI STATION - EAST - JUST AFTER

Carson heads up a handicap ramp to the SKYFARI TRACTION STATION. The aerial cable-car ride is closed for the night. Multicolored booths wait in hanging suspension. Each car adorned with an animal theme. The llama car, the beaver car, etc.

Carson opens a green METAL CASE marked "Power". One simple switch. He turns it on and the carousel immediately starts up.

He puts his back against a "*You must be this tall to ride*" SIGN. Just missed the cutoff.

CARSON
I'll hafta risk it.

Hops into the panda carriage and locks the door, just as Danny and the boys arrive. The thugs try to grab hold of Carson's car but it slips away and lifts off.

Quickly, they all cram into the next car.

EXT. SKYFARI - CONTINUOUS

Both parties catch their collective breath. The chase has taken somewhat of a time out. It's suddenly quiet as the airborne ride takes them on a shortcut through the zoo over the treetops.

Carson shivers from the fact that he's soaking wet, there's a high wind and three grown men only one car away want to kill him.

DANNY
When I get a hold of you kid you'll be wishing I hadn't lost my gun. Now your death will be slow and painful.

Nick looks over the railing. Dazed.

NICK
Everybody looks like little ants down there.
(looks to Danny)
You look like an ant, too.

Nick's POV: The Hallucinogens have kicked in. Danny's head is that of an insect. Black, compound eyes. Antennae. Mandibles.

DANNY THE BUG
What the heck is wrong with you?!

NICK
Do you want a cube of sugar, little bug?

Danny ignores him and turns to Otis.

DANNY
I don't wanna take the chance he gets away. Go. Move it!

Otis begrudgingly climbs out of the carrier and swings on to the cable like a silverback gorilla.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to Carson)
Jump now or deal with Otis! Either way, you're gettin' squashed!

Otis shimmies along the line towards Carson. Hand over hand, the big guy moves pretty quickly.

The boy digs through his pack, looking for a weapon. Finds a partially chewed animal card.

CARSON
The African bat. Did you know that bat bones are so thin, they can't walk?

The behemoth is getting closer. A few feet away...

CARSON (CONT'D)
It eats up to 1,000 insects per hour and always turns left when exiting a cave. It's so true.

Otis reaches for him...

CARSON (CONT'D)
Most importantly, the bat is the only mammal that can fly.

He FLINGS the card. It soars like a throwing star, striking Otis in the eyeball.

OTIS
Hey!

Instinctively covers up, letting go of the cable and falling 100 feet!

OTIS (CONT'D)
AAAaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!

EXT. ASIAN PASSAGE - CONTINUOUS

Otis bounces in the MESH NETTING over one of the many outdoor exhibits.

This one covering a BENGAL TIGER'S CAGE. Who's very interested in the feast that has just fallen from the sky.

OTIS
Goooood kitty...

The cat circles, then JUMPS. Swatting his enormous paw at Otis' plump belly. Missing by a good eight feet.

OTIS (CONT'D)
(relieved)
Silly kitty, you can't jump--

Boing! One of the many bolts holding the net to the cage's frame pops off. Then... Boing! Another one.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Aw. Shoot.

EXT. SKYFARI STATION - WEST - NIGHT

As soon as Carson's car pulls into the exiting station, he jumps out and flips the other ELECTRICAL SWITCH. Stranding Nick and Danny, whose car is on the decline but still a good twenty feet in the air.

DANNY
Okay kid, you win. I'm callin' a truce. Let's stop now before somebody gets hurt.

Carson nods okay and moves to the power box.

Danny whispers to a sickly looking Nick. Pale. Bloodshot eyes.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Man, this kid's a moron.

Carson flips the power on then quickly turns it off.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Hey! What's the deal?!

His car's moved an inch. Carson turns the ride on and off again. The car just merely jerks back and forth.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Cut that out!

On and off. On and off. On and off. Faster and faster. The guys thrash about the carriage. Banging their heads.

NICK
Stop. Or I'm gonna-- BLECH!

Nick heaves over the side.

CARSON
YA KNOW HORSES, THEY CAN'T VOMIT! IT'S SO TRUE!

Off - on. Off - on. Off - on.

EXT. ASIAN PASSAGE - CONTINUOUS

Boing! A few more bolts pop out. Otis descends closer to the waiting tiger. Licking its chops.

EXT. SKYFARI STATION - WEST - CONTINUOUS

Carson flips the switch one too many times. The power box SPARKS. A loud whirring sound.

The ride goes nuts. Danny and Nick's carriage flies into the station at 100 MPH.

DANNY
No, no, nooooo!

Before they can jump out of the car, they're lifted back into the air at a terrific velocity.

Carson, seeing he just broke the ride, sheepishly backs out of the station and takes off running.

EXT. SKYFARI - CONTINUOUS

An out-of-control thrill ride! The guys hold on for dear life.

Nicks's POV: Danny's "feelers" twitch with panic.

DANNY THE BUG
Danger! Save the queen!

The lift's BRACE snaps off the cable line.

NICK & DANNY
AHHHHHH!!

Danny and Nick twirl through the air like a spinning U.F.O!

EXT. ASIAN PASSAGE - NIGHT

Otis carefully scales the netting. Bolts strain. He's almost safely to the structure's edge...

NICK & DANNY
AHHHHHH!!

The Skyfari car drops into the net!

INT. TIGER CAGE - CONTINUOUS

The three thugs crash to the ground. Danny presses his face against the netting to see he's inches away from a...

DANNY
TIGER!!

RWAAAR! They try to run but the huge feline pulls his catch towards himself with his strong, toothy jaw. A tug-of-war. The guys fight to reach the CAGE EXIT.

Danny finds the KEY marked TIGER on the chain. His hand shakes wildly, trying to unlock the door.

The tiger lowers it's head... raises his tail... readying to pounce...

OTIS
No... Bad kitty.

It leaps! The guys tumble through the exit. Safe.

All but Otis' size 12 SNEAKER! The tiger clamps on.

OTIS (CONT'D)
It's got me!!

His foot slips out of the shoe just before the beast bites down.

EXT. TIGER CAGE - CONTINUOUS

Shaken, Otis flops on the ground and counts his toes.

OTIS
One little piggy, two little piggy, three little piggy, four little piggy, five little piggy. Whew! All piggies accounted for.

Danny divides up the ZOO KEYS and hands them out.

DANNY
Spread out and find where that evil Chucky doll is hiding.

NICK
What should we do if we find him?

DANNY
Well, the zoo's been so much fun... why don't we next take him to the circus!?

Danny tosses Otis the infrared scopes and marches off. Steamed.

OTIS
Sarcasm?

NICK
Definitely.

EXT. GORILLA CAVERN - NIGHT

Sounds of a rainforest play over a speaker system.

CARSON
Taking you back to the panda habitat was naïve. I need to get you out of the park.

Carson has the zoo map spread open on a VIEWING BENCH. In only his underwear, once again. The damp safari garb dries over a HOT WATER PIPE.

CARSON (CONT'D)
If I can distract Jennifer and his men long enough, maybe we can escape through this emergency exit.

The panda whines. Cold and missing his mother.

CARSON (CONT'D)
I'll getcha to your mom, don't worry. Bet she's worried sick about you.

He stares through the glass wall, into the bioclimatic zone. Where ORANGUTANS and SIEMENS climb trees and swing about.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Moms do that. They worry 'cause they love you. Even if they're far away, clear across the zoo.

A MOTHER CHIMP jumps to a vine, her baby safely around her neck.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Even if you hardly ever talk to her, she loves you.

The cub nuzzles into the boy's chest to keep warm.

CARSON (CONT'D)
She has to. It's a law of nature. It's so true.

A knock at the glass wall.

A young ORANGUTAN, around the size of Carson, points to the FOOD CHUTE: a small opening to the exhibit for feeding the animals. Wide enough for a large bunch of bananas or a small boy.

CARSON (CONT'D)
I got an idea.

He empties his back pack: Panda doll head, index card case. Pockets his toothbrush and mouthwash.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Here ya go.

Tosses the cub a GRANOLA BAR.

INT. ARCTIC RIM - NIGHT

DANNY
Come out, come out, wherever you are!

Danny peeks his head through the door of this glacier designed habitat.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Kid, I know you're into these--

The huge polar bear ambles out of its cave. Twice the size of the mama panda. It opens its wide mouth to show Danny its sharp teeth.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(high pitched scream)

While he hurries to exit the exhibit, he fails to lock the cage door properly. It creeps open.

INT. MANATEE COVE - NIGHT

Nick stands hypnotized in an underground grotto. He's bathed in shimmering light from a calming BLUE AQUARIUM.

NICK
Yeah... Really? I guess so.

Through his stoned eyes, a huge MANATEE talks to him with an angelic yet sexy voice.

MANATEE
Oh, you're quite attractive. The unibrow is a feature that suggests masculinity and strength. I am quite taken with you. Would you care to make out?

NICK
Sure.

He firmly presses his lips to the glass and goes to town.

EXT. LOST FOREST - NIGHT

Otis scans the dense foliage with the night-vision binoculars. Grumbling to himself.

OTIS
Fall off a chair lift... Tiger catches ME by the toe... I should have stayed in medical school.

He spots movement in the trees.

Otis' POV: A HEAT SENSOR IMAGE of someone about three and a half feet tall. Moving fast.

EXT. ELEPHANT ODYSSEY - NIGHT

Danny searches the ELEPHANT PENS when he's blasted with a TRUNK FULL OF WATER.

As he wipes his face with his tattered shirt, his walkie-talkie blares.

OTIS (O.S.)
(on radio)
I found the boy!

INT. MANATEE COVE - NIGHT

NICK
I gotta go, baby.

One more kiss for good luck, then he's off.

EXT. LOST FOREST - NIGHT

OTIS
(huffing and puffing)
You can't outrun me, son. I'm bigger, faster and stronger!

He tries to catch him but the kid is too quick. Zipping through the trees. Otis can't even get a good look at him. He's just a blur in khakis and a pith helmet.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Where'd he go?

Otis searches the bushes when a PINECONE bonks him on the head.

He looks up to see the kid scaling a TALL TREE with great speed and dexterity.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Wow. That little tomato can climb.

EXT. TALL TREE - CONTINUOUS

That's 'cause he's a nine-year-old orangutan in the kid's clothes.

ORANGUTAN
Oooh. Oooh.

EXT. LOST FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Nick join Otis at the tree's trunk.

DANNY
Where is he?

Otis points up into the thick leaves.

OTIS
He's got really strong and hairy forearms. Gotta be on steroids.

DANNY
Well, go on. Get him!

NICK
Gee. That's pretty high and I ain't feeling so well.

He wipes his brow with the lizard still attached to his arm.

ORANGUTAN (O.S.)
Oooh! Oooh!

DANNY
Hear that? He's laughing at you. Mocking you. Ya gonna let him do that?

NICK
I guess.

DANNY
MOVE IT!

EXT. HIPPO TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Carson watches Otis and Nick start up the tree through his spyglass.

CARSON (O.S.)
They took the bait.

Once again, he's only wearing his tighty-whities.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Next, we create a trail of safari cards that lead to the swamps, then--

Looks down. Where's...

CARSON (CONT'D)
Yun Zi!

The panda's escaped the pack and scurrying down the trail!

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - NIGHT

MR. BYRON
What's going on? Shouldn't the police be here by now? I'm hungry.

The concussion has worn off and he's back to being a dick.

ZOE
I'm sure that little boy is getting help as we speak.

Off in the distance, she spots Carson in his briefs trying to chase down Yun Zi.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Or, he's gone streaking with a baby panda.

Behind her, Benny sticks his hand into a meerkat hole.

BENNY
I think I got the- Ahhh. It bit me!

Mocking chirps emanate from underground.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE DISPATCH - NIGHT

911 OPERATOR
Sir, please. I can't understand-- You're going to have to calm down. CALM DOWN.

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - UNDERGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Inside a meerkat hole, a little rodent squeaks into Benny's red phone. Apparently, it hit "send".

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
(on phone)
Sir, I have no idea what you're babbling.

INT. POLICE DISPATCH - CONTINUOUS

Frustrated and unable to help, she hangs up.

911 OPERATOR
The weirdos sure are out tonight.

Detective Callaghan enters the station escorting a grungy CRIMINAL in cuffs. Long hair, tattoos, TRENCH COAT.

CRIMINAL
I didn't do nothin'. You got the wrong guy!

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Save it.

Shoves him through the pen of dispatchers.

911 OPERATOR
Hey Callaghan, got a message for ya. From your kid.

Hands him a WHITE SLIP to read.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Can you please get me the night security desk at the zoo?

911 OPERATOR
Sure thing.

Finds the info on her DESKTOP. Dials and waits.

911 OPERATOR (CONT'D)
...No answer.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Hmmmm. Punch up WWW.PANDACAM.COM

911 OPERATOR
Ya don't need to say the "WWW".

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Oh. Sorry.

She loads up the site. Mama Panda is still passed out.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
(CONT'D)
You see a baby panda?

911 OPERATOR
Could be hibernating.

A troubled look on the detective's face. He stops a passing uniformed cop, HANK (30s).

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Hank, do me a fave and book this perp. I need to swing by the zoo.

HANK
What's he in for?

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Caught this creep in a dark theatre showing that Disney princess flick. He was fussing with something under his coat.

HANK
Oh my god. He wasn't-- ?

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
(grave)
Yep... Digital pirating.

Hands him a CAMCORDER. Evidence to go with the ashamed degenerate. Hank shakes his head, disgusted.

HANK
We live in a sick, sick world.

BACK TO:

EXT. URBAN JUNGLE - NIGHT

CARSON
(whispering)
Yun Zi, where are you?

He frantically searches the African animal zone. An airy, open area created for a more interactive experience.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Come out, come out wherever you--

Carson's eyes widen when he spots the baby panda. It obliviously chews on his foot beneath the belly of a sleeping, two-ton RHINO!

EXT. RHINO HABITAT - CONTINUOUS

CARSON
Come here, boy. You wanna treat?

He waves, jumping up and down in an attempt to grab the cub's attention. Yun Zi hasn't any clue that he's inches away from being stepped on.

Carson has no choice but to scale the four-foot ROCK BARRIER and go after him.

EXT. TALL TREE - NIGHT

A hundred feet up...

NICK
I see him!

Nick tries to focus but the venom coursing through his veins makes him groggy.

Otis, twenty feet below him, wheezes as he tries to keep up.

OTIS
Grab him before he goes any higher!

Nick reaches out and the orangutan hurls a handful of "mud" at him.

NICK
Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

He loses his grip and falls, catching Otis' only shoe.

The sneaker slips off and Nick falls through the tree hitting every branch along the way.

OTIS
Nicky!

The branch Otis is holding on to snaps off and he follows his friend down.

EXT. LOST FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Danny steps out of the way before getting pulverized by Nick, who hits the ground hard.

DANNY
That was close. You need-

OTIS
Ahhh!

The big guy squashes him instead. All three lay on their backs gasping for air.

NICK
That kid is disturbed... he hurled his poop at me.

INT. RHINO HABITAT - NIGHT

Carson tiptoes up to the sleeping beast. Gets on his knees and crawls under it.

CARSON
Shhh.

The rhinoceros abruptly shakes his head. Damn annoying flies!

Carson remains frozen. He quietly lifts the cub into the pack and slowly slips it over his shoulders.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Whew.

Gets on his feet and takes two steps before Yun Zi lets out a tired cry.

The rhino's grey eyelids open. It turns, spots the intruders. Snorts.

CARSON (CONT'D)
RUN!

The boys sprint for the fence as the beast charges!

RHINO
(loud grunts)

With all his might, the kid jumps onto the wall and throws his bare legs over the side. Just misses getting gored by the rhino's horn!

EXT. RHINO HABITAT - CONTINUOUS

Carson catches his breath only to discover he's out of the frying pan and into the fire. The villains stand above him. Bruised. Dirty. Pissed.

Almost as furious as the wild rhino, who angrily stomps in circles behind the four-foot barrier.

CARSON
Hey Jenny. Guys. How's it going?

They say nothing. Just stare him down with the hatred that burns brighter than a thousand suns.

CARSON (CONT'D)
You all look pretty bushed. I think I have a couple of juice boxes in my pack.

DANNY
Kid, you're more annoying than warm toothpaste. WHEN I GET DONE--

His sentence is cut short by the rhino squirts a firehose gush of urine over the fence directly into Danny's face.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Eahhhh!

Carson uses the distraction to flee.

EXT. URBAN JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

The boy dashes between the stone-walled exhibits, desperate to lose the bad guys.

But they're moments behind him. Limping and exhausted.

DANNY
Blech. I got pee all over me.

NICK
Well, I got poo on me.

OTIS
I'm stain-free!

On cue, his bare feet slip on the puddle of vomit Nick spewed earlier.

EXT. AFRICA ROCKS - DEAD END - JUST AFTER

Carson finds himself at a dead end. A tall, brown ROCK WALL surrounded by GREEN VEGETATION. The panda is out. Bushed. Too much action tonight.

He searches around in a panic. What to do?!

The boy takes a closer look at the PLANTS.

CARSON
Genus Mimosa.

Looks up, over the wall. Notices something interesting. He quickly digs through the pack, tossing items out (yo-yo, granola bars) and pocketing a few (TOOTHBRUSH, MOUTHWASH).

Then plucks the LARGE LEAVES and stuffs them into the pack with the resting cub.

NICK (V.O.)
He went over here!

The FLASHLIGHT BEAMS are getting closer. He lifts the pack over his head and waits.

CARSON
Come on... come on.

The three men arrive from around the bend to find Carson with his hands in the air.

CARSON (CONT'D)
You got me. I give up.

DANNY
Yeah. Great. You can put those down.

He lowers his <u>empty arms</u>.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Where's the panda?

CARSON
Panda? Hmmm. Well, they're native to central and south western China.

DANNY
I JUST SAW YOU WITH IT!
(to others)
It's around here somewhere.

They search the foliage. Otis looks up.

OTIS
Found him.

Eighteen feet above them, the panda-pack hangs off a GIRAFFE's head. Who uses it like a feedbag. Chewing the leaves while the cub soundly sleeps.

Danny is exasperated. Are you ##%$* serious!?

DANNY
(to Nick)
You, stay here and catch the bear if it- WHEN it falls. Otis, find a ladder or somethin'.

He lifts Carson off his feet, putting him in a headlock.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'll take care of this evil spawn of Ronald McDonald once and for all!

CUT TO:

EXT. COP CAR - NIGHT

Det. Callaghan drives through BALBOA PARK. The lights of the San Diego cityscape behind him.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)
(on radio)
No response from the chaperone phones either.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN (O.S.)
Try the students. One of them must own a cell.

INT. POLICE DISPATCH - NIGHT

911 OPERATOR
On it. I assume you checked to see if Carson called his mom.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN (O.S.)
He doesn't have the number.

911 OPERATOR
Why's that?

INT. COP CAR - NIGHT

Callaghan sighs. Really doesn't want to get into his family history.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Let's just say she bailed on us some time ago.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)
I'm so sorry. The poor kid.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Don't worry about it. Carson is a pretty tough and resilient guy. Nothing gets him down.

A sign ahead: ZOO DRIVE 2 MILES.

BACK TO:

INT. ????? - NIGHT

It's pitch black. Can't see a damn thing.

CARSON (O.S.)
Let's not be rash. How about we negotiate your demands? I can't give you the panda, but would you consider three hamsters and a potbelly pig? The pig's from Mrs. Sagovia's classroom. It's very smart. Knows math. Well, it can count to three. You can ask it, "what's 2+1 or 7-4 or 3x0." Or trivia questions. "How many stooges are there?" *Oink, oink, oink-*

DANNY (O.S.)
Shut it!

CARSON (O.S.)
Wait... wait!

We hear Carson fall, landing with a THUD.

CARSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ow.

Danny shines his flashlight into the boy's face. There's a wall of pane glass between them. The kid is in an exhibit. But which one?

DANNY
My turn to be Marlin Perkins, K? Do you know what a gadfly is?

The kid looks around, frightened. Trying to figure out where he is.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'm talking to you! A gadfly?!

CARSON
Huh? I- I think so. It's like a horsefly.

DANNY
Any of those flies that pester other animals with their constant buzzing and irritatin'. And that's you. A bothersome know-it-all pest that nobody wants around.

CARSON
Well, I wouldn't say no--

DANNY
Nobody! No friends. No family. Yep, even a mama gadfly doesn't want to be near her younglings.

Bull's eye. Danny hits Carson where it hurts.

DANNY (CONT'D)
The gadfly lives a miserable, lonely life. It's only companion is a big brown pile of steaming manure.

Carson looks away. Stares at the rocky floor lining the tank.

DANNY (CONT'D)
But you don't hafta worry about that.

CARSON
(hopeful)
I don't?

DANNY
Nope.

He flips a small SWITCH on the outside of the glass tank. A BLACK LIGHT illuminates a desert landscaped terrarium.

DANNY (CONT'D)
'Cause your life is over... It's so true.

He turns off the flashlight and is swallowed up by the dark room.

CARSON
Wait! Don't leave me in here! Please!

DANNY (O.S.)
Shoo fly, don't bother me.

After a few footsteps, the EXIT DOOR swings open and Danny leaves in a rushed gate.

EXT. ZOO BUS LOADING ZONE - NIGHT

Otis runs through the long QUEUE OF CHAINS to the double-decker tour bus. He could have just walked a straight line around the maze but... well, he's an idiot.

EXT. AFRICA ROCKS - DEAD END - NIGHT

As the baby panda rocks in its giraffe cradle, Nick stands transfixed in another hallucinogenic conversation. Eyes glossy. Drool trickling from his open mouth.

GIRAFFE
You know, the monobrow is seen as regal in the animal kingdom.

NICK
I've heard that. I like your long neck. Very sexy.

GIRAFFE
(titters)
Oh, you make me blush... Say, would you care to make out?

NICK
Yep.

The giraffe's long purple tongue slithers like an anaconda, stretching down and wrapping itself around Nick.

It licks his entire face with gooey, slimy saliva.

NICK (CONT'D)
That's niiiiiiiice.

EXT. OUTBACK - NIGHT

Otis wildly steers the double decker bus. He hops the curb and takes a shortcut through the desert landscape.

KANGAROOS and DINGOES watch as he runs over a BARREL CACTUS.

EXT. BOTTOM OF BUS - CONTINUOUS

The sharp thorns pierce the bus' BREAK LINE. Red FLUID gushes from the broken hose.

INT. TANK - NIGHT

Carson gets on his knees and tries to pry open the TANK'S LID with his back.

A LATCH on the outside keeps it locked.

CARSON
The Carson's claustrophobia can be detrimental to its wellbeing. It must remain calm if it hopes to stay alive.

Takes deeps breaths. His eyes dart around the enclosure.

Not much room for the boy and whatever else is in here.

EXT. AFRICA ROCKS - DEAD END - NIGHT

Otis speeds towards the giraffe exhibit where Nick stands in the middle of the road, kissing air.

OTIS
What's he doing?

He lays on his horn and flashes the headlights.

Nick's POV: <u>The bus has a FEMALE FACE.</u> Big, blue "headlight eyes" bat at him, flirting.

BUS
Smooch with me, Nicky!

It's red "bumper lips" pucker. So does Nick.

OTIS
Get out of the way!

Otis slams on his brakes!

The bus skids before plowing into Nick! Sending him and his lizard entourage flying into the foliage.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Buddy, you okay?!

Miraculously, the delusional idiot survives with only a few bruises. He rubs his eyes and shakes off the collision.

NICK
Wow. What a kisser.

At that moment, the panda-pack slips off the giraffe's head and falls directly into Nick's lap.

The cub yawns. Its little eyes open. Perfectly safe.

DANNY (O.S.)
Good, ya got 'em!

Danny runs up and joins the party.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Now let's get the heck out of Dodge.

Otis helps his friend to his feet, when they all hear a FAMILIAR SIREN in the distance.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Aww craptastic! Gimme those!

He tears the high-tech binoculars off Otis' neck and feverishly climbs the bus stairs.

EXT. FRONT GATES - NIGHT

Night vision goggles: The swirling lights of a patrol car. Detective Callaghan investigates the front gates.

DANNY (O.S.)
Looks like we're moving to plan B.

INT. TANK - NIGHT

Meanwhile, Carson shivers. Not just because he's only in his underwear. His eyes widen and he sees the top entry on his list of "the most hated things in the world." Number #3 being Benny, #2 - asparagus and #1...

CARSON
<u>Scorpions.</u>

Illuminated by ultraviolet rays from a black light, the armored arachnids glow an unnatural neon blue.

A DOZEN of them crawl over the rocks, snapping their pinchers.

Carson reaches into his shorts. (Yeah, I didn't like writing that line either) Retrieves the two items he pocketed.

He threatens the bugs with his toothbrush spear.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Stay back!

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - NIGHT

ZOE
I feel like this is bad idea.

Mr. Byron holds a fourth-grader's legs like a wheelbarrow, protruding from a meerkat hole.

MR. BYRON
He's fine. YOU'RE FINE, RIGHT BENJAMIN?!

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - UNDERGROUND

Squeezed inside the tight tunnel, Benny wrestles his red phone from the rodent. It suddenly goes off.

BENNY
It's ringing! Pull me out!

INT. MEERKAT ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Benny is dragged from the hole in a dust cloud.

BENNY
I toldja! You all owe me HUGE.

VOICE (O.S.)
I'll hafta pay ya back later.

The phone is swiped from Benny's filthy hands and turned off. He wipes the dirt from his eyes to see...

DANNY
GET ON THE BUS!

Danny points to the exit where Nick and Otis march the class into the double-decker. Including Benny's pal Greg, who's still unconscious, hair teased, painted in FULL MAKE-UP and wearing snap-on EARNINGS.

INT. TANK - NIGHT

Undeterred by the "hard bristles" of Carson's weapon, the glowing scorpions slink closer.

CARSON
This isn't gonna work.

Tosses the toothbrush aside and picks up the mouthwash. Reads the back label.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Contains 21.6% alcohol.

Bingo!

The ugly, terrifying creatures climb onto his feet, moving up his leg. Hands quivering, Carson fusses with the cap. Finally opens it.

He sprinkles the green liquid over the florescent monsters that have now reached his belly.

They suddenly stop moving.... Then begin twitching... falling to the dirt floor.

Aggravated hisses. Their telsons striking themselves in the back. Sending venom through the stinger into the abdomen. Dead.

CARSON (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

The kid breaths a sigh of relief. He's out of immediate danger but still trapped in the tank.

CARSON (CONT'D)
HELP!!!!

EXT. INSECT HOUSE - NIGHT

CARSON (O.S.)
Somebody, help!!

Digging in the TRASH RECEPTACLE, the young orangutan hears Carson's cries. Curious, he investigates.

INT. INSECT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ORANGUTAN
Oooh! Oooh!

CARSON
Hey buddy! Can you help me out?

Now it's Carson behind the glass pointing to the latch.

Happy to return the favor, the ape climbs the tank and flips the lid open.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Detective Callaghan flips open the trunk of his car.

Digs out BOLT CUTTERS. Heads back to the front gate.

INT. BUS - BOTTOM - NIGHT

Danny grinds the stick into gear and hits the gas. Otis is behind him in the first seat, biting his nails.

OTIS
What's the plan, boss?

DANNY
We plow through the front gates. No cop is gonna fire at a bus full of children.

Zoe wobbles her way up, grasping on to the HANDRAIL.

ZOE
Excuse me, but--

DANNY
Behind the white line!

She steps back.

ZOE
I think there's something wrong with your man here.

DANNY
Yeah, he's a fat idiot.

OTIS
Hey.

ZOE
No, the other imbecile.

She points to the back where Nick lies on the floor moaning.

DANNY
MORON NUMBER TWO!

Nick sits up.

<u>His POV: Danny, Otis, Zoe and every passenger is a fluffy black and white panda.</u>

PANDA OTIS
You okay, buddy?

NICK
Never been better. God dang you're adorable.

OTIS
Thanks!

Danny shakes his head "whatever" and turns back to the steep rising road.

DANNY
Keep it together. We only need-

ROSCO
EROOOOOH!

The annoying peacock lands on the hood of the bus.

DANNY
You again!? Get off!

The bird takes advantage of the windowless bus and pecks at Danny's fingers clasping the steering wheel.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I am gonna cram stuffing up this pretentious turkey's butt!

The proud fowl squawks and spreads its long tail quill-feathers.

OTIS
Oooh pretty.

DANNY
Crapalapa!

Danny's view is blocked by the brightly colored plumage.

He hits the brakes!

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Beneath the bus, the punctured break-fluid hose has completely drained.

INT. BUS - BOTTOM

DANNY
No brakes!

He quickly removes the key, turning off the ignition. The transmission continues to allow the bus to roll to an eventual stop.

Danny pulls the emergency brake.

OTIS
That was close.

A LOUD SNAP! The e-break doesn't hold. Tires spin as the bus descends backward, down the steep hill.

ZOE
Everybody hold on!

EXT. INSECT HOUSE - NIGHT

As Carson buttons-up his reclaimed safari suit, he and the orangutan hear distant screams.

He separates the nearby bushes to see the bus careening downhill. His classmates are in a fit of panic, especially Mr. Byron.

INT. BUS - BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. BYRON
We're all gonna die!

ZOE
Children, put your heads into your lap!

Everyone, including the bad guys, braces themselves for impact.

Danny cringes. In the side mirror he watches the vehicle SMASH through a five foot high barrier.

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - CONTINUOUS

The students scream in terror.

The bus launches off an INCLINED ROCK, sailing into a MURKY SWAMP.

EXT. INSECT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Carson and the orangutan share worried looks.

CARSON
We need to help them!

ORANGUTAN
(agreeing)
Oooh. Ohhh.

The two redheads sprint down BIG CAT TRAIL.

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - NIGHT

ZOE
Come on everybody, up top!

The bus slowly sinks into the swamp. The zookeeper ushers the scared children upstairs. They're terrified but don't push and shove.

Well, most of them...

BENNY
Out of my way!

He aggressively cuts through the line passing Danny the driver who attempts to restart the vehicle.

DANNY
It's flooded. We're in trouble.

OTIS
Is that sarcasm? If not, "NO DUH!"

He points outside the bus where a DOZEN CROCODILES drift towards them from every direction.

EXT. GIFT SHOP - NIGHT

Across the zoo, Detective Callaghan exits the gift shop with the dazed and half-naked security guard hanging off his shoulder.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
You okay? What's going on here?

SECURITY GUARD
A little thief broke in and knocked me out. Could have been a gang.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
What did he take?

SECURITY GUARD
Umm... a safari uniform and an--

A TRUMPET BLARES!

The men smartly step aside from a roaring and stampeding...

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
(flabbergasted)
...elephant.

Atop the pachyderm, the orangutan's long arms wrap around Carson who looks like a young Tarzan in an underwear loincloth. His fiery red hair blows in the wind. A COIL of ROPE across his chest and a determined face.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Carson?!

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - NIGHT

At the top of the bus, Zoe tries to calm the children while down below, the bad guys keep trying to turn over the engine.

INT. BOTTOM OF BUS - NIGHT

Mossy water seeps in fast, over the windowless railing.

In the back, waste-deep in goop, Nick leans over the side, babbling.

NICK
Yeah??... get out of town! It's *Jordash for men*... thank-you.

NICK'S POV: A Croc is inches from his face.

CROCODILE
Kiss me, you magnificent beast!

Nick puckers up. The reptile positions its wide jaw around his head.

SNAP!

Otis pulls his buddy back before getting his noggin' bitten clean off. Then turns and yells at the driver.

OTIS
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE, NOW!

DANNY
I'M OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS!

Their quarreling is interrupted by thunderous stomping.

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - CONTINUOUS

The saplings that circle the swamp collapse under the powerful feet of Carson's elephant!

The bad guys' jaws hit the floor. Speechless.

INT. BUS - TOP - CONTINUOUS

BENNY
Carrot-crotch?

Carson's classmates are pretty dumbfounded.

LITTLE GIRL
(to Zoe)
Do you think if I ask him nicely, he'll give me a ride?

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - NIGHT

Carson hands the orangutan one end of the rope.

CARSON
Be careful.

Though uncommon, the orange primate can jump up to 20 feet in the air. It's so true.

INT. BUS - BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

It leaps to the hood of the bus and hands the rope to Otis.

CARSON
TIE IT OFF!

The big guy quickly loops the rope around the bus' frame.

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - NIGHT

Detective Callaghan and the Security Guard arrive just in time to see Carson's pachyderm tow the vehicle out of the swamp and onto the safe shore.

INT. BUS - TOP - CONTINUOUS

The kids cheer their hero!

BENNY
Yeah, well, if I had an elephant I could have saved us, too.

INT. BOTTOM OF BUS - CONTINUOUS

Detective Callaghan and the guard rush down the hill.

Danny and his men hightail it off the bus and flee into the zoo. The Detective pays them little heed, he's focused on helping the kids.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Come on, let's go! One at a time.

The last in line is Dr. Fowler. Callaghan lifts her off the bus. When Carson's Dad and the zookeeper's eyes meet, it's love at first sight.

ZOE
Thank you, officer.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Detective Callaghan, er- Kirk.

She bats her long eyelashes and smiles.

ZOE
Zoe.

EXT. DISCOVERY OUTPOST - SWAMPLANDS - NIGHT

Carson and the Security Guard give a hand, helping the kids up the steep terrain.

MR. BYRON
Thanks, Carson. You really saved our butts.

CARSON
It's so true.

BENNY
I don't know why you're thanking him. Again, the elephant did all the work. The elephant's the real-- Whoa!

The bully slips and falls face-first into a huge pile of pachyderm poo. Just desserts.

EXT. ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A fleet of COP CARS skid into the parking lot. Cherry-tops flashing. Sirens blaring.

EXT. LOST FOREST - NIGHT

Otis hustles frantically up the hill.

OTIS
I gotta get out of here!

As soon as he reaches the top.... THWACK!

OTIS (CONT'D)
Owww! Mosquito!

He turns to see he's been darted by the orangutan, who's apparently found the lost gun.

ORANGUTAN
(laughing)
Hoo- hho.

Otis' eyes roll to the back of his head, passes out and tumbles down the hill.

EXT. PETTING ZOO - NIGHT

Melcher and the cops storm the facility.

OFFICER MELCHER
I see one over here!

They stop at the edge of the petting zoo. Disgusted looks fall over their faces.

NICK
Baby, I love you too.

Nick is making out with the goat... It's consensual.

NICK (CONT'D)
I'm gonna take you home to meet my mom.

OFFICER MELCHER
Arrest that sicko.

EXT. HIPPO TRAIL - NIGHT

Through infrared goggles, we see the cops detain Nick. Danny lowers his binoculars while hiding in some bushes.

DANNY
Crap on a cracker. There's gotta be another exit.

He goes back to scanning.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Maybe near the amphibians-- What the hell?

Suddenly, his lenses go black. Frustrated, he lowers the night-vision specs.

POLAR BEAR
RWAAAAAAA!

Towering above him is the only animal that doesn't show up on infrared and the one whose cage he left open.

DANNY
AAAHHHHHHHHHH!

And Danny gets his second bear mauling of the evening.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CARSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caption: One Year Later.

The room is still adorned with animal paraphernalia but the posters have been replaced with FRAMED PHOTOS:

* Carson on the *Late Show* with LETTERMAN.

* Accepting an AWARD as PETA's "Man of the Year".

* *San Diego Tribune* headline : *"Pandamonium! Kid saves zoo's cub."*

* Carson receiving a MEDAL while shaking hands with the PRESIDENT.

CARSON
Ya know, ferrets sleep around 20 hours a day. It's so true.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
No kidding? Huh. So what do you want to do tomorrow. Got the whole afternoon off.

He tucks in Carson's ZEBRA-PRINT BEDSHEET, nice and tight.

CARSON
How about the zoo?

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
Again? I don't know, you better ask your mother.

ZOE
It's fine by me.

Zoe the zookeeper, A.K.A. Carson's new mom, enters the room.

ZOE (CONT'D)
He's got a lifetime pass, might as well use it.
(kisses the boy's forehead)
Pleasant dreams, sweetheart.

She notices a STAMPED BROWN PAPER BOX on his desk.

ZOE (CONT'D)
You're sending them a care package?

CARSON
Yep. I figure everybody needs a friend.

DETECTIVE CALLAGHAN
That's real nice of you, son. G'night.

CARSON
'Night Dad, good-night Mom.

She sits the parcel back on the desk next to his computer that displays the Panda-cam's live feed.

CARSON (CONT'D)
Good night, Yun Zi!

On screen, the slightly larger cub once again falls out of his tree.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

GUARD
You boys got some mail.

Carson's package is handed through high security bars to Danny. He and his pals wear ORANGE INMATE JUMPSUITS inside this tiny cage.

NICK
Oh, please be my medication!

The skin rash from Nick's reptile bites never quite cleared up. Danny's bear scratches are permanent, too.

DANNY
(tearing it open)
It's a plant.

A small POTTED PALM TREE.

OTIS
Cool. That should really open up the room.

Otis lays on the top bunk reading *Boy's Life* magazine. The cover photo has Carson holding the rescued panda. They've taken a marker to it. Blacked out his teeth and added devil horns.

DANNY
It's probably from the kid. He's taunting us, I tell ya.

NICK
Dude, let it go.

DANNY
Never!

OTIS
Article here says, the kid is going to escort the panda back to China next year.

DANNY
Is that so?

Danny gestures wildly with the plant.

DANNY (CONT'D)
We're breaking out of here and I'm gonna get that little snot eater if it's the last thing I ever do!

He kicks up the pot's soil, unearthing an angry SCORPION! The critter bites Danny's hand!

DANNY (CONT'D)
Ahhhh!

He falls backwards knocking Nick into the BOTTOM BUNK, which causes Otis' bed to come crashing down on both of them.

As the freed scorpion crawls over frame and stings the screen, we...

CUT TO BLACK.