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# JOE EXOTIC

“UNWANTED ANIMALS”

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**Type of Material: 3<sup>rd</sup> REVISED NETWORK DRAFT**

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ACT ONE

1 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - HALL/BEDROOM - MORNING (2017)

1

Close On: a CAT. No, not a tiger or lion or even a bobcat. I know you came to this show expecting big cats -- we'll get to them. But for now, we're on a little housecat, tracking with her along the floor as she meanders down the hall.

Eventually the cat goes into a bedroom and hops onto a shelf, past a photo -- from the early 70's. A girl and her brother dressed for Halloween. He's a pirate, she's dressed as a cat.

We keep going, into the walk-in closet, and as we glide down the rack of clothes we can't help but notice -- every single piece of clothing is cat print.

Finally we arrive at: A WOMAN in a leopard-print bathrobe, late 50's, long blonde hair cascading down her back. To some of us, her clothing might look like variations of the same thing, but she approaches her choice with a precision that only she understands.

Finally something strikes her fancy, and as she pulls it from the hanger, a DOORBELL startles her. A visitor? This early?

2 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - HALL/ENTRYWAY - MORNING (2017)

2

Our cat lady makes her way down the hall, curious -- eventually getting a glimpse of: her HUSBAND, already at the front door, where TWO AGENTS (from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, one female, one male) show their badges. They hear our lady's footsteps -- and all turn to her.

FEMALE AGENT  
...Carole Baskin?

Off Carole, *what is this about?*

3 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING (2017)

3

Carole (still in her robe) and her husband (HOWARD, 60's, avuncular and professorial) sit down across from the agents -- AGENT DOMINGUEZ (female, 40's) and AGENT THOMAS (male, 30's).

CAROLE  
We've never been visited by agents from Fish and Wildlife before. Our sanctuary has a perfect record.

HOWARD

Whatever it is, I'm sure we can sort it out. Can we get you anything?

AGENT THOMAS

I'll take a coffee.

Dominguez shoots him a look.

AGENT THOMAS (CONT'D)

What? I can't ask for a coffee?

Dominguez turns to Carole, getting right to the point.

AGENT DOMINGUEZ

It's not about your sanctuary. We have reason to believe a hitman has been hired to murder you.

HOWARD

What?

Ashen, Howard looks to his wife. Carole is normally someone in charge at all times, but this news knocks her back.

AGENT DOMINGUEZ

Does the name Joseph Maldonado-Passage mean anything to you?

CAROLE

Joe hired a hitman?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ

Yes.

CAROLE

Joe can afford a hitman?

AGENT THOMAS

Mrs. Baskin, do you know why Mr. Maldonado-Passage would engage a murder-for-hire?

CAROLE

Well sure. He hates my guts.

The lawyer in Howard comes out.

HOWARD

We've been in an ongoing dispute with Joe. Has he been charged?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
We hope to have enough evidence to  
charge him soon.

CAROLE  
What about the hitman?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
(knows this won't go well)  
We can't locate him at the moment.

CAROLE  
You lost the hitman?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
...One of us did.

AGENT THOMAS  
(looks sharply at  
Dominguez)  
Really?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
(to Carole)  
Somewhere in Arkansas.

HOWARD  
What was he doing in Arkansas?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
Heading here.

Carole and Howard share a bewildered, alarmed look. Carole dabs her eyes with a tissue.

AGENT DOMINGUEZ (CONT'D)  
I understand this must be hard for  
you.

Carole realizes it looks like she's crying.

CAROLE  
Oh no, I haven't taken my  
medication yet today. I'm allergic  
to cats.

Thomas clocks the tiger paintings, tiger statues, the cat climbing on Howard. *Allergic to cats?*

HOWARD  
So...you two are here to guard the  
house then?

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
That's not really something we do  
at the Fish and Wildlife Service.

HOWARD  
Okay. What's your plan?

The agents are silent.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I don't understand...

CAROLE  
...I'm sorry, are you telling us  
that someone is currently on their  
way to kill me -- and there's  
nothing you can do about it?

Dominguez and Thomas don't know what else to say.

AGENT DOMINGUEZ  
We thought you should know.

4 INT. GUN STORE - DAY (2017)

4

Carole and Howard stare at a wall of guns, a lumberjack-like  
SALESMAN (40's) assisting them.

CAROLE  
We need one for the car.

HOWARD  
Two for the bedroom.

CAROLE  
Like his and hers?

SALESMAN  
What kind of firearms are you  
looking for?

CAROLE  
I don't know much about guns.

HOWARD  
Something that will stop a hitman  
in his tracks.

The Salesman assumes Howard can't possibly be serious.

SALESMAN  
Okay...Well it doesn't get any more  
reliable than a Glock.

The Salesman places a Glock handgun on the counter.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)

I also have a Ruger you might like.

As the Salesman goes to fetch it, Carole takes the Glock. Feels it in her hand.

HOWARD

Are you okay?

Carole holds back her anger through gritted teeth.

CAROLE

I'm fine.

HOWARD

No one's going to hurt us.

CAROLE

He ordered my murder, Howie. Like it was takeout from Chili's.

Carole looks at her husband, wondering how did it get this far?

CAROLE (CONT'D)

...I just wish I could go back. To before I ever heard the name Joe Exotic.

AND WE CUT TO --

5 EXT. ROAD/BCR - MORNING (2010)

5

CHYRON: Seven years earlier. Carole bikes to work, looking like a hippie-dippie flower child on a beach cruiser, wending her way through the semi-jungle of Tampa. The Carole of 2010 is thinner, with shorter hair, not to mention less burdened.

She arrives at an imposing gate, which dramatically opens for her (it has the feel of a castle's drawbridge being lowered). A sign tells us we're at: BIG CAT RESCUE. Carole's sanctuary.

She pedals inside, past VOLUNTEERS working in different colored shirts, and stops before the TIGER ENCLOSURES. The beautiful ANIMALS resting in their homes, built with care -- and lots of money. She takes the sight in with satisfaction. She's queen of this magnificent place.

6 INT. BCR OFFICE - MORNING (2010)

6

VOLUNTEERS answer phones and move with purpose around the office -- Carole demands this place run efficiently.

As soon as Carole walks in, the energy kicks up a notch. A YOUNG VOLUNTEER is ready at the door with Carole's Starbucks--

YOUNG VOLUNTEER  
Morning, Carole.

CAROLE  
(takes her coffee)  
Thank you.

Carole keeps moving as another volunteer -- TYLER (late 20's, eager to please) -- hands her a set of papers.

TYLER  
Status reports.

She takes them without stopping. She's not rude, just focused.

CAROLE  
I need to see you in my office.

TYLER  
Did I do something wrong?

CAROLE  
(entering her office)  
And get Susan please.

Tyler, terrified, hops to it.

7 INT. BCR OFFICE - CAROLE'S OFFICE - MORNING (2010)

7

Carole puts her laptop on her desk. Notices some liquid on her landline. She grabs tissues and wipes the mess, as SUSAN BASS (40's, Carole's deputy) and Tyler come in.

SUSAN  
One of the cats pee on your phone?

CAROLE  
Unless you want to confess.

SUSAN  
My aim's not that good.

Tyler takes a seat.

CAROLE  
On your feet.

Tyler bolts back up, nervous, wondering what that means.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
How do you support yourself?

TYLER  
I bartend at The Rusty Pelican.

CAROLE  
Do you know why I don't pay you and the other volunteers?

TYLER  
Well, it's a non-profit, so...

CAROLE  
It's because I don't want mercenaries at Big Cat Rescue. I want patriots. Do you understand?

TYLER  
Absolutely. My parents don't get why I'm almost 30 and working for free, but I'm one hundred percent committed to the cause.

CAROLE  
I know you are. That's why it's my honor to present you with this.

Carole reaches into a drawer...and pulls out a red shirt. Tyler's eyes go wide. Susan smiles.

TYLER  
(overwhelmed)  
Oh my God...

CAROLE  
It's a big responsibility. You'll be in staff meetings.

TYLER  
(realizing)  
Red shirts get to work with the small cats.

CAROLE  
Our lynx and ocelots will be very happy to have you taking care of them. You've earned this, Taylor.



TYLER

It's Tyler.

CAROLE

Right. Well, congratulations.

She hands the shirt to him. Tyler tries to restrain his enthusiasm.

8 INT. BCR OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING (2010)

8

Carole and her VOLUNTEERS sit around the conference table as Susan is in the middle of leading the staff meeting --

SUSAN

We've been in talks with Mr. Jarrett to rescue his tiger -- it appears to be about four years old.

She points to a photo of a tiger on the board.

CAROLE

He's a private owner?

SUSAN

Yeah, in South Carolina.

Tyler, in his new red shirt, eyes the bottle of water in front of his seat. He whispers to the CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER next to him (30, female).

TYLER

Is that water for me?  
(she nods)  
It's my first staff meeting.

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER

Really? I couldn't tell.

CAROLE

We know how recent the photo is? Or if that's the actual cat?

SUSAN

No and no.

CAROLE

Do we know anything?

SUSAN

Just that Jarrett's agreed to meet.

CAROLE  
I'll handle it myself. What's next?

SUSAN  
Status of animal abuse shows.

Susan indicates a "murder board" of animal shows that looks like it could have been in *The Wire*.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
The two most recent shows are Welch's Great Cat Adventure, in Texas, and Corley's Exotics, Wisconsin.

CAROLE  
Anything on them?

SUSAN  
No. After the shows, they both disappeared into the ether.

CAROLE  
Just like all the others.

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER  
(discouraged)  
How are we supposed to stop any of these operations when we can't even track them?

Carole doesn't know, though she doesn't say it out loud.

CAROLE  
No one said it was going to be easy. What they're counting on is you getting tired of fighting. So they can keep ripping baby cubs away from their mothers. So they can cruelly move tigers from cage to truck to mall and back, over and over -- knocking them unconscious each time like their lives don't matter.

Carole looks at the Curly-Haired Volunteer, challenging her.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
So the question is, are you tired of fighting?

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER  
No.

Carole nods, then moves on -- scanning the dozens of other companies on the board.

CAROLE

What's Awakening Productions? I've never heard of them.

SUSAN

They're new. We got a tip they're doing a show in Iowa this weekend.

CAROLE

Looks like we have an opportunity to get ahead of this one. Let's take advantage of it.

(then)

Whoever you are, we're coming for you.

9 INT. IOWA MALL - DAY (2010)

9

Close on -- COWBOY BOOTS. We travel up a MAN'S body, past the boots up to his jeans -- his fingers nervously tap-tap-tapping against his side -- then onto his sparkly, attention-grabbing shirt, and finally to his distinctive BLEACH BLONDE MULLET. We don't see his face.

What we can see is that we're backstage, as the man peeks through the crack in a curtain to check out how big the crowd is. He takes a breath...ready. And a VOICE over the loudspeaker gives him a proper introduction --

VOICE OVER LOUDSPEAKER

Ladies and gentleman, please give a warm Iowa welcome to the one and only: JOE EXOTIC!

10 INT. IOWA MALL - STAGE - DAY (2010)

10

A BURST OF LIGHT AND SOUND, like a magic show mixed with Vegas touches -- and out of the SMOKE steps the man in the blonde mullet. Smiling, hands in the air dramatically accepting the CROWD'S applause. This is JOE.

At this point Joe is in his mid 40's, and right away we can tell he's a natural entertainer and charismatic as hell, even though he might have a funny-sounding voice.

JOE

Welcome to the best exotic animal show in these United States!

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm telling you, folks, you're gonna see animals like you never seen 'em before, up close and personal! It'll be closer than that time you walked in on Mom and Dad and they said they were just wrestling. Sure looked like Dad was winning though, didn't it?

We pull back to see the food court behind the stage. This ain't no Vegas, but the crowd is two hundred strong, including a bunch of KIDS, and they're excited. A banner reads "Awakening Productions" with the image of a majestic tiger.

JOE (CONT'D)

First I wanna introduce you to my friend. Cletus, come on out here!

A HANDLER brings out a CAMEL, Cletus. Joe takes Cletus' lead strap. Joe bites down on the end of a carrot, then brings it close to Cletus, who snatches it out of his mouth and gobbles it down, slobbering on Joe. The crowd eats it up!

JOE (CONT'D)

(wiping off his mouth)

Now he might kiss like he's French, but I can assure ya he's one hundred percent Arabian. Cletus said "forget all them sheiks in the Middle East, there ain't no better place in the world to be than the Lindale Mall with you folks."

As he soaks in the applause, Joe notices his employee CRYSTAL (30) trying to get his attention from the wings.

JOE (CONT'D)

(makes his way to her)

What the hell is it? I'm just getting warmed up!

CRYSTAL

We got a problem.

11 INT. IOWA MALL - EMPTY STOREFRONT - DAY (2010)

11

Joe's team has taken over an empty storefront to use as a holding area. FIND Joe staring at one of the cages. Inside: a TIGER. It looks unwell -- lethargic and panting.

CRYSTAL

He's been throwing up.

JOE  
(feeling for the tiger)  
Poor fella.

CRYSTAL  
I told you he wasn't feelin' good  
when we left the zoo.

JOE  
We gave him the antibiotic. What  
the hell are we gonna do? He's my  
headliner.

CRYSTAL  
Well he needs a vet. So unless you  
can magically pull a tiger out of  
your ass, you're screwed.

Joe grimaces, *shit*. But then...he gets struck with an idea.  
As a matter of fact...

12 EXT. IOWA MALL - OTHER SIDE OF EMPTY STOREFRONT - DAY (2010)

12

A shorn SHEEP (in a pen) stares back at Joe and Crystal  
nervously, perhaps suspecting something is up. Another  
employee, a sweet-faced guy in his early 20's named JOHN  
FINLAY, runs up with a shopping bag.

JOHN FINLAY  
I got it.

JOE  
Good. Gimme the orange.

John pulls out a can of ORANGE SPRAY PAINT from the bag,  
handing it to Joe. Joe shakes the can. The sheep backs away  
at the sound.

JOE (CONT'D)  
(to the sheep)  
Relax, it'll wash out. I think.

He goes into the pen. As we hear the SOUND of paint being  
sprayed mixed with the baaaas of the sheep, John looks to  
Crystal. This seems like a crazy idea. But Crystal's face  
tells us that when it comes to Joe, this ain't so crazy.

JOE (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Help me hold him down!

13 INT. IOWA MALL - DAY (2010)

13

Joe is back onstage and in full-on performance mode.

JOE

Who wants to see a tiger appear out  
of thin air?

(crowd cheers)

I can't hear you!

(crowd goes wild)

Your wish is my command!

And Joe does a dramatic spin, kneeling and pointing to the middle of the stage, where -- A PYROTECHNIC GOES OFF -- and suddenly A TIGER IS THERE...And the CROWD loses it. Wow!

JOE (CONT'D)

My friend here may be young, but  
soon he's gonna be eatin' 330  
pounds of meat a month! That's  
enough to clean McDonald's out!

As the SMOKE dissipates, it starts to dawn on the audience...that's not a tiger. It looks like...an orange sheep with black stripes? They stare at each other, confused. Joe realizes he's losing them and quickly pivots --

JOE (CONT'D)

You know what's better than seeing  
a tiger? Petting one! Who's ready  
for the next part of the show!

14 INT. IOWA MALL - DAY (2010)

14

A long line of PEOPLE snakes past stores, eagerly getting a glimpse at what awaits them at the front -- a cage with fake grass, beside the Sunglass Hut, where Joe holds a TIGER CUB.

It's like a line to sit on Santa's lap, except this one is full of excited adults as well as children, with Joe as Santa -- not asking what they want but granting it to them, the opportunity to hold an actual tiger cub!

JOE

Wait your turn! You're all gonna  
get your chance!

Joe eats up the adulation. As a FATHER and his 7-year-old DAUGHTER step up for their turn --

JOE (CONT'D)

Only five bucks.

(the guy hands over five)

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Each. It's a small price to pay for  
a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The father hands over another five, while his daughter looks at Joe like he's a superhero come to life.

DAUGHTER

Are you real?

JOE

You bet your ass I am, darlin'.

Suddenly, Joe stops. Out of the corner of his eye he's spotted something -- someone in a coat and hat sneaking into his backstage holding area. He hands the cub to Crystal.

JOE (CONT'D)

You take over.

As Crystal shows the girl the adorable tiger cub, we follow Joe, quickly moving towards the holding area.

JOHN FINLAY

(trailing)

What's going on?

JOE

Get security.

15 INT. IOWA MALL - EMPTY STOREFRONT - DAY (2010)

15

Joe enters to find his suspicions confirmed -- the person in the coat is using a camcorder to record the sick tiger.

JOE

Hey! Get away from there!

Joe hurries over and grabs the coat, SPINNING THE PERSON AROUND -- to find it's a soccer mom (SHARON, 35, in a Cedar Rapids Youth Soccer hat).

SHARON

Take your hands off me!

JOE

Tell your bosses at PETA they're wasting their time. I ain't doin' shit!

SHARON

You're mistreating this animal! And I don't work for PETA. I'm with Big Cat Rescue.

That's a new one for Joe, as John leads MALL SECURITY in --

JOE

Who?

SHARON

Carole Baskin. You're going down.

JOE

I'll be going down all right, but  
your ugly ass won't be on the other  
end of it.

(to mall security)

Get her outta here.

As security leads her out --

JOE (CONT'D)

Do your boss a favor and give her a  
message: she don't wanna mess with  
Joe Exotic!

John Finlay looks to Joe -- *what was that all about?*

JOHN FINLAY

Who's Carole Baskin?

JOE

Hell if I know.

(refocuses)

C'mon, we got a show to finish.

Joe leads John out, having no idea what has just been triggered -- the beginning of a feud that in time will capture the nation's attention. As they go, WE STAY WITH THE SICK TIGER, slowly pushing in on this innocent animal that was the catalyst for it all...and off the caged tiger, we

**END OF ACT ONE**



ACT TWO

16 EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY (2010)

16

TIGHT ON the rear door of a U-Haul as it slides open, revealing a dusty aluminum transport crate. Inside is a TIGER, worse for wear: patchy fur, glassy eyes.

Carole and Howard peer into the truck, the tiger's owner (AMBROSE JARRETT, 40's, redneck and proud) beside them.

AMBROSE  
(to Howard)  
We got a deal?

HOWARD (indicating  
Carole)  
Don't ask me, she's the boss.

Ambrose spits. Okay, one of those marriages where the woman wears the pants. He turns to Carole.

AMBROSE  
If you're having second thoughts,  
there's a roadside zoo up in  
Tennessee that's interested in  
taking him --

CAROLE  
It's a she, actually.

AMBROSE  
(doubtful)  
Cat weighs 450, easy --

CAROLE  
Paws are too small, no ruff around  
the neck.  
(then)  
Plus she's got a vagina.

Ambrose snorts, but Carole's lost interest in him -- she's fixated on the tiger.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
(quietly, to the tiger)  
Bet you've still got some fight in  
you. Don't you?

Ambrose breaks in, shattering the moment --

AMBROSE  
Well?

CAROLE  
(retrieving an envelope)  
You said \$5000?

A bullying grin curls Ambrose's lip. Thinking he can get one over on this diminutive woman, he ups the ante --

AMBROSE  
Gonna need ten.

HOWARD  
Now hold on a minute --

AMBROSE  
This cat is purebred Siberian.

CAROLE  
(doesn't bat an eye)  
Let's see your permit then.  
(off him)  
You're selling her across state lines. Endangered Species Act requires a permit if she's purebred.  
(can't resist adding)  
...As I'm sure you well know.

Ambrose's smile is gone now, replaced by a scowl.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
(goes for her phone)  
Maybe I should get the proper authorities on the phone, see if we can't sort this out --

AMBROSE  
(not without menace)  
What's your problem, lady?

Carole stares at him, not backing down an inch.

CAROLE  
My problem is I am trying to have one day of peace on this earth. But I can't have peace, can I? Because I have to get into fights with men like you.

Ambrose looks at her. Who is this woman?

CAROLE (CONT'D) Men who take these beautiful animals that are born to be wild, and you put them in cages so they can never survive in the wild again. You take away what makes a tiger a tiger. Did you ever consider that? When you deprived her of her essence? All so she could be your prop.  
(then)  
Now do you want the five thousand or not?

17 INT. BCR OFFICE - DAY (2010)

17

Carole makes her way into the office, pausing dramatically as all the VOLUNTEERS wait with baited breath to hear the news. Susan Bass, at her desk, shoots Carole a questioning look...

SUSAN  
...So?

Carole strides to a BELL mounted on the wall -- and rings it loudly. This is their tradition.

CAROLE  
We got her, folks.

The Volunteers break into A ROUND OF APPLAUSE as Carole beams.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
Because people who keep tigers in cages are...say it with me...

CAROLE AND EVERYONE  
A-holes!

18 EXT. GW ZOO - DAY (2010)

18

An 18-wheeler lumbers onto the zoo grounds, and who's that in the passenger seat? Joe Exotic, HITTING THE HORN over and over. Announcing his arrival home in the manner in which he's accustomed -- as loudly as possible.

JOE  
(getting out)  
Honey, I'm home!

A gaggle of EMPLOYEES comes out to help Crystal and John, including the bearded BUTCH (30s).

BUTCH  
(razzing Joe)  
You look like hell, Joe.

JOE  
I been on the road for two days,  
what's your excuse?

As they start to pull gear from the truck --

JOE (CONT'D)  
(turns to John)  
John, is it?

JOHN FINLAY  
Yes, sir, Mr. Exotic.

JOE  
Mr. Exotic is my father's name.  
(off John, really?)  
Just yanking your chain. Grab some  
gear, we'll take it to the shed.

19 EXT. GW ZOO - ANIMAL ENCLOSURES - DAY (2010)

19

Find Joe and John carrying road gear past the kangaroo and  
swan pond, giving us our first glimpse of Joe's zoo.  
Everything feels more rundown than Big Cat Rescue.

JOHN FINLAY  
Where'd you learn how to care for  
all these different animals?

JOE  
I'm a proud graduate of Google  
University. There's a lot you can  
learn from the internet, y'know.

Joe spots one of the MONKEYS in its enclosure, and it  
delights him.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Look at the balls on this guy!  
That's my bubba right there. You  
thirsty?

Joe fills the monkey's bowl with water.

JOE (CONT'D)  
I rescued this monkey from a shitty-  
ass circus that went belly up. A  
lot of these animals are rescues.  
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

If they're cross-eyed or missing a  
tail, the zoos don't accept 'em.  
But I'll take any unwanted animal.

They head off again, down Tiger Alley.

JOHN FINLAY

Then why do those animal rights  
people wanna stop you?

JOE

They're a bunch of lonely cows  
picking fights with me cuz their  
husbands can't get it up for them  
anymore! They say cub breeders are  
evil, that we get rid of our  
animals when they get old and  
expensive -- but you ever see me do  
that?

JOHN FINLAY

(doesn't know)

I just started here --

JOE

(on a roll)

No! I got big plans -- I'm taking  
my show national, so people all  
over can love on these beautiful  
animals. That's what I'm about. And  
the animals love me as much as I  
love them. Check this shit out.

As if to prove his point, Joe goes to a tiger cage. A huge  
adult TIGER inside eyes John, snarling. To John's  
astonishment, JOE GOES INSIDE THE CAGE.

Joe steps toward the tiger, who gets up -- all 600 pounds of  
him. Joe, weighing in at about 160, doesn't flinch. He calmly  
talks to John as he moves toward the tiger.

JOE (CONT'D)

My dream was to own a tiger. Wanna  
know why?

John is too wide-eyed to respond. The moment loaded with  
danger. Joe grins.

JOE (CONT'D)

Anyone can grow up to be a fucking  
doctor or farmer.

Joe reaches his hand out slowly, then PETS THE ENORMOUS  
TIGER. THE TIGER LETS HIM. John watches, in awe. Mesmerized.

And we're off Joe, rustling the big cat's fur, feeling the surge of power that comes with being one of the only people on earth with the stones to step into a cage with one of nature's most ferocious beasts.

20 INT. ANIMAL CLINIC - EXAM ROOM - DAY (2010)

20

Carole arrives at the vet clinic, where the TIGER she bought from Ambrose is tranquilized (a TECH runs oxygen and propofol). The Curly-Haired Volunteer fills Carole in.

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER  
The vet just finished up.

CAROLE  
How's she looking?

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER  
Malnourishment, ringworm on her left ear...

CAROLE  
So, the usual.  
(then, all business)  
Let's get her into the quarantine building ASAP. Keepers should be ready for 24 hour observation -- I want at least two fecal samples processed before we move her outside.

The Volunteer nods, writing down Carole's instructions --

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER  
You got her in time.

Carole reaches out and pets the cat, trying to comfort the anesthetized animal.

CAROLE  
(a heavy burden)  
I better have. Cats were there for me. I owe them.

Off Carole, her heart heavy --

21 EXT. WEST VIRGINIA STREET - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**, 1971)

21

Find 10-YEAR-OLD CAROLE, happily taking a stroll with her HOUSECAT, Pearly Mae.

10-YEAR-OLD CAROLE

What do you want for dinner,  
Pearly? We have kibble...or  
kibble...or kibble. Your choice.

Suddenly, out of an alley steps a DOBERMAN. He looks nasty.  
He growls at Carole, ready to strike.

Carole stares, frozen, her heart in her throat. And just as  
the Doberman is about to attack --

PEARLY JUMPS ON HIM. Seriously. The tiny cat claws,  
scratches. Carole watches, not sure what to make of it.

Finally the Doberman knocks Pearly off and -- to Carole's  
astonishment -- the dog runs away, apparently having had  
enough. Pearly saved her. Carole scoops up her cat lovingly.

CAROLE (V.O.)

Pearly was one tough kitty.

22 EXT. STAIRS FAMILY HOUSE - EVENING (**FLASHBACK**, 1976)

22

Find TEENAGE CAROLE exiting the house, her things packed in  
two grocery bags, her cat carrier on her arm.

TEENAGE CAROLE

Ready for an adventure, Pearly?

She sounds hopeful, though we might sense darkness in her  
past. She heads off with her cat into an uncertain future.

CAROLE (V.O.)

She was with me when I left home at  
15.

23 EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**, 1978)

23

ON Teenage Carole's closed eyes. Pull back to reveal she's  
asleep, using a duffel bag for a pillow. The cat carrier  
beside her.

CAROLE (V.O.)

She was with me when things were  
hard.

Suddenly we hear footsteps, and the sound of a car door SLAM.  
Carole bolts awake as we realize -- she's sleeping under a  
car. As the engine starts, Carole hurriedly grabs the cat  
carrier and the duffel bag and scoots out from underneath.

As the vehicle pulls away, Carole reassures Pearly --

TEENAGE CAROLE

*It's okay. We'll be okay.*

*Off Carole in the pre-dawn light of the parking lot...*

CAROLE (V.O.)

*And she was with me when things got better.*

24 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - MORNING (**FLASHBACK**, 1980) 24

*Carole, now nineteen and living in a house, picks up her NEWBORNN BABY JAMIE and introduces her to Pearly.*

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD CAROLE

*Pearly, this is my daughter, Jamie.  
Jamie, this is my best friend,  
Pearly.*

*Carole beams.*

25 EXT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY (**FLASHBACK**, 1986) 25

*Carole sobs. SIX-YEAR-OLD JAMIE stands beside her. We spin to see: a shovel, and a newly dug gravesite for Pearly.*

*Jamie consoles her distraught mother.*

SIX-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

*It's okay, Mom. We'll be okay.*

26 INT. ANIMAL CLINIC - EXAM ROOM - DAY (2010) 26

*Back in 2010, Carole gets misty-eyed thinking about Pearly.*

CAROLE

*I do everything I can, but it never feels like enough.*

*The Volunteer puts a comforting arm around Carole.*

CURLY-HAIRED VOLUNTEER

*I know, Mom.*

*We realize this is no regular employee: it's Jamie, Carole's daughter, now 30 years old. They gaze down at the unconscious tiger as Carole squeezes Jamie's hand.*

CAROLE

*I'm glad you were here with her.*



Jamie smiles -- her mother taught her everything she knows.

JAMIE

She's been through a lot.

CAROLE

(understands this better  
than anyone)

Yeah. But she's a survivor.

Susan enters with a somber look on her face.

SUSAN

Sorry to interrupt. We got video  
from our volunteer in Iowa.

27 INT. BCR OFFICE - CAROLE'S OFFICE - DAY (2010)

27

As Carole watches the video of Joe's ill tiger shot by the soccer mom, she shakes her head, looking like she's in almost as much distress as the tiger.

And then a voice we recognize in the video --

JOE (O.S.)

Hey! Get away from there!

The video image turns and freezes on Joe, in mid stride, charging toward camera, his face contorted mid-yell.

Carole cocks her head. Her spidey-sense tingling. There's something about that man...where has she seen him before...?

CAROLE

(thunderbolt)

SUSAN! Get everyone in the  
conference room!

28 INT. BCR OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (2010)

28

Carole storms in and slams a series of printouts down in front of her gathered EMPLOYEES -- photos from various exotic animal shows.

CAROLE

We've been struggling to shut down  
all of these disparate animal abuse  
shows. But look --

She pins the image of Joe from the video up on the murder board.

CAROLE (CONT'D) The one  
in Iowa. What do you notice? Other  
than the constipated look on his  
face.

TYLER  
His mullet?

She takes a photo from another event and pins it up --

CAROLE  
Welch's Great Cat Adventure, Texas.

She circles something -- a grainy image of someone in the  
background. It's Joe.

JAMIE  
(dawning on her)  
The mullet...

CAROLE  
(another photo)  
Corley's Exotics, Wisconsin --

Another circle -- another grainy image of Joe. She does it  
over and over again --

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
Alex Productions. World Magic.

SUSAN  
(holy shit)  
It's all the same person...

Carole looks up at her crew, her eyes bright with hope.

CAROLE  
This is no longer a conference  
room. From now on, it's a war room.  
(points at image of Joe)  
This is who we've been after. This  
is our guy.

Off Carole, her mission clear...

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

29 EXT. GW ZOO - DAY (2010)

29

Crystal watches as Joe stands on a ladder outside a transport trailer. He's holding a tranquilizer pole and aiming the needle inside the trailer like he's spearfishing.

JOE  
Almost got him...

He thrusts the tranquilizer into the TIGER inside, and the animal roars in distress.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Give it a few minutes, then move him into his cage.

CRYSTAL  
Alright. I have to call my parole officer back.

JOE  
Hey, if he wants to talk to me, I'll say whatever you need me to. You know that, right?

She looks at him appreciatively.

CRYSTAL  
I know. Thanks.

Butch makes his way over.

BUTCH  
Joe, that weirdo is back at Ozzy's cage.

JOE  
(stops)  
Shit. You think he's one of those animal rights nutjobs?

Butch shrugs, doesn't know. Joe's face turns serious.

30 EXT. GW ZOO - GRIZZLY CAGE - DAY (2010)

30

Joe, gun in hand (just in case), heads to Ozzy's enclosure. Sees a LANKY MAN right up against the cage (inside is an 11-foot GRIZZLY BEAR).

JOE  
Hey! Get your ass away from the  
cage!

The Lanky Man turns, sees Joe's armed.

LANKY MAN  
Whoa. Calm down.

JOE  
This is my damn zoo, don't tell me  
to calm down. What group you with?

LANKY MAN  
I don't think I'm with any group.  
Unless you count Costco?

JOE  
Real funny.

LANKY MAN  
Thing is, if I don't get right up  
to the cage then I can't give Ozzy  
his Twinkies, and they just make  
him so damn happy.

JOE  
Twinkies upset his stomach.

LANKY MAN  
Not banana flavored.

The Lanky Man seems to know his stuff, which surprises Joe.

LANKY MAN (CONT'D) Ever  
since I got out of the hospital,  
Ozzy's the only thing cheered me  
up. This zoo saved me.

Joe clocks the Man's PROSTHETIC LEG as he puts his gun away.

JOE  
You need a bench or something?

If Joe was trying to be nice, he miscalculated. That pisses  
the Man off.

LANKY MAN  
I can stand just as good as you.

JOE  
I didn't mean any offense.

LANKY MAN

Yeah, that's what everyone says,  
right after they tell me the job  
ain't mine. How would you like it  
if you got dinged for the funny way  
you talk?

JOE

I don't talk funny.

LANKY MAN

(sarcastic)  
Yeah. Okay.

JOE

What happened?

LANKY MAN

Zip line accident.

JOE

Jesus.

LANKY MAN

Shoulda died. Said goodbye to my  
wife and everything.

JOE

Bet she's disappointed you pulled  
through.

The Man laughs. He can't help but like Joe. Joe stares at  
this bear-loving misfit, perhaps sensing a kindred spirit.

JOE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

REINKE

John Reinke.

JOE

You want a job?

Reinke can't believe it.

REINKE

You serious?

Joe smiles. Hell yeah he is. The sound of a vehicle  
interrupts them -- John Finlay approaching on a 4-wheeler.

JOHN FINLAY

Joe!

He jumps off and shows Joe his phone (Reinke looks, too) -- a clip of the abuse video that was sent to Carole.

JOHN FINLAY (CONT'D)  
It's the Iowa show.

We hear Carole's voice -- she narrates with a sad tone.

CAROLE (V.O.)  
Look at this sick tiger. Sadly, he is one of many big cats subjected to repeated abuse by a monster named Joe Schreibvogel. Together we can stop him. Go to [bigcatrescue.com](http://bigcatrescue.com) for more information.

The clip ends and Joe steps away, befuddled and irked.

REINKE  
(amused)  
You're a monster?

JOHN FINLAY  
It's that woman Carole Baskin. She's got a whole website trying to take you down now.

Feeling attacked, Joe gets a determined look on his face.

JOE  
...Well if she wants to mess with me, I can mess with her.

31 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING (2010)

31

FIND Carole being spun around. She and Howard are ballroom dancing, and she laughs as Howard brings her back into his arms (she's having a blast even though she thinks she's a terrible dancer).

HOWARD  
You're getting better!

CAROLE  
That's not saying much!  
(kisses him)  
I have to go to the office.

HOWARD  
Can we practice more after work?

CAROLE  
Depends how masochistic I'm  
feeling.

The landline rings. Carole recognizes the number.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
One of my donors.  
(she takes the call)  
Hi, Donna, how are --

We can hear Donna's urgent voice on the other end--

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
What are you talking about? What  
website?

Confused, Carole quickly clicks onto the site Donna gives  
her. It's a fake Big Cat Rescue site, with images of animals  
from Joe's show performing and in travel cages (clearly Joe  
created the site).

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
I don't understand. This isn't us.

Donna responds, as Howard looks to Carole -- *what's going on?*

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Where's mute on this thing?

HOWARD  
(points, whispering)  
I think it's that button.

CAROLE  
This one?

HOWARD  
No, the other one.

CAROLE  
Are you sure?

HOWARD  
No.

Carole hits the button.

CAROLE  
(checks)  
Donna?  
(to Howard)  
It worked.

HOWARD  
What's going on?

CAROLE  
Someone's doing shows using our  
name. They even copied our website  
to make it look like we're the ones  
abusing animals!

Carole's face radiates rage.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
I've got to deal with this.

She takes a breath, returning her voice to a calm state.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
(into the phone)  
Donna. Donna?

HOWARD  
You're still on mute.

Carole clicks it off mute.

CAROLE  
Donna, I assure you this goes  
against everything we stand for --

Off Carole, doing damage control...

32 EXT. GW ZOO - NIGHT (2010)

32

Joe's EMPLOYEES feast on dinner by their trailers. Butch mans  
the grill, surrounded by Reinke (who's feeling very much at  
home), a smiling John Finlay, and Crystal, along with others.  
All having a great time. Joe surveys the scene.

JOE  
Hey! Listen up, you motherfuckers!

Joe reads from his cell phone.

JOE (CONT'D)  
A statement from Carole Baskin and  
Big Cat Rescue. "A fraudulent  
website has been created to sow  
distrust and alarm in the big cat  
community. To be clear, we would  
never harm an animal, and we are  
deeply upset." You hear that, boys?  
She's deeply upset!



EMPLOYEES

Oh no./That's terrible!/Suck it,  
Carole!

The group busts out laughing.

JOE

She wants to put us out of  
business. Well guess what? We just  
had our most profitable show yet!

Joe pulls a stack of hundred dollar bills out of his pocket.  
The crew whistles, impressed.

JOE (CONT'D)

And when I do well, we do well.

He starts passing out the bills, a hundred bucks to each  
employee. They whoop and holler with gratitude.

JOE (CONT'D)

Even though you all are the ugliest  
bunch of rejects I ever saw.

REINKE

Hey, I ain't no reject!

JOE

Like hell you're not!

LAUGHTER all around, everyone feeling the camaraderie.

JOE (CONT'D)

I know cuz I'm a reject, too. Been  
one my whole life. But I got news  
for you: the meek ain't gonna  
inherit the earth. We are.

(raises his beer)

Here's to all the unwanted animals.

EMPLOYEES

Hear, hear!/Cheers!

JOE

Now let's get good and shitfaced.

Off the cheers of the crew, the revelry truly beginning --  
and Joe, the proud parent of this misfit family, we...

**END OF ACT THREE**

ACT FOUR

33 INT. GW ZOO - GIFT SHOP - NIGHT (2010)

33

John Finlay walks into the sparse gift shop to find Joe going over receipts behind the register while a MOM (32) and her twelve-year-old son look around.

JOHN FINLAY  
I finished that weld on  
Bonedigger's cage.

JOE  
That's great, John. Hang on a sec --  
(to Mom)  
Hey we're closing up for the night,  
but if you want a stuffed animal,  
I'll give you a second one half  
off. Can't beat that.

MOM  
He's a little old for stuffed  
animals.

JOE  
How about a t-shirt then?

Joe holds up a shirt that reads "I Got Peed On By a Tiger at the GW Zoo."

JOE (CONT'D)  
Can't get that anywhere else!

MOM  
(not interested) You're  
right about that.  
(to her son)  
Time to go, Ben.

JOE  
C'mon, Ben, you don't wanna leave  
empty-handed, do ya? Tell your mom  
you wanna support the animals. I  
got candy, ya know!

But they're gone. Joe grimaces at the missed opportunity.

JOHN FINLAY  
You need a hand?

JOE  
Depends what you're gonna do with  
it.

JOHN FINLAY  
I meant closing up.

Joe puts the receipts away.

JOE  
I'm not keepin' ya, am I?

JOHN FINLAY  
(shrugs)  
Ain't like I'm in a hurry to get home.

JOE  
Everything okay?

JOHN FINLAY  
Things just been quiet there, since my dad passed. Don't have much family left, y'know...

He's playing it off, like it's not a big deal, but Joe can tell it's something that's weighing on John.

JOE  
You like it here so far, John?

JOHN FINLAY  
(lights up)  
I love it. It's like...I dunno, Seaworld or something, but in the middle of Oklahoma.

JOE  
Lemme tell you something. This ain't Seaworld -- it's my world. And you're gonna be okay now, cuz we take care of our own here.

(then)  
C'mon, you can help me bring the cubs in for the night.

John nods. Feeling like he has a home at the zoo.

34 INT. GW ZOO - JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (2010)

34

Joe walks into his house (which is on the zoo grounds) holding two TIGER CUBS.

JOE  
Watch your step, the animals leave their chew toys all over the place.

John, following with a CUB in his hands, watches wide-eyed as Joe gently puts the cubs in cribs.

JOHN FINLAY  
You keep 'em in cribs?

JOE  
They're babies, aren't they? Go ahead.

John places the cub in the crib, getting a thrill.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Take a load off, dude.

Joe plops on the sofa. John follows suit, noticing as he sits how torn up the sofa is, thanks to the tigers.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Long day, huh? I hope you have a girlfriend who doesn't bust your balls for working so hard.

John smiles, embarrassed.

JOHN FINLAY  
I don't gotta worry about that.

JOE  
Yeah? Why's that?

JOHN FINLAY  
My girlfriend cheated on me, so that's over.

JOE  
You tryin' to tell me she found someone better than you? Bullshit.

John smiles, blushing. Doesn't know what to say.

JOE (CONT'D)  
You just need someone who'll appreciate you.

John gets that Joe is coming onto him, even if it's not aggressive, and he doesn't want this to go too far.

JOHN FINLAY  
I'm not uhh...

JOE  
What?

JOHN FINLAY  
Into guys. I mean, I don't care if  
you are, but...I'm straight.

JOE  
You ever been with a guy?

JOHN FINLAY  
(definitive)  
No.

Joe nods, then tries a different tack.

JOE  
You watch porn?

JOHN FINLAY  
Yeah.

JOE  
What kind?

JOHN FINLAY  
I dunno. Babysitter stuff?

JOE  
Girl and a guy?  
(John nods)  
Okay, well when the guy's doin' the  
girl, you like it when he's got a  
big one or a little one?

JOHN FINLAY  
(answers honestly)  
...Big one, I guess.

JOE  
(grins)  
Well then ya ain't that straight.

John thinks about that for a second. Not sure what to make of  
it. Does Joe have a point?

Joe takes the opportunity to make his way closer. Slowly,  
giving John every opportunity to say no. Joe reaches his hand  
to John's crotch, and John doesn't respond, perhaps a deer in  
headlights -- or perhaps more open to this than he thought.

Joe lowers John's fly, then dips his head into his lap. As  
Joe's head bobs up and down, we're on John's face, processing  
what's happening. He looks down at Joe, then decides better  
of it and looks straight ahead, keeping Joe out of his view.

35 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (2010) 35

Howard sleeps peacefully, wearing his eye mask. Carole, on the other hand, is wide awake. Restless. Disturbed by Joe's recent counter-attack. As she stares up at the ceiling, we...

36 INT. ANIMAL AUCTION - DAY (**FLASHBACK**, 1992) 36

Thirty-one-year-old Carole sits with her husband, DON LEWIS (55, in dirty jeans and ratty white t-shirt). The auction is in a barn-like space.

CAROLE

When do they bring the llamas out?

DON

Do I look like I run this auction?

Carole tries to ignore the demeaning way in which Don speaks to her. The MAN (40's) next to them interjects, neighborly.

MAN

I think they're after the bobcat.

CAROLE

Thank you.

MAN

(extends his hand to Don)  
Russ Tuttle. What do you want a llama for, if you don't mind my asking?

DON

(shakes)  
Don Lewis. I own some land, and the llamas are good for clearing out the grass.

CAROLE

They're his landscapers.

As the bidding begins, Carole talks to her husband.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Remind me, while we're out this way I want to stop at the Walmart.

DON

What for?

CAROLE

I want to buy a meat grinder.

DON

*What on Earth do you need a meat grinder for?*

CAROLE

*I can make you burgers.*

DON

*What's the difference? If you're cooking it, it's gonna taste like shit either way.*

*(then)*

*Sounds like a waste of money to me.*

CAROLE

*I promise I'll put it to good use.*

*Don grumbles. Meanwhile, the Man next to him has begun bidding on the BOBCAT.*

MAN

*Three hundred!*

CAROLE

*(leans over to the Man)*

*Good luck, that bobcat's adorable.*

MAN *(smiles*

*warmly)*

*She'll look even better stuffed.*

CAROLE

*What?*

MAN

*I'm a taxidermist. I'm going to club her in the head and make a decoration out of her.*

*The Man raises his arm.*

MAN (CONT'D)

*Four hundred!*

*BUT WE'RE ON CAROLE, absorbing what the Man said. She's stunned, horrified. She raises her arm and yells --*

CAROLE

*Five hundred!*

DON

*What are you doing?!*

*The Man doesn't appreciate the competition and raises his arm again.*

MAN

*Five fifty!*

CAROLE

*Six!*

DON

*Carole, stop!*

37 INT. CAROLE & DON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY (**FLASHBACK**, 1992) 37

*Carole finishes filling the bath with water. Perfect.*

CAROLE

*Bath is ready, Jamie!*

38 INT. CAROLE & DON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY 38  
(**FLASHBACK**, 1992)

*12-YEAR-OLD JAMIE and Don stare at the bobcat, now on the sofa (clearly Carole won the animal). As Carole enters --*

DON

*What do you know about raising a bobcat?*

CAROLE

*Nothing. But she's just a big cat, I'll figure it out.*

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

*Don't cats hate water?*

CAROLE

*She's been given a new life, Jamie. So she should get baptized, right?*

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

*I guess.*

*We realize -- the bath isn't for Jamie, it's for the bobcat. Carole wraps the animal up in her arms.*

CAROLE

*C'mon, Windsong. Time to get saved.*

*As Carole (with Jamie) takes the bobcat into the bathroom, we stay in the hallway.*



*The sounds tell us everything we need to know -- a GROWL, followed by Carole trying to soothe the animal, then the sound of WATER SPLASHING, Carole and Jamie LAUGHING -- as water SPLATTERS out into the hallway!*

39 INT. CAROLE & DON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (**FLASHBACK**, 1992)

39

*Carole fixes a bowl of milk. As Don grabs a beer, he clocks a scratch on her arm.*

DON  
Cat scratch you?

CAROLE  
I'm alright.

DON  
Should keep that damn thing in its cage.

CAROLE  
It's not meant to be in a cage its whole life.

DON  
Well I don't wanna see it. Keep it outta my way.

*She grabs the bottle opener. Opens the beer for him.*

CAROLE  
I'd like to get some more.

DON  
Beer?

CAROLE  
Cats.  
(off Don, what?)  
They deserve a better life.

DON  
(scoffs)  
You can't even take care of one.

CAROLE  
(firm)  
I'm not asking. I'm telling you it's something I need to do.

*Don stares at her, taken aback by her nerve. He doesn't like it one bit. After a long, loaded moment...he chuckles.*

*DON*  
*You think you're so goddamn smart,*  
*Carole. Yeah, you try and save 'em.*  
*I wanna see that.*

*He cracks up laughing. Carole's face hardens as she takes in his dismissive condescension. Off of Don's cruel laughter, and Carole's anger building --*

40 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (2010) 40

FIND Carole in bed, Don's laughter echoing in her ears. She's on her laptop, looking at pictures of Joe and his tigers. The tigers she feels powerless to save. In the moment she can't help but feel...was Don right?

Carole slams the computer shut. She could wake up Howard, sleeping next to her...Instead she gets up and quietly walks out into the hallway.

41 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - HALL/ENTRYWAY - NIGHT (2010) 41

Carole reaches into the hall closet and takes out her coat. What's she doing?

42 EXT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (2010) 42

Carole exits the house. The moon out, the crickets chirping. With purpose she walks down the driveway and makes her way onto the main street, which is barren -- no cars at this time of night, and no houses close by.

She walks down the main road for a while, until she stops. Looks back at how far away her house is now. Far enough that Howard won't wake up.

AND THEN SHE SCREAMS. A long, guttural howl from the deep depths of her being. Full of rage, exasperation.

...She gives herself a moment to catch her breath and rein in her feelings...That done, she starts the walk back home...

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

43 INT. BCR OFFICE - CAROLE'S OFFICE - MORNING (2010)

43

Tyler pops his head in as Carole's in the middle of a call --

CAROLE

(on the phone, frustrated)

-- Yes I know how many malls Mr. Sutton runs, I understand he's busy -- but please ask him to call me back, I left my number yesterday. It's important.

TYLER

(as she hangs up)

Sorry to interrupt. Had a question about the feeding schedule for the ocelots --

He clocks she's in no mood for this conversation.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Or I could just go. You look like you want to punch me in the face.

Carole sighs, rubs her face.

CAROLE

At what point does banging your head against a wall lead to permanent brain damage?

TYLER

(a beat, then)

That's rhetorical, right?

CAROLE

None of the malls will call me back. I tried OSHA, PETA -- but there's just no law against how Joe Exotic treats his cats. I can't find a way to stop him.

(then)

Sit down.

Tyler just looks at her, *really*?

CAROLE (CONT'D)

I could use the break. How's that red shirt treating you so far?

TYLER

(sits)

Great. I love seeing the animals up close. Jamie's been showing me the ropes.

CAROLE

Did you study zoology in college?

TYLER

I dropped out, actually. Spent a year volunteering for the Obama campaign, that was cool.

CAROLE

Doing what?

TYLER

Mostly online stuff. Reaching out to people, building a coalition. It was a grind. But strength in numbers, y'know?

Something about that strikes Carole. Her wheels turning.

CAROLE

Tell me more.

44 INT. BCR OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (2010)

44

Carole plants herself on the desk as Susan works away.

CAROLE

What if I told you I could press one button and get every supporter we have to email every mall currently set to host Joe's shows?

SUSAN

I would tell you it's against company policy to come to work stoned.

CAROLE

There's a software program the Obama campaign used. We can rally people against these malls in bigger numbers. The malls would have to listen to us.

SUSAN

You think two thousand emails would make a difference?

CAROLE

No. But twenty thousand might.

Susan realizes Carole's serious.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

There are a lot of animal rights groups. We can't be the only ones who are against what Joe's doing. We have to reach out and convince them to come together under one flag.

SUSAN

That's ambitious.

Carole hands her a stapled collection of papers.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And you have a list of people for us to contact.

(then)

So I should put everything down --

CAROLE

And start calling. Yes.

45 INT. BCR OFFICE/CAROLE'S OFFICE - DAY (2010)

45

Letters spit out of a printer, addressed to people all over the country -- just as Tyler answers the RINGING phone.

TYLER

Big Cat Rescue/ Hold please.

(calls out to Carole)

Carole, it's Luis Diaz from Americans Against Animal Cruelty --

46 EXT. BCR - DAY (2010)

46

As Carole inspects a new enclosure under construction --

CAROLE

(on the phone)

Karen, look at the photos of Joe's abuse and tell me if you could sleep afterwards.

47 INT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - DAY (2010) 47

Howard does squats while holding little barbells, while Carole is on another call --

CAROLE  
-- Individually we're a whimper,  
Derrick, but together we're a roar.

48 INT. BCR OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (2010) 48

Carole is with Jamie and Tyler when Susan comes in --

SUSAN  
I just sent the Great Lakes Rescues  
email list.

CAROLE  
Got it.  
(to Tyler)  
Add it to the rest.

Tyler tabulates, all eyes on him.

JAMIE  
Well?

CAROLE  
What's the final number?

TYLER  
I'm going as fast as I can! I'm not  
good under pressure!  
(then)  
Okay, I got it. 24,366.

Carole looks at Jamie and Susan, who are stunned.

SUSAN  
Those malls have no idea what's  
coming.

JAMIE  
(dawning on her)  
You're going to crash their  
servers.

Carole smiles. She's got Joe now.

49 INT. BCR OFFICE - CAROLE'S OFFICE - DAY (2010) 49

Carole takes a seat before her computer as Jamie watches.

JAMIE

You got all their emails, now you  
just have to rally your new troops.

CAROLE

No pressure.

Carole fixes her webcam camera. Puts on a smile. Hits the  
record button.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Hi...

She freezes. After a beat, she turns it off.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

False start...Let's try that again.  
(hits record)  
Hello there, animal supporters.

Jamie makes a face. Carole stops the recording.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Yeah. Too stiff.

Carole thinks. Then hits record again. IN CUTS we see Carole  
audition different intros --

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Greetings, friends of the feline./  
Meow, look what the cat dragged  
in!/In the jungle, the mighty  
jungle, it's Carole Baskin!  
(doing Tom Jones)  
What's new, Pussycats?  
(then)  
Hey all you fat cats and kittens.

Carole stops. She found something. It's not exactly right...

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Cute cats and kittens. Courageous.  
Cuddly...

And then -- a lightbulb. And we cut to --

The image of Carole from her computer camera, as she looks  
right at us, with the phrase that will become ubiquitous --

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Hey all you cool cats and kittens!  
My name is Carole Baskin, and I  
need your help.

50 EXT. WICHITA MALL - LOADING AREA - DAY (2010)

50

The 18-wheeler is parked outside his next show, and Joe gives direction as his CREW begins to unload.

JOE  
Careful with that. Precious cargo.

A harried man in a suit, MELVIN (40's), hurries over and tries to determine who to approach, then goes to Joe.

MELVIN  
Excuse me, are you Mr. Exotic?

JOE  
Autographs after the show.

MELVIN  
No, I'm Melvin Choi. I manage the mall.

JOE  
Well shit, great to meet you, Melvin. Looks like you got a hell of a mall here.

MELVIN  
Thank you...I'm afraid we have to cancel the show.

Joe stares at him. For a long, loaded beat.

JOE  
Why's that, Melvin?

MELVIN  
All I know is we were inundated with emails and --

JOE  
What the hell do emails got to do with this?

MELVIN  
I don't know what kind of enemies you have out there but this is a huge problem for us.

JOE  
Alright, let's sit down and talk --

MELVIN  
It's not my call. I'm sorry.



Melvin backs away with an apologetic wave, and Joe realizes there's nothing he can do.

JOE  
So that's it? Fuck your apology!  
I'm not doing anything wrong!

John, having heard the brouhaha, keeps Joe back, making sure he doesn't do anything he'd regret.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Get off me!  
(to Melvin)  
Hey, I'm talking to you! This ain't  
right!

JOHN FINLAY  
Joe, It's okay.

JOE  
It's not okay! None of this is  
fucking okay!  
(then)  
Let go of me, damnit!

John lets him go. Panting, Joe glares as Melvin retreats back into his mall. Joe looks around, feeling helpless. He finally clocks the crew, having witnessed the scene.

JOE (CONT'D)  
...Load the truck back up. We're  
leaving.

The crew just stands there, wondering what just happened.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Load it up, damnit!

They get back to work. Off Joe, his heart breaking just a little...

**END OF ACT FIVE**

ACT SIX

51 EXT. CAROLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (2010)

51

Close on -- champagne being poured. Carole and Howard are on their porch, celebrating. Howard hands her a flute.

CAROLE  
Thank you, Howie.

HOWARD  
Would you like some victory brie?

CAROLE  
You know I've been looking forward to it all day. Why don't you make a toast first.

HOWARD  
Me?  
(she nods)  
Okie doke.  
(raises a glass)  
To...Joe Exotic.

Carole raises an eyebrow. Didn't expect that.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
Wherever he may be, he learned the first lesson of tangling with my brilliant wife. It does not go well.

Carole smiles appreciatively.

CAROLE  
Not bad for a high school dropout.

But then, before they clink --

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
Wait. I want to do one, too.  
(then)  
When there are no more tigers in cages, then there will be no need for us to rescue them. Here's to us -- putting ourselves out of business.

52 EXT. GW ZOO - NIGHT (2010)

52

It's late, and Joe sits alone, pained and resentful. John finds him and sits beside him.

JOE  
(with a quiet intensity)  
She got to every mall within a  
thousand miles.

JOHN FINLAY  
What does that mean?

JOE  
(at a loss)  
It means I got no income. Zoo might  
have to shut down. The animals...I  
don't even know what would happen  
to them.

Joe shakes his head, gutted, wiping away tears.

AND WE INTERCUT -- Carole on her porch with Howard -- Joe at  
his zoo -- our two protagonists on a collision course --

CAROLE  
Today, it was Joe Exotic. Tomorrow,  
we go after the rest of them.

JOE  
They never just let me be.

CAROLE  
Every roadside zoo, every immoral  
animal show, every private owner.

JOE  
All the times I been turned away,  
kicked to the curb.

CAROLE  
I won't quit until I've taken out  
every last one of them.

JOE  
They always try to tear me down.  
But there's something she don't  
know.

John looks at Joe, *what?* WE PUSH IN ON JOE, FOCUSED,  
DETERMINED --

JOE (CONT'D)

I had to fight for everything I  
ever got in this goddamn world. She  
thinks she can knock me back and  
I'll just go down quietly. But I  
don't do anything quietly.

Back to Carole -- emboldened and confident --

CAROLE

They'll find out soon enough: I  
always win.

Carole and Howard clink glasses. And we go back to Joe, anger  
and hurt radiating from every pore.

JOE

That bitch poked the wrong goddamn  
bear.

Off Joe, staring off darkly...WE PULL OUT, until a sign comes  
into view: "The zoo holds no liability for your injury or  
death." And off that ominous sign...

**END OF EPISODE**