

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG

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Based on a screenplay by
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**FOR EDUCATIONAL
PURPOSES ONLY**

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG

1 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY 1

The lush Pangani Mountains of Africa, mysterious and seemingly untouched.

2 EXT. PANGANI FOREST - DAY 2

A warm golden light bathes the jungle. Shafts of sunlight filter through the forest floor. The sounds of WILD BIRDS break the hushed quiet of the setting. As we MOVE IN we FIND a large female mountain gorilla lounging, eating leaves in the dense undergrowth, her precocious baby gorilla plays nearby.

THROUGH CAMERA LENS

A view of the mother gorilla, a few PICTURES SNAPPED.

BACK TO SCENE

The photographer is RUTH YOUNG, naturalist, researcher, sitting in the undergrowth with her camera, notebooks, and sketch pad. Her precocious young daughter, JILL, plays nearby.

Jill smiles, watching the baby gorilla clown. As the baby sees her, he suddenly scampers to a nearby tree and hides his face behind it. Jill does the same. She peeks out to catch a glimpse, just as the baby peeks out to catch her eye. They both scamper to different trees. Each time they move to a different tree, they go through this peek-a-boo interaction, both moving further away from their mothers. The mother GORILLA notices, lets out a CRY. Ruth looks around for Jill and signals by a distinctive whistle for her to come back this instant.

Both children take a last look at each other and then scurry to their waiting mothers.

RUTH

Jill. What did I tell you?

JILL

But Joe started it!

RUTH

It's not good for them to interact with us.

(gathering her things)

Besides, that wasn't Joe. It was Marley.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

Jill helps her mother heft the equipment as they start to head back to camp.

JILL

No it wasn't. It was Joe.

RUTH

Joe is just a baby, Jill. He was too big to be Joe.

As they walk, they can see the sunset over the mountain trail.

JILL

Check. Check the pictures.

Ruth looks down at her daughter, surprised by the confidence in her voice.

3 EXT. EQUATORIAL SKY - NIGHT

3

The Southern Cross above the horizon. The Milky Way a dusty streak of white. A shooting star streaks in an arc down to the --

MOUNTAIN RANGE

The dark peaks silhouetted against the stellar glow.

POV SHOT

Charging THROUGH dense, primeval forest. We hear an eerie metallic JANGLE of what sounds like wind chimes riding right with us. Something is moving quickly up this mountain.

4 EXT. PANGANI JUNGLE - NIGHT

4

Bursting THROUGH FRAME -- a pack of mongrel hunting dogs driven hard by a half dozen African men with rifles.

Poachers wielding pangas (machetes). A glint of silver as a panga sweeps ACROSS FRAME, hacking at the wall of thistles and nettles.

ON DOGS

Eyes yellow. Teeth flared. The RINGING sound made by TIN SQUARES cut from cans, tied by rawhide around their necks. CLANG-CLANG-CLANG. One poacher whips his panga again.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

PUNCH IN to reveal -- impaled in the earth, a three-foot stick figure with a macabre animal skull for a head. The poacher shouts in local dialect until -- A foul-looking man, GARTH, pushes INTO FRAME. Carrying a heavy Weatherby Mark V rifle across his back. Garth yanks the primitive doll from the ground. Looks back as -- A figure approaches in the darkness.

A glowing cigar clenched in his stained teeth, STRASSER checks the doll over -- primitive, grotesque; then snaps it in two. Tossing it away contemptuously, he shouts orders in the local dialect.

The men continue up the path. Dogs sweeping behind like a wildfire. CLANG-CLANG-CLANG. PAN UP OVER TO --

5 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

5

The RING of the DOG COLLARS floats on a night breeze across a deep valley to the other side of the mountain, down to a...

CLEARING

A small circle of huts forming a campsite around a night fire. We go inside...

one of them --

6 INT. HUT - NIGHT

6

Ruth Young's hut. On one side is a makeshift field laboratory, highlighted by a wall collage of photos -- family shots mixed right in with gorilla shots.

RUTH

sits on the edge of a cot, tucking Jill into bed. She leans down, kisses Jill gently on her forehead.

RUTH

Jill, what made you think the gorilla we saw today was Joe?

JILL

I was right, wasn't I?

(CONTINUED)

RUTH

My notes say that Joe is only six months old. Either I got confused, or he's a very unusual gorilla.

JILL

(sing-song)

I told you so.

RUTH

Yes, you did. And Mommy's going to write it down in her book.

She holds up a dog-eared composition book, Ruth's detailed log of her observations.

RUTH

Right here. '... and my trusted colleague, Dr. Jill Young, showed me the error of my ways.'

Jill smiles.

RUTH

Now go to sleep.

Ruth begins singing a lullaby.

RUTH

(singing)

'Sleep till the night ends, the night wind will sing for you. Your song and my song. It goes on forever.'

As she sings, a man appears in the doorway. This is KWELI, the camp manager. He seems nervous and impatient, but doesn't want to disturb Ruth. Jill sees him.

JILL

Goodnight, Kweli.

Ruth turns.

RUTH

Kweli? What is it?

KWELI

You should come. Quickly.

As soon as she hears the words, Ruth is up. As she leaves the hut, she grabs her walking stick.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

JILL

Mommy, can I...

RUTH

Stay here, Jill.

Ruth exits, Kweli behind her. Jill follows, despite her mother's orders... but Kweli feels her behind him. He turns around and crouches down, looking Jill seriously in the face:

KWELI

(fatherly)

Stay here, child.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. HUT

7

A group of Bahatu trackers have gathered in the center of the camp. They stand, silently, listening...

The distant CHIMING of the poaching dogs is unmistakable -- ECHOING in the night.

Ruth walks into the circle, also listening. She turns to Kweli.

RUTH

(grimly)

Poachers.

Kweli nods. All the men look at Ruth for a sign.

RUTH

(in Swahili,
subtitled)

Let's go.

Ruth leads them onto the forest path that goes up the mountain.

NEAR HUT

Jill has not stayed in bed. She has come out of the hut to watch the commotion.

JILL'S POV

Her mother, silhouetted by moonlight, in her mind larger-than-life, pushes up the trail. Then she's gone.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. PANGANI FOREST - NIGHT

8

Strasser leads a breakneck pace through the woods. Garth looks around as the AFRICANS begin to murmur something over and over. These men seem scared...

AFRICANS

... n'gai zamu!... n'gai zamu!...

Garth steps closer to keep up with Strasser.

GARTH

They're at it again.

STRASSER

Mystical nonsense. There's only one thing they should be afraid of on this mountain.

(threatening, to
the men)

And it's staring them right in the face!

The men stare back at Strasser with equal hostility.

Suddenly, Garth kneels and picks something from the ground. Rubs it between his fingers. Deposits it in Strasser's hand.

GARTH

Gorilla. We're close.

9 EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

9

Jill is pacing by the hut, trying to stay put like her mother said. Finally she can stand it no more. She grabs a long, stainless steel flashlight from a peg hanging on the outside of the hut and runs off...

10 EXT. FOREST - WIDEN ANGLE - NIGHT

10

The African men fan out. It gets quiet fast. Strasser and Garth swing rifles down from their shoulders as they stalk. Proficient hunting machines.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - STRASSER

His predator's eyes scanning the moonlit green tapestry. One more step -- then a dry POK-POK-POK sound erupts from the bushes. The DOGS BARK madly -- CLAPPERS RINGING.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

Trees shake furiously.

Strasser spins to see several gorillas, darting from the trees, a blur of black shapes trying to escape up the mountain.

CLOSE ON ONE FEMALE

The same one Ruth watched earlier. Joe clings tightly to her back, his eyes wide with fear.

JOE'S POV

A nightmarish collage of images accompanied by the CLANGING of the dogs' COLLARS, the charge of the African poachers, the SCREAMS of the MOTHER and the other GORILLAS. Then he sees Strasser run forward, raise his rifle with icy precision.

THROUGH SCOPE

Strasser has Joe's mother dead on. Her head in the cross-hairs as she tries to get away. The MOTHER'S raspy animal SCREAM is unmistakably maternal, heart-breaking. It ECHOES across the mountain as she tries to reach a deep stretch of woods.

On her back, Joe turns once more to look back and sees□--

EXTREME CLOSEUP - STRASSER'S TRIGGER FINGER

squeezing gently, the EXPLOSION of the SHOT RATTLES the forest.

The MOTHER'S SCREAM is CUT OFF sharply.

ON JOE

We see Joe thrown THROUGH FRAME, tumbling into the high grass.

Then, silence.

STRASSER AND GARTH

crash through the dense foliage to retrieve the body. The DOGS SNAPPING behind. CLANG-CLANG-CLANG.

(CONTINUED)

GARTH
(shouting)
Get the baby!

STRASSER
(shouting)
Don't shoot it! They want the
babies alive!! Bring the sack!

CLOSE ON JOE

He SCREAMS wildly, darts back and forth, desperately looking for his mother.

JOE'S POV

THROUGH the tall grass in the b.g., he can see the Africans disappear up the hill hunting down the others.

BACK TO SCENE

And then we see Joe's anguish turn to fury. He GROWLS -- and as the two big hunters come nearer -- Joe springs out at them.

Joe is moving so fast, Strasser barely has time to react before the furry black shape is on top of him -- WIDEN as Joe attacks Strasser, knocking him back. Strasser shouts and drops his rifle. Tries to pull Joe off as they tumble down through the trees. Strasser punches and pulls at this ball of sinew and muscle. He reaches for his Match Master side arm with his right hand. PUNCH IN CLOSE as Joe bites down viciously through the hand. Strasser howls...

ANGLE ON GARTH

He has retrieved his rifle and is charging hard for his downed companion. He looks for a clear shot at Joe. PAN RIGHT and RACK FOCUS as Ruth Young explodes from the trees and flashes past Strasser, snatching Joe away. Joe is not quite sure what has happened, but he hangs on to Ruth for dear life.

Strasser staggers forward, holding his mangled hand. Enraged.

He rips Garth's gun away from him and with his bloodied hand, finds a way to pull the trigger. SHOTS RIP through BARK but Ruth disappears into the trees like a spirit.

11 EXT. FOREST - ON JILL - NIGHT 11

Running but nearing exhaustion. Hearing a fusillade of GUNSHOTS -- Jill runs faster, panic contorting her face.

She runs desperately, swiping at branches, stinging vines.

ANOTHER POV

Something is running TOWARDS her.

12 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT 12

Jill shines her flashlight into the forest. Further up, someone waves a light back and forth. Like a signal.

Jill's face lights up. She continues running. Suddenly, Jill is bowled over by Joe who leaps into her arms. They roll on the ground, Jill with the wind knocked out of her. They look into each other's face and both know that the worst is happening. They are both silent with fear.

Strasser appears through the darkness. His right hand wrapped in a bloody swath. Denying the pain. Garth follows, gun up.

Jill and Joe lie hiding in the undergrowth. Jill's eyes tell Joe not to make a sound. They barely breathe.

JILL'S POV

of Strasser's and Garth's boots. Jill can hear the sound of their voices, but their words are indistinct.

BACK TO SCENE

STRASSER

(quietly)

She's got to be here somewhere.
She's got that damn devil with her.

GARTH

(matter-of-fact)

I think you might've hit the woman.

STRASSER

(shrugs)

These people want to live like
heroes, let them die like heroes.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

They are nearly on top of Jill and Joe, and their words are now crystal clear. Strasser looks at his bloody, wrapped hand and stares vindictively into the dark forest around him.

STRASSER

That little demon took off my damn trigger finger.

(in Roumanian)

Monstrule!

GARTH

Your little 'monster' couldn't have gone far. Want to keep looking or...?

STRASSER

(in pain)

No. Let's get out of here.

Jill and Joe lie still as stone as Strasser and Garth continue past. Once they're gone, Joe and Jill begin to breathe again. Then, Jill sees a light pop on in the darkness. She flashes back.

JILL

Mom!

RUTH (O.S.)

(whispering)

Shhh!

Ruth suddenly emerges from the darkness. She collapses next to Jill in the undergrowth.

JILL

(whispering)

Mom, there were men, they...

RUTH

I know, I know. Shhh.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - RUTH'S HAND

We see blood trickle down her fingers. Ruth covers it quickly so Jill can't see.

BACK TO SCENE

JOE, clinging to Jill, begins to WHIMPER.

RUTH

Oh, look who it is. Hello, Joe.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

JILL

He's scared.

RUTH

Poor baby. He lost his mommy tonight.

Ruth turns her attention from Joe to her daughter.

RUTH

He needs someone to protect him. Will you do that for me, Jill?

Jill is taken aback by her mother's behavior. She knows something is wrong, but she doesn't know what it is.

RUTH

Promise me you'll protect him, Jill.

JILL

I... I promise.

Ruth takes Jill into her arms. She rocks her back and forth, humming the lullaby we heard before.

HOLD ON --

-- the three of them, huddled together in the dense jungle, the lilting sound of Ruth's lullaby drifting through the night air.

CAMERA FLOATS UP THROUGH the trees until it REVEALS and HOLDS ON the star-lit Pangani sky. RUTH'S VOICE EXPANDS INTO a CHORUS of POWERFUL AFRICAN VOICES SINGING the SAME LULLABY, now transformed into an inspirational hymn.

DISSOLVE TO:

13 EXT. GRAVE SITE - DAY

13

MUSIC CUE: RUTH'S VOICE BECOMES a CHORUS of powerful AFRICAN VOICES SINGING the SAME LULLABY in the local dialect. But now it's become a powerful hymn -- sacred and inspirational.

From the sky, flower petals of every color begin to fall. As they fall, they land on...

A wooden plank that simply reads: "RUTH YOUNG."

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

PAN ACROSS TO an adjacent marker that reads: "DR. EDWARD YOUNG" -- Jill's parents now reunited on that great mountain.

WIDEN TO camp cemetery.

Kweli lays Ruth's walking stick across her grave. Steps back -- not even trying to wipe away his tears. Jill stands bravely, singing through her broken heart. Kweli takes her hand in his.

POV - FROM WOODS

Someone is watching all of this. Staring directly at Jill.

BACK TO SCENE

Kweli looks down at Jill.

KWELI

Don't worry, little one. I will take care of you.

Jill nods, trying to stifle her tears. But she is now staring into the woods, sensing that she is being watched.

KWELI

You will love living in the village. There are other children, and...

Jill pulls her hand away from Kweli's and starts walking toward the woods.

KWELI

Jill!

But she ignores him, breaking into a run, drawn inexorably toward the jungle.

ON KWELI

Starting after her at first, but then stopping. He lets her go.

CUT TO:

A14 EXT. PANGANI FOREST - DAY

A14

Jill pushes her way through the brush, finding Joe,
waiting for her.

ON JILL

Joe in her arms now, running through the woods as fast
as she can, and we PULL BACK and...

DISSOLVE TO:

14 EXT. AFRICAN LANDSCAPE - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

14

Rolling foothills. Farms. Giving way to steeper slopes.
The mountains rising just beyond.

15 OMITTED

15

16 EXT. AFRICAN LANDSCAPE - DAY 16

SUPERIMPOSE: 12 YEARS LATER.

A quickly-moving dust cloud turns out to be --

HUMVEE

racing at breakneck speed over the dirt highway. Driven by GREGG O'HARA -- anyone would consider him young, strong and handsome -- except that right now, it's all hidden under the grime from a long flight and a week's growth of beard. Hair long, unkempt; clothes wrinkled.

Gregg passes four local men burning a clearing in the woods for yet more farmland.

Pushing its way up the mountain side. The humvee is packed with EQUIPMENT that RATTLES as Gregg hits every bump in the road.

17 EXT. VILLAGE - DAY 17

A tiny African village, just a main square with a bar, a school, an infirmary and a gas station.

Standing smack in the middle of the road is an East Indian with a goatee, wrap-around Black Flys, and a Nike workout suit.

Gregg's HUMVEE SKIDS to a sharp stop in front of him.

GREGG

You must be Pindi.

Pindi flashes him a broad smile.

PINDI

The one and only, bro.

CUT TO:

17A EXT. VILLAGE - DAY 17A

Pindi is leading Gregg down a row of vehicles: two Land Rovers, one with a strange-looking seat attached to the front hood, and an old, flatbed lorry. A surly-looking group of men lounge around on them.

(CONTINUED)

17A CONTINUED:

17A

PINDI

Six men, three cars... everything
you ask for, Mr. Ohara.

(lowering his
voice)

All paid for in advance, out of
Pindi's pocket...

Gregg holds an envelope filled with cash in Pindi's face.
He nods towards the nasty-looking men.

GREGG

Sweet-looking bunch of guys.

Pindi snatches the envelope -- but Gregg holds onto his
end.

GREGG

I asked for experienced trackers.

PINDI

These men are the best -- I assure
you. Very best.

Gregg allows Pindi to pull the envelope away. He
immediately rifles through the cash, checking to make sure
it's all there.

Gregg eyes Pindi's men suspiciously, then walks around to
the back of his humvee and flips open the storage boot,
revealing an array of animal-tracking gadgetry. Pindi
looks over his shoulder as Gregg loads a menacing-looking
rifle.

PINDI

Nice piece you got there. What
are we hunting, elephants?

GREGG

We're not hunting anything.

Pindi sees that Gregg is loading the rifle with tran-
quilizer darts. This confuses him, but he pretends to
approve.

PINDI

Ah! Tranquilizer darts. I agree
-- much nicer to animals than
bullets.

GREGG

(indicating tranquilizer
gun)

Your men know how to use this, right?

(CONTINUED)

17A CONTINUED: (2)

17A

PINDI

Oh sure, boss. Only professionals here.

Gregg carefully puts the rifle back, then grabs a pair of Minolta 10x20 binoculars.

PINDI

So tell me, boss -- where are we going today?

ON Gregg, panning across his field of vision with the binoculars. He stops.

GREGG

There.

POV THROUGH BINOCULARS

The highest peak in the range, playing hide and seek with the clouds.

BACK TO SCENE

Pindi's men see where Gregg is pointing. They murmur, trading grim glances at each other. Pindi jumps with nerves.

PINDI

There? Uh, boss, that is not such a good mountain. The men don't like it very much at all. You see there is a legend they believe in, that a creature lives there...

Gregg's back to checking his equipment.

GREGG

'N'Gai Zamu.' The sacred guardian of Mount Pangani.

Pindi looks at Gregg, surprised he knows this.

PINDI

You know it? How funny!
(with dread)
That's not, by any chance, what you are looking for, is it, boss?

Gregg looks from Pindi's nervous face to the serious faces of the trackers. They are all watching him.

(CONTINUED)

17A CONTINUED: (2A)

17A

GREGG

Looking for a legend? No. Why
would I do that?

Gregg takes the car keys from Pindi's hand.

(CONTINUED)

17A CONTINUED: (3)

17A

GREGG

Gimme those.

OFF Pindi☐-- not particularly thrilled...

CUT TO:

18 EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

18

The caravan trundles up a winding dirt road, into the mist-covered mountains.

19 OMITTED

19

20 EXT. MOUNTAIN - HIGH MEADOW - DAY

20

The vehicles are circled in a clearing. Three small audio dishes have been positioned to triangulate the location of the slightest sound. An infrared video cam is mounted on a tripod. A geometric, field-assembled cage made of an impact-resistant, high-tensile steel alloy sits off to the side.

21 OMITTED

21

22 EXT. MEADOW - DAY (LATER)

22

Gregg has earphones on, plugged into a backpack with a Sony digital recorder, listening. The sound is ambient and mysterious.

Pindi stands behind Gregg, watching him carefully.

PINDI

What are you listening to?

GREGG

Sounds.

Pindi listens to the jungle. It is full of sounds. Something small makes a RUSTLING SOUND a few yards away.

PINDI

Like that right there?

GREGG

Yup.

Pindi nods.

(CONTINUED)

PINDI

I understand completely: jungle sounds! Very important. I know a guy, he can get you a C.D. of jungle sounds, cheap. Even cheaper if you buy ten.

Gregg puts his hand up to signal for quiet.

He hears something.

He listens intently for a moment, then the WHOOSH of a SPRING TRAP BLASTS his ears, followed by shouts and the sound of an ANIMAL SCREECHING. Gregg throws off the headphones, grabs a strange-looking pole called a DNA plug gun, and crashes with Pindi through the woods.

Gregg runs INTO FRAME to see several of Pindi's men closing the cage on a lithe, young leopard.

PINDI

(beaming)

How do you like that, boss? I told you these men were the best.

Gregg kneels to inspect the leopard. He finds it beautiful -- his face softens at the sight of it.

GREGG

(soothing, to leopard)

You're a beauty.

Carefully, he extends the DNA plug gun and pricks the cat, startling it and causing all the men to jump.

GREGG

(stands)

Okay, set him free.

Gregg and Pindi stand over the leopard. Pindi offers his ersatz smile.

PINDI

(testing the water)

Why ask for a cage if you are not keeping the animal?

Gregg releases the vial of blood from the DNA gun.

GREGG

Because I'm only keeping this.

(CONTINUED)

PINDI

Yes, but I know a guy, in Botswana, he'd pay you ten thousand American dollars for that leopard. I'd be willing to split with you -- fifty/fifty.

Greg ignores Pindi. He's busy transferring the vial to a container. Pindi presses on.

PINDI

Perhaps you're right. Sixty to you, forty to me. That's a very fair deal!

Still no response from Gregg -- he's logging notes into a book.

PINDI

My goodness -- you're an excellent negotiator. Okay, boss! Seventy/thirty it is.
(to his men)
Take him to the truck.

The men bend over and hoist the cage up -- but now Gregg blocks their way.

GREGG

Put the cat down... now.

Gregg is one scary-looking bastard. The men drop the cage. Pindi back-pedals.

PINDI

("angry," to his men)
You heard him... put it down!
(to Gregg)
They never understand me. I don't know what to do...

Pindi stops abruptly as his yammering is interrupted by the LEOPARD, GROWLING.

SOUND CUE: A LOW RUMBLE.

Floating on the wind like DISTANT THUNDER. It seems to come as an answer to the young leopard's cry. Birds fly out of the trees above the cage. The men are spooked.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (3)

22

GREGG

quickly puts on his headphones and listens to the amplified sound again. HIGH-PITCHED SCREAMS -- then the rhythmic rondo of sharp POK-POK-POK-POK CHESTBEATS.

Pindi is on the verge of panic. He forces his trademark smile.

PINDI

Uh, excuse me. Time to flee, right?

POV - TREES

The top branches suddenly shake violently -- sending a sharp WOODEN RATTLE across the meadow. Is that a shadow from a passing cloud that seems to ripple through the foliage? Gregg steps closer. The trees bend like the wake of a boat -- they bend in a straight line.

Something powerful and unseen is moving through the trees.

Pindi and his men retreat back in the meadow. Gregg scans the forest. BRANCHES spring with a LOUD WHOOSH!

Gregg can't help it -- his fear takes over and he backsteps into the meadow.

WIDEN SHOT UP TO the trees. Catapulting DOWN THROUGH FRAME -- landing right in front of them is a gorilla -- nearly 15 feet high. The GROUND TREMBLES from the force.

A nearby Land Rover bounces two feet into the air from the impact.

His canines are fully exposed. Thick, black hair on his crest stand erect. Deep brown eyes aglow as he gives another DEAFENING CALL. This is JOE. Backlit by the sun he seems to encompass the forest.

PUSH IN CLOSE ON Gregg's reaction. In complete awe.

GREGG

Don't anybody move.

PINDI

(frightened out
of his wits)

How about... I move... just over here...

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (4)

22

Pindi scurries for cover behind the frozen, awe-stricken trackers.

ANGLE - JOE

moves to the cage and peers inside. The LEOPARD paces and HISSES. Joe straightens up bi-pedally and pounds his massive chest with his fist. The hollow POK-POK-POK ECHOES off the mountain.

Joe raises his hand again and smashes the top off the cage, as if it were made of matchsticks. The leopard leaps out of the cage and dashes safely into the forest. JOE bares his teeth and ROARS at Gregg, as if to say "stay off my mountain." His mission accomplished, Joe quickly turns and starts back for tree cover.

Silence. Everyone is open-mouthed, unable to believe what they have just seen...

Then Greg snaps out of it. Bursting into action, he runs to the humvee, motions to Pindi.

GREGG

Come on!! We're going after him!

PINDI

What is this 'we'? There is no way my men will ever agree to...

Gregg yells to the paralyzed trackers:

GREGG

(in Swahili)

Three times your price.

(in English)

Triple your fee.

That's what it's all about. The men get a move on, running for the vehicles as fast as they can.

ENGINES REV, DOORS SLAM, as the trackers ready for the chase. All four cars pull out.

22A OMITTED

22A

23 EXT. MEADOW

23

All is silent for a moment, then Joe EXPLODES INTO FRAME. Joe hears the DRONE of ENGINES -- turns to see --

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

JOE'S POV

The caravan, looking like the cavalry in a Western, comes charging over the hill.

Gregg's humvee comes crashing over a ridge in pursuit of Joe. Gregg yells out to the cars around him:

GREGG

Herd him towards me! I gotta get close.

Gregg grabs his DNA stick and grins at Pindi.

GREGG

Real close.

Pindi realizes with a sickening feeling that Gregg is having a major rush.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The lead car, a Land Rover, comes right up behind Joe.

BACK TO SCENE

Joe-- sensing the car next to him, turns and ROARS...

LAND ROVER

The guy with the tranquilizer RIFLE panics and FIRES!

BACK ON JOE

The dart hits his arm. Uh oh. That was a mistake.

INT. LAND ROVER

The tracker has just enough time to get a good look at Joe's furious expression before... WHAM!

Joe throws his shoulder into the side of the Land Rover, sending it tumbling end over end into a ravine.

ON GREGG

Disgusted with the guys' stupidity.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

Experienced trackers, my ass!

Pindi shrugs. The two of them watch as Joe continues running, then changes directions and starts heading straight for them. The humvee has to swerve out of the way to avoid colliding with Joe.

FOLLOW JOE as he books across the meadow in the opposite direction, now. The modified Land Rover with the hot seat attached to the hood swerves around and chases Joe. They catch up, and the tracker climbs into the hot seat, readying a metal clamp attached to a chain...

GREGG

tries to yell across at him.

GREGG

No, we don't want to...

Too late, the guy's slapped the clamp onto Joe's arm.

Joe ROARS, tries to shake off the chain, then speeds up.

THE CHAIN

unspools rapidly, whipping out from the front of the modified Land Rover. Quickly, it grows taut and now the Rover is being pulled by Joe. The driver slams on the brakes with both feet, but all that does is tilt the front end upwards, digging up clods of dirt as they're dragged along.

JOE

feels the increased pull, and is starting to get annoyed. He heads right for...

STAND OF TREES

The guy in the hot seat is battered by branches and leaves as they're dragged through the trees.

BACK ON HUMVEE

Now circling around the stand of trees, trying to catch up with Joe when he emerges from the opposite side.

GREGG

Hold the wheel!

PINDI

(terrified)

Oh, sure.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (3)

23

Gregg hands the wheel over to Pindi as he reaches for his DNA gun...

THEIR POV

Joe has just emerged from the tree stand, dragging the thoroughly-battered, modified Land Rover and its dazed occupants. Joe sees the humvee heading towards him.

CLOSE ON JOE

His brow furrows. Is he coming up with a plan? He makes a ninety degree turn...

BACK ON GREGG

Who is intently screwing a telescoping extension on the DNA plug gun. Pindi gapes at what Gregg is doing.

PINDI

I hope you are planning on throwing that at him, because...

GREGG

Pindi! Look out!

Pindi looks forward again just in time to see...

THE CHAIN

Pulled taut between Joe and the modified Land Rover, has become a moving clothesline, and the humvee is heading right into its path. Pindi tries to swerve, but they can't avoid it. He ducks and...

Gregg leaps out of the car, hurdling the chain, just as...

It shears the top right off the vehicle!

Gregg tumbles to the ground, as the humvee rolls to a stop nearby. Meanwhile, the--

LAND ROVER

is SPINNING OUT, still connected to Joe. Joe is almost curious about the chain. He begins to pull back as the modified Land Rover circles him. The modified Land Rover bucks-- and for a second there is a standstill. Then Joe yanks...

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (4)

23

And the chain, the winch, the tracker in the hot seat... in fact, the entire axle of the modified Land Rover, are pulled from their moorings.

The tracker racks up against a tree, followed closely by his chair and winch...

The axle tumbles to a stop...

The LAND ROVER COLLAPSES like a stack of cards.

JOE

stands at the edge of the field, observing his victory. Then he beats his chest and ROARS.

IN MEADOW

Pindi and his men run to the one remaining car, the flatbed lorry. They all pile in and speed away across the field. Pindi sees something up ahead, yells at the driver.

PINDI

Stop!

The LORRY SCREECHES to a halt, right next to Gregg, who is stumbling towards them.

PINDI

Hurry up, bro! Get in!

Pindi watches as Gregg stumbles around to the back of the truck. But instead of getting in, he grabs a silver case and pulls it off.

PINDI

Excuse me, boss, but please, I would like to avoid being killed.

Gregg flips opens the case, revealing a video camera. He hoists it up, and barely able to walk, takes one last look at Pindi and the bruised and busted-up trackers.

GREGG

Get those men down the mountain. They need help.

Gregg takes off after Joe. Pindi can't believe it.

PINDI

Crazy Americans!

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (5)

23

He slaps the driver on the shoulder.

PINDI
Get us out of here.

They PEEL OUT of there...

GREGG'S POV

Staring down the path of crushed growth that Joe has left in his wake. He takes a deep breath, then exhales. Then he heads off into the jungle.

24 EXT. PANGANI FOREST - MOVING - DAY

24

FOLLOW Gregg DOWN a wide trail of broken limbs leading into the densest part of the mountain. Thorns and stingers scratch Gregg as he fights his way through.

THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA

The green paradise of the mountain rushes right AT us. Bright blossoms and strange insects. The sun diffuses in daggers of light.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PANGANI FOREST - BACK WITH GREGG - DAY

Gregg climbs over a fallen tree. Ducks under some low branches. Stops to catch his breath. He listens intently. Takes another step forward. Hears a TWIG SNAP.

THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA

PAN RIGHT. Joe springs out from hiding -- as gorillas love to do to enemies. He charges Gregg and cuffs him onto his back. Joe is in full attack mode -- eyes wide, teeth exposed. He snatches Gregg by the foot.

GREGG

screams as he's jerked helplessly into the air. Joe shakes Gregg viciously -- then whips him back and forth, knocking him against a sapling. Gregg fights to free himself but he's no match for Joe's strength. He knows Joe is going to hurt him badly -- maybe kill him.

Joe cocks his arm -- to crush Gregg against a wide tree trunk.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

JILL (O.S.)

Joe! Stop!

Joe looks surprised, caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

GREGG'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV

A beautiful young woman is standing ten feet from him.

BACK TO SCENE

GREGG

Oh, wow.

JILL

Joe...

ON Jill -- she looks at Gregg like he's the lowest form of life on earth.

JILL

... drop him.

And Joe does, dropping Gregg hard to the ground. On his head.

CUT TO BLACK.

25 OMITTED

25

26 INT. VILLAGE INFIRMARY - DAY

26

OVER BLACK, we hear the MURMUR of VOICES, speaking in Swahili. PICTURE FADES UP...

POV SHOT

LOOKING UP AT KWELI, 12 years older than we last saw him. Kweli looks right INTO CAMERA, then says something over his shoulder in Swahili.

REVERSE ANGLE

Bruised and bandaged, Gregg blinks, trying to bring his eyes into focus.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

Where am I?

KWELI

The infirmary. You've been unconscious for an entire night. You're lucky to be alive.

Gregg winces as he slowly raises himself to his elbows.

GREGG

Strange, I don't feel lucky.

He takes in his surroundings; a simple infirmary. THROUGH the open door, he can see the village he started his trip in.

KWELI

You crashed your vehicle. It is waiting for you outside.

GREGG

You're an injury behind. The kicker was getting dropped on my head by N'gai Zamu.

Kweli chuckles.

GREGG

Think that's funny? You should try it?

KWELI

N'Gai Zamu is just a legend, my friend.

GREGG

No, he's a giant gorilla with a mean backhand. There was also a woman...

Gregg tries to get up. It's an ordeal.

KWELI

A woman?

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

Out in the jungle. She saved my life. A beautiful woman.

Kweli gives him a patronizing smile.

KWELI

You were dreaming, Mr. Ohara.

GREGG

No. I never remember my dreams.

Gregg sits up in bed and swings his feet to the floor. Kweli turns and heads for the door.

KWELI

It would be wise for you to see a doctor in Kimjayo. I took the liberty of calling one for you.

GREGG

Don't need one.

KWELI

But he is expecting you. If you can drive, you should leave today.

Kweli walks out of the room. Gregg squints after him, sensing that something is up.

CUT TO:

Gregg walks gingerly out of the infirmary, looking like crap. He squints in the bright midday sun, then spots...

The humvee, a mere shadow of its former self, parked right near the infirmary, covered with a tarp. Gregg pulls the tarp back to find all his expensive equipment, a good deal of it broken, pitchforked into the back. He scowls.

He starts rummaging through the stuff, looking for something in particular. Then he finds it -- his video camera, covered with mud, but seemingly in good condition. He pushes the record button. Light goes on. Still works.

He pops open the tape slot, and his face falls. The video cassette has been removed.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

GREGG

Damnit.

Just then, a group of village schoolchildren dash by Gregg. They are giggling, as if they had dared each other to run up to the stranger. They sing out the one English word they know as they pass:

SCHOOL CHILDREN

Hello! Hello! Hello!

Gregg shakes his head, smiling, and follows them with his eyes as they fly by like a flock of birds. He watches as they dart into the open air market, playfully knocking aside a familiar individual:

Kweli. We watch from...

GREGG'S POV

as Kweli steps into a fruit stall, letting the kids fly by him.

Then Gregg's eyes widen as a tall and lovely young woman steps INTO VIEW next to Kweli.

BACK TO SCENE

He watches as they shop together, realizing that this is, in fact, the beautiful young woman who saved him.

28 OMITTED
&
28A

28
&
28A

29 EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - THAT MOMENT

29

Kweli and Jill have a familial ease with each other as they pick out their groceries.

KWELI

Our visitor must be feeling better. He should be leaving the infirmary today.

Jill looks up toward the infirmary and sees Gregg leaning against his truck, watching them.

JILL

Looks like he just has.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

Jill nods across the street. Kweli looks and sees that Gregg is leaning against his Jeep, arms folded across his chest, staring at them with a mixture of amusement and irritation.

JILL

He's walking so soon. Joe should have dropped him harder.

KWELI

He's not a poacher, Jill. He's working for an animal conservancy in California.

JILL

(shrugs)

He can't be trusted. He's an outsider.

KWELI

A grateful outsider. He told me he was saved yesterday by a woman.

(teasing Jill)

A beautiful woman.

Jill looks at Kweli sharply, then back across the street at Gregg, whose eyes continue to assess her. She looks straight back at him, locking into his gaze.

JILL

And what did you tell him?

KWELI

What could I tell him? He knows what he saw. He's not a fool.

Jill and Gregg are still holding each other's eyes.

JILL

I'll be the judge of that.

Across the street, Gregg is breaking into a big, slow smile. It unnerves Jill. Kweli, always Jill's protector, catches the action between the two of them and bristles a bit -- but Jill has already turned her back and taken off through the back of the market.

30 EXT. PANGANI FOREST - DAY

30

If Ruth Young was suited to these woods, her daughter was born to them.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (A1)

30

She hikes through the forest effortlessly, as though it were her own back yard.

As she walks near the banks of a river, however, she stops. She listens carefully, sensing something out there, in the jungle.

BEHIND TREE (NEARBY)

Gregg, his video camera in one hand, stands stock still behind a tree, trying to avoid being discovered. He is absolutely drenched in sweat, the long hike clearly much harder than Jill has made it look.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

BACK TO JILL

Still listening. All she can hear are the familiar SOUNDS of the JUNGLE. A moment passes, then she shakes it off and keeps moving.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS ACTION

31

Jill comes out into a clearing, bordered by a large pool at the base of a magnificent waterfall. She pulls a flashlight out of her back pack and, in the same motion her mother used to summon her, begins waving it back and forth into the surrounding forest.

GREGG

watches this bizarre ritual, wondering what Jill could possibly be doing.

CUT TO:

JOE'S POV - DEEP IN WOODS

The beam of light cuts through the deep green darkness of the trees.

BACK TO SCENE

Jill continues waving the flashlight, waiting for a response. Then, we hear the sound of SOMETHING LARGE APPROACHING.

ON GREGG

The thunderous sound making him nervous...

ON JILL

Not so Jill. She waits calmly, at first, as the FOOT- STEPS APPROACH. Then, as the branches begin to bend and break, and we get our first glimpse of fur, she smiles.

Mighty Joe Young emerges from the brush, not growling, not threatening, but rather looking like a puppy coming to greet his master.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

JILL
 (cooing to Joe)
 Hey, handsome. How are you?

ON GREGG

Absolutely thunderstruck, watching in awe as the giant GORILLA bows his head so Jill can scratch behind his ear. He makes LOW, GUTTURAL SOUNDS that are the gorilla equivalent of a purr.

Jill inspects Joe, checking him to see if he's okay. Her voice is full of gentle concern and worry.

JILL
 What were you thinking yesterday,
 letting those men see you? Don't
 do that again, okay? Please.
 (praying to herself)
 Please.

We see the fear in Jill's face, knowing that Joe can't understand what she's saying. She shakes it off and brightens. She gives Joe a playful tussle, then covers her eyes with her hands.

JILL
 One. Two. Three. Four...

It takes only a moment for Joe to respond. His eyes open wide, he looks in every direction then, suddenly, crashes into the woods!

JILL
 ... seven, eight, nine, ten.
 (yelling)
 Ready or not, here I come!!

And Jill runs into the woods after Joe.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. PANGANI FOREST - DAY

32

Jill walks through the forest, searching for Joe. It should be clear by now that they are playing hide and seek.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (A1)

32

JILL
(theatrically)
Oh, my God! I can't find Joe.
Where's Joe?

She stomps around, pretending not to see him. Of course, she knows exactly where he is. He's so big, the tree he's standing behind barely hides one leg.

CLOSE ON JOE

He can't help peeking. He loves this.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

Jill pokes her head around every tree.

JILL

Come out, come out... wherever
you are!

Then, pretending that she just spotted him, she charges right at him.

JILL

I found you!

JOE ROARS, delighted by their game. Jill tussles with him, then gets a mischievous look in her eye.

JILL

Bye-bye, Joe!

Suddenly, she dashes into the woods -- where she's actually small enough to hide well. Joe passes by her, moving through the foliage.

In a moment we see how much he fears actually losing her -- he begins to WHIMPER -- and spins around. He stands up to his full height, beats his chest and shakes his head in frustration. He can't bear the idea that she is gone.

A beat, then Joe starts tearing bushes out by their roots, hunting for Jill. He sees one BUSH RUSTLING, goes over and rips it out of the ground, revealing...

GREGG

Standing there, completely exposed, filming all this with his dented video camera. He looks up at Joe towering over him.

GREGG

Oh boy.

JOE ROARS!

Gregg stumbles backwards, trapping himself against a tree as Joe advances. Remembering what one should do when faced with an enraged gorilla. Gregg averts his eyes and rolls into a ball, assuming the submissive position. He's like a pill bug, playing dead, protecting the back of his neck with his arms.

Joe raises his mighty fist -- it looks like he might smash Gregg anyway... but then he hears Jill's voice.

(CONTINUED)

JILL (O.S.)
 (soothing)
 Joe! It's okay.

Joe stops and turns his head to Jill.

JILL
 Now get out of here, Joe. Run.

Joe looks at her, not sure why her tone's gotten so stern.

JILL
 Run, Joe. Run!

Joe looks back at Gregg, still curled into a tight ball. He gives him a playful, parting swat for good measure before obeying Jill and running into the forest.

The "little swat" is powerful enough to send Gregg rolling like a croquet ball into a thicket of bushes. Painfully, he uncurls, plucking nettles out of his legs as Jill approaches.

GREGG
 (pulling out
 a nettle)
 Nobody better try and tell me I
 imagined this.

Jill reaches down to Gregg. He thinks she's offering him a hand up.

JILL
 Anything broken?

GREGG
 (checking himself)
 No... no. I think I'm... oh.

Gregg's voice trails off as Jill reaches for the video camera, not him. She examines the camera.

JILL
 Hmm -- it looks okay. I think
 it's still working.

GREGG
 (relieved)
 Oh -- good.

JILL
 Well -- I can fix that.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (3)

32

Jill smashes the camera into a tree, breaking it for good. She drops the pieces onto the ground and takes off.

GREGG
(calling after her)
Hey -- wait a minute!

32A EXT. RIVER BANK

32A

Jill is making good time down the rough terrain of the river bank. Gregg catches up to her.

GREGG
Hang on a second -- what's the problem?

JILL
You. You're the problem. That's the second time I've stopped you from being ripped in two -- and next time I'm just going to watch. Understand?

GREGG
(appeasing)
You saved me. I'm grateful. Now I just want to talk to you -- Miss Young.

Jill stops in her tracks and shoots Gregg a surprised look. He explains gently.

GREGG
I know who you are. I read all your mother's work. Books... notes... everything I could get a hold of.

JILL
(hiding emotion)
So?

GREGG
So it's why I'm here.

Jill gives a short nod, accepting this tribute. She turns back around and resumes walking. Gregg follows, bursting with questions.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

She knew about Joe? Did she have a theory on him? How old is he? I can't believe you kept him a secret all these years. How'd you manage that?

JILL

By keeping people like you off the mountain.

GREGG

You got this all wrong. I want to help you.

JILL

You're not helping anybody here. You're just making matters worse.

GREGG

How's that?

JILL

This mountain will be crawling with people, thanks to you. You go back to wherever you're from, put the word out...

GREGG

The word is out. It's done. I'm not the only one who saw him, remember? Rare animals mean big money and Joe's as rare as they come. It's going to be tough to protect him here. Maybe impossible.

Jill spins on him.

JILL

'Here' is Joe's home. And 'here' is where he must live. He doesn't have a choice.

GREGG

That's not true. Place that sent me could take care of Joe. They got the facilities...

JILL

Just what Joe needs. A cage.

(CONTINUED)

32A CONTINUED: (2)

32A

GREGG

Not a cage, a preserve. A place where he'll be free from poachers, free from land development...

JILL

But he won't be free.

GREGG

How long do you think Joe will stay free here? I'm telling you there's gonna be a hunt starting on this mountain tomorrow. And I don't expect they'll give it up until one of them bags the prize. You should think about it.

Jill hates the ring of truth in Gregg's words. She turns and takes off down the mountain alone.

CUT TO:

33 OMITTED

33

34 EXT. RAHA PRESERVE AND CONSERVANCY (BOTSWANA) - SUNSET

34

Giraffe roam the grounds of a lush, private preserve, surrounding a large, opulent, main house.

ANDERSON (O.S.)

Quite an impressive facility you have here, Mr. Strasser.

35 INT. LODGE - SUNSET

35

STRASSER sits in a leather chair, in an expensively-appointed room. His rough exterior has been polished by money, but his cold eyes have not changed. Sitting across from him is ANDERSON, the button-down director of the Cascade Park Zoo.

ANDERSON

Tell me, why is it that you keep such a low profile about this wonderful place?

STRASSER

Our only interest is the well-being of our animals.

(CONTINUED)

ANDERSON

(satisfied)

Well, I think I've come to the right place for Morris.

Anderson puts some photos on the coffee table.

CLOSE ON PHOTOS

of a full-grown Bengal tiger, looking miserable in a fairly small enclosure. We see insignias for the Cascade Park Zoo on the fences around him.

ANDERSON

You can see how depressed he is. He's grown out of his habitat, and our zoo doesn't have the budget to do anything about it. That's why he needs a new home.

Strasser reaches out to pick up the photos, and as he does...

CLOSE ON STRASSER'S HAND

A black leather glove-like apparatus with a thumb and forefinger in place that gives the appearance of a whole, if menacing, hand.

STRASSER

Poor thing. Yes, he will be much happier here on our preserve. Back to the wild. Free again.

A door opens behind Anderson. Garth sticks his head in the room.

GARTH

Phone for you. Urgent.

Strasser stands.

STRASSER

Will you excuse me, Mr. Anderson?

Strasser turns and follows Garth through the door, into...

CUT TO:

35A INT. BACK ROOM (RAHA) - CONTINUOUS ACTION

35A

... a room that would give dear Mr. Anderson nightmares. A man in a white smock is packaging poached rhino horns into boxes. The boxes, labelled medical supplies, are being sent to addresses in China.

On another wall, in front of a bank of telephones, is a dry-erase board covered with animal names, and their respective prices.

STRASSER

See what our friends in China will give us for a Bengal tiger, Garth.

Strasser hands Garth the photo of the tiger.

GARTH

Looks like a big fellah.
(excited, looking
at photo)

I'll set a new record with you.

Strasser picks up one of the phones. He idly plays with a rhino horn as he talks to Pindi.

STRASSER

Strasser.

PINDI (O.S.)

It's about time already! You know how long I am waiting? A man can only carry so much change...

STRASSER

(irritated)
What do you want, Pindi?

CUT TO:

35B EXT. VILLAGE - SUNSET

35B

A small street of stores -- all covered in brightly-painted advertisements. Outside one store is a lone pay phone -- manned by Pindi. Pindi speaks furtively, so as not to be overheard. INTERCUT conversation.

(CONTINUED)

35B CONTINUED:

35B

PINDI

Not what I want, boss, what you want. How about a giant gorilla?

STRASSER

Talk.

PINDI

Big as three men, two thousand pounds, at least.

STRASSER

You've been drinking, haven't you?

PINDI

Swear to God, boss. Saw him with my own two eyes.

STRASSER

Don't waste my time again.

ON PINDI

There is a CLICK on the LINE.

(CONTINUED)

35B CONTINUED:

35B

PINDI

Hello? Boss...

Now a DIAL TONE. Pindi looks at the phone.

PINDI

I'll catch him and charge you
double, madar chode.

Pindi smashes the phone down on its cradle.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

36

In the center of the village, two trucks of rough-looking men are gassing up their vehicles. A third truck arrives from the other direction.

It's a POACHER we recognize, one of Pindi's men, accompanied by a half dozen others, all armed with rifles.

ANGLE ON JILL

She steps out in front of the Poacher's truck. The driver SLAMS on the BRAKES, stopping within an inch of striking her. Alarmed, the Poacher stands in his seat and screams at Jill.

POACHER

Stupid girl! What do you think
you're doing?

Jill calmly walks up to the Poacher's side of the vehicle.

JILL

I found this in the forest this
morning. Thought maybe you
dropped it and might want it back.

With that, Jill brazenly steps forward and throws a net over his head. It's a poacher's net.

Enraged, the Poacher slowly pulls the net off his head. The other poachers find the scene hilarious. It infuriates Jill.

JILL

Poaching is illegal! Get off this
mountain!

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

The Poacher and his driver exchange a significant look. Nodding to each other, they start to climb out of their truck, eyes glaring at Jill...

KWELI (O.S.)

Jill! Jill Young!

Everyone turns to see Kweli walking quickly towards them.

KWELI

(to Jill)

Come here immediately! You are needed at the school this moment!

Kweli is trying to give her a way to save face. Jill knows it, but she doesn't want to back down before the poachers.

Kweli snatches Jill by the elbow and drags her away. The poachers hiss and cat call. Jill walks away slowly. She wants to make sure they know she's not running.

Kweli hisses furiously into her ear:

KWELI

We have to talk. Now.

36A INT. RUTH'S HUT - DAY

36A

This is Jill's mother's hut. It is full of significant mementos -- her mother's old bulletin board, photographs, research, etc. It feels homey.

Kweli, distraught with worries over Jill, rips a photo of her mother from the wall and shoves it in front of her face.

KWELI

Your mother slept in this bed. She worked at this desk. She died in this jungle. Do you plan to do everything just like her?

JILL

My mother would have been proud of what I did today.

KWELI

(angry)

Proud? Of that foolishness out there? Of you risking your life?

(CONTINUED)

JILL

She risked hers -- why shouldn't I risk mine? I'm just doing what I promised, and I promised to protect Joe. And I'm going to do everything I can to stop the poachers...

KWELI

You can't stop them.
(more gently)
Even she couldn't stop them.

Jill holds the photo of her mother tightly in her hands.

KWELI

Jill, the other gorillas have moved south, to safer lands... but Joe has stayed behind.

JILL

They don't want him. They won't let him come.

KWELI

Maybe... or maybe you won't let him go.

JILL

(sharply)
He needs me.

It's only half the truth, and they both know the other half -- that Jill needs Joe, too. Kweli sighs. He puts his hand protectively on Jill's shoulder.

KWELI

The danger here is building for both of you. I feel it -- and so do you.

Jill looks away. She knows he's right.

KWELI

I know what the American is offering, Jill.

Jill looks into Kweli's eyes. He must be very worried, to be checking around like this.

KWELI

Think about what he has to say.
That's all I ask.

Kweli leaves Jill to mull it over.

37	OMITTED	37
38	EXT. GAS PUMP - DAY	38

A poacher's truck, carrying six rowdy poachers, speeds down the main street, kicking up a cloud of dust. The dust cloud envelops Gregg, making him cough as he repacks some of the damaged equipment in his truck.

(CONTINUED)

He hears more coughing behind him and turns to find Jill at his shoulder. She has a troubled air about her -- clearly she is wrestling with something.

JILL

Leaving?

Gregg nods, continuing packing.

GREGG

I'm gonna head up the mountain. See if I can throw some of the poachers off the trail.

JILL

(dubious)

You think it will work?

GREGG

Not for long. Just trying to buy you a little time, that's all. With more of these bastards arriving every hour, I suggest you get Joe as deep into the jungle as you can -- as fast as you can.

Across the street at the bar, a chorus of CACKLES rises from a group of drunken poachers. The mere sound of them makes Jill dig her fingers into her arms with anxiety.

She looks across at the poachers -- and then back to Gregg, packing up. If she doesn't say this right now, this second, she never will. She snaps.

JILL

Okay!

GREGG

Okay what?

JILL

Okay we'll go.

Gregg turns and looks at her.

GREGG

We?

JILL

Me and Joe. To that place of yours in California.

(off Gregg's look)

What?! You didn't think you could take him without me, did you?

(CONTINUED)

Gregg stops packing to look squarely at Jill.

GREGG
You're sure about this?

JILL
No. I am completely unsure about this. But I'll do it. On one condition.

GREGG
Name it.

JILL
I'm in charge of Joe.

GREGG
Done.

JILL
(suspicious)
Done? Just like that? That was way too easy.

GREGG
You're not a very trusting soul are you, Miss Young?

JILL
No, I'm not.

GREGG
(sarcastic)
Tough, isn't it? Trying to measure me up -- decide if I'm a fraud...

JILL
... or a fool.

Gregg smiles, half sour, half amused.

GREGG
Well, I'd like to know if you're a bona fide lunatic or just a mixed up monkey girl but -- but I guess we'll have to take our chances and figure it out as we go along.

Jill snorts. Gregg looks her straight in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

Come on, Jill. Trust it. You'll be in charge of Joe.

(extends hand)

Let's shake on it.

JILL

I don't shake. That's not how we make pacts around here.

GREGG

(growing impatient)

Alright, how do you make pacts around here?

JILL

You have to endure a bite from a Makiki spider.

GREGG

A what?

JILL

You'll have a high fever and hallucinations. You'll say things -- lots of things. We'll hear what's in your heart. Then, if your intentions prove true, the pact is made.

Gregg nods to himself, considering.

GREGG

A spider bite and hallucinations?

JILL

That's right.

GREGG

Then you'll trust me and let me have Joe?

JILL

That's right. Well?

Gregg cocks his head.

GREGG

Well... I think... that's the biggest load of crap I've ever heard.

Jill smiles. She's satisfied. This is the answer she was looking for.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (4)

38

JILL

Good. Maybe you're not a fool
after all.

Gregg scoffs, realizing she was only testing him. Jill
turns and starts walking away. Gregg calls after her.

GREGG

Get your things together. Fast.
We're getting out of here as soon
as we can.

Gregg watches her go, head held high like a queen. He
chuckles to himself. It's hard not to appreciate this
girl.

GREGG

(to himself)
Makiki spider.

39 EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - MOVING - DAY

39

Jill bursts INTO FRAME -- racing at full stride, long
hair flowing -- so reminiscent of that little girl we saw
before -- a wild mixture of fluid grace and strength.
The trees seem to fly apart behind her revealing Joe --
running with her. As if speed alone could make their
enemies disappear.

40 EXT. MEADOW - DAY

40

Jill watches the clouds rush by the mountaintop. Joe
stands next to her, looking out at the mountain valley
where they've grown up together.

Wind sweeps down from the peak. The trees bow and bend
gracefully. To Jill, the mountain has never seemed more
beautiful. She looks at Joe -- magnificent against the
natural tableau of his world. She looks at him, worry on
her face about what is about to happen to him.

He looks at her trying to understand.

JILL

I don't know what else to do.

CRANE UP so we can see Joe and Jill against the Edenic
mountain vista.

40A EXT. WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY - MOUNTAIN TOP - MORNING

40A

Backlit against a blue sky. PAN DOWN as the wind RUSTLES the TREES and a flock of small birds appear and disappear like a storm cloud. CONTINUE DOWN PAST a waterfall, as we COME TO a grassy field, then a moat, then, finally, a railing at the edge of an observation area.

(CONTINUED)

40A CONTINUED:

40A

NOW REVEAL

That what we are looking at is not, in fact, the African landscape, but rather a fabricated habitat, encircled by a sprawling campus of stucco buildings.

Workers in matching uniforms with the "CALIFORNIA ANIMAL CONSERVANCY" logo on them, run back and forth, a hive of activity in anticipation of the new arrival.

PULL IN ON two of them, walking and talking: DR. HARRY RUBEN, the Conservancy's Director and Chief Zoologist, and DR. CECILY BANKS, an African-American veterinarian with long braids stuffed under a baseball cap.

HARRY

This is crazy. All I said was, 'Bring back some blood samples.' So what does he bring back? A giant gorilla.

CECILY

Don't even pretend to be upset, Harry.

HARRY

You know how much it cost to convert the tiger habitat? Try half our operating budget.

CECILY

You'll be on the cover of National Geographic, Harry.

HARRY

Hey, I just said it was crazy. I didn't say it wasn't worth it.

They continue walking, and we...

CUT TO:

41 OMITTED
thru
44

41
thru
44

45 EXT. SAN DIEGO FREEWAY RAMP - MORNING

45

A busy freeway, near Los Angeles. FIND a car with a California Animal Conservancy logo on the side...

46 INT. CAR - MOVING

46

Gregg drives. Jill, almost bouncing with anxiety and excitement, rides shotgun.

JILL

There are more cars on this road than I've seen in my entire life, total.

GREGG

Welcome to L.A.

Jill whips around in her car seat and peers anxiously through the back window.

JILL'S POV

We see the cab of a large trailer following their car.

BACK TO SCENE

JILL

(anxious)

Think he's okay back there? I think he's okay back there.

Three seconds pass.

JILL

You think he's okay back there?

GREGG

(soothing)

Don't worry. He's doing fine.

JILL

Sorry. I'm a little tense.

(checking behind her again)

Yeah. I think he's okay back there.

GREGG

Good. Thanks for the update.

Jill pulls herself away from the back window and faces front again. She stares out at the nondescript sprawl of greater L.A. It looks like non-place. There is no "there" there.

(CONTINUED)

JILL

So this is L.A.
 (perplexed)
 It all looks the same. How do you
 know where you are?

GREGG

Beach is that way, mountains are
 that way, Mexico's that way,
 Canada's that way. Don't worry
 about the rest -- you'll never see
 it through the smog.

Gregg glances over at Jill. She is drumming her fingers
 in her lap with nerves, not listening to a word he's
 saying.

Gregg smiles with empathetic amusement.

GREGG

Maybe you better check and see if
 Joe's okay back there.

Jill obediently whips around in her seat to check for
 Joe -- then realizes Gregg was teasing. She settles back
 down, facing front again.

JILL

(blushing)
 Ha ha.

A livestock truck, same conservancy labels, travels right
 behind Gregg and Jill's vehicle. Heavy, open air slats
 obscure the truck's occupant, but we know who it is.

JOE'S POV - LOOKING OUT

Traffic rushes by, a buffeting rush of air -- the
 strangeness of it all frightens Joe -- and makes him
 curious. PUSH IN CLOSE ON the air slats as Joe peers out
 again.

POV SHOT - MINIVAN

comes INTO FRAME passing by the trailer.

47A INT. MINIVAN

47A

A mom drives her son home from little league. She listens to an OLDIES station. He looks out the window, bored. Then his eyes go wide.

BOY'S POV

PUSH IN CLOSE ON the trailer and Joe's two big eyes staring out. They lock eyes momentarily.

The boy isn't sure if he's seeing things. Then two enormous fingers extend out from between the slats and wave at him.

BOY

For the boy it is a beat of pure astonishment. As if a daydream came real for the moment. The trailer pulls past leaving the boy wide-eyed, wondering.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. CALIFORNIA ANIMAL CONSERVANCY - DAY

48

Gregg and Jill's car pulls onto the grounds of the California Animal Conservancy. A sprawling campus of stucco buildings and lifelike habitats, the conservancy is a state-of-the-art preserve.

The car passes the main gate, where a worker in a conservancy uniform waves Gregg through. As the live-stock truck pulls in behind them, the worker picks up his walkie-talkie.

CONSERVANCY WORKER
Main gate to Dr. Banks. They're
pulling up now.

CUT TO:

49 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - DAY

49

Cecily clicks off her walkie-talkie, turns and yells to anyone in earshot.

CECILY
Elvis is in the building! I
repeat, Elvis is in the building...

On her order, workers in matching conservancy uniforms start moving into position around Joe's Habitat.

NEAR OBSERVATION AREA

A crane is lowering a platform into place that will straddle the moat. Harry scowls, seemingly unable to enjoy the moment.

CECILY
You hear that, Harry?

From around the conservancy, we can hear the sounds of the other ANIMALS, SCREECHING, SNARLING, BELLOWING...

CECILY
They smell him.

HARRY
Gregg, or the gorilla?

They both turn as...

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

CONSERVANCY CAR

pulls up right in front of them. Gregg gets out first.

HARRY

I'm confused, O'Hara. You phone us to say you're bringing back a two thousand pound wild animal...

GREGG

Hello, Harry. Cecily.

CECILY

(affectionate)

Welcome back, baby.

HARRY

... but security tells me you've requested no firehoses, no restraints of any kind...

GREGG

Let me introduce you to...

HARRY

How are we supposed to control the animal? With a giant, rolled-up...

Harry trails off as Jill gets out of the car.

HARRY

... newspaper?

Harry wasn't prepared for somebody this young and beautiful. Neither was Cecily. They raise their eyebrows at Gregg.

GREGG

Jill Young, Dr. Harry Ruben -- he run the place -- and Dr. Cecily Banks, who makes sure he doesn't screw it up.

CECILY

(chuckles)

Chief veterinarian. Hi.

Jill steps forward, shy and polite. She extends her hand.

JILL

Hello. It's a privilege to meet you both.

(CONTINUED)

Harry is too flustered by Jill to say a word. He just manages a weird little smile and a sound that's not English.

Just then, a BANG and a loud GROWL come out of the trailer. Harry and Cecily almost jump out of their skins.

JILL
Coming, Joe! Hold on!
(to Harry)
I think he'd like to come out
now -- if you don't mind.

HARRY
(stammering, scared)
Mind? No, of course I don't mind.

Jill and Gregg look at each other, excited. This is the moment they've been waiting for. They grin at each other.

GREGG
Harry? I think it's time you met
Joe.

They start moving to the trailer...

HARRY
Hold it!

Harry whirls around and waves over a pair of nerdy, grad-school-geek conservancy workers, JACK and VERN. They run eagerly forward to take orders. They gawk at Jill, each one instantly deciding she is the woman of their dreams. Harry barks at them, bringing them back to attention.

HARRY
Jack? Vern? Get the sedatives
ready.

JILL
(quickly)
We won't need any of that.

HARRY
Miss Young, we know what we're
doing here, and the best way to...

Gregg steps forward.

GREGG
Harry -- you and I made an
agreement. The lady's in charge
of Joe.

50 EXT. BACK OF TRAILER

50

Jack and Vern nervously raise the gate to the back of the trailer. The gate lays flat against a retractable plank that creates a bridge to the habitat.

JOE GROWLS SOFTLY from inside.

JACK

Easy, big boy.

VERN

Don't forget who's gonna feed you.

They raise the gate completely. Jill comes up behind them.

JILL

I'll take it from here.

Jack and Vern are only too happy to let Jill take over.

JOE'S POV - FROM TRAILER DOOR

He can hear Jill but sees only her silhouette at first... and the lush greenery behind her. He GROWLS...

The entire staff, other than Gregg, takes one step backward. Harry whispers in his ear.

HARRY

You sure she knows what she's doing?

Gregg's watching Jill with quiet admiration.

GREGG

She knows.

BACK BY TRAILER

Jill keeps coaxing Joe.

JILL

Come on, Joe. Come on, big guy.

SHADOW

passes over the staff of the conservancy. A look of absolute wonderment on every face as Joe emerges from the trailer. Cecily nudges Harry, whose jaw is slack. Gregg sees this reaction, and beams.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

BY TRAILER

Joe takes a step forward. He looks out across the platform into the sanctuary -- taking in the familiar trees and flowers the staff has planted for him.

ON HARRY AND CECILY

Completely overwhelmed by the sight of this massive creature. Cecily manages a few words.

CECILY

That is one, big gorilla.

BACK TO JOE

His head turning sideways at the sound of her voice. A tense moment, as Joe glares at the assembled crowd. He is magnificent. Awesome. Staggering.

Harry knows a photo-op when he sees one. He whispers loudly to Vern:

HARRY

Hey! What do I pay you for? Get some shots -- of me, too.

Vern picks up a camera and scrambles to get into position -- but he's so nervous that he trips, sprawling on the ground and startling Joe. Joe turns and scampers back into the trailer.

Vern gets back on his feet, red-faced. Jill glares at Harry. Gregg just chuckles at the stupidity. Harry blames Vern.

HARRY

What -- he did it.

BY TRAILER

Jill walks to the edge of the trailer. She coos into the darkened interior.

JILL

Come on, ya big baby. Come on back. Do I have to come in there and get you myself?

She heads into the trailer after him. Harry and Cecily exchange incredulous looks.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (2)

50

INSIDE TRAILER

We can hear JOE making PANTING and HOOTING sounds, almost as if he is trying to reason with Jill. Jill coos and makes her own soothing sighs and sounds. Their noises bounce off the metal trailer walls.

OUTSIDE TRAILER

Everyone exchanges curious glances. Miss Young is one strange girl. Gregg just smiles.

A moment passes -- and then the trailer begins to rock as Jill backs out of it, followed by Joe. She leads him, walking backwards, down the platform, then steps off so he can pass.

JILL

(soothing)

That's it. That-a-boy.

Joe hesitantly takes a few steps forward on his own.

GREGG

(under his breath)

Go on, Joe. Go on.

Everyone holds their breath as Joe completes the crossing. Gregg looks over at Jill. Her eyes are glistening.

Joe heads up through the back of the habitat, already investigating his new home. Everyone exhales.

HARRY

Alright. Take the platform away.

Jill is instantly alarmed. She turns to Harry.

JILL

Hold on -- I'm going in with him.

Harry shakes his head and motions for the workers to proceed with removing the platform.

HARRY

No. We can't allow that. We don't have insurance to cover anyone in there who's not an employee.

GREGG

Harry...

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (3)

50

JILL

But you said -- I'm in charge of Joe.

HARRY

Yes. And I'm in charge of this facility.

Jill looks over at Gregg, distraught. Gregg shakes his head, disgusted -- he sees exactly where this is going.

50A INT. HALLWAY OF CONSERVANCY CONDO - DAY

50A

Jill and Gregg are at a door that Gregg is unlocking. Jill paces angrily and storms through the door as Gregg opens it. CAMERA FOLLOWS Gregg in. He's carrying her bags.

JILL

(imitating Harry)

'I'm in charge of this facility.'
Who is that guy? I bet that man hasn't spent one night outside in his entire life.

GREGG

Probably not.

JILL

You said I was going to be in charge of Joe. I should be sleeping down there, with him, not in this... this...

(taking in the space)

cage.

Gregg is grim and quiet. He thinks what she's saying is true. He sets her bags down, detesting the antiseptic space as much as she does.

Feeling claustrophobic, Jill dashes to the window and tries to open it. It's a double-paned window. The top doesn't open at all -- the bottom cranks open three inches, barely letting in air. Jill pushes on the window, horrified?

JILL

What's wrong with this window?

(pushing on it)

That's all it opens? That's all?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

50A CONTINUED:

50A

JILL (CONT'D)
(growing breathless)
This is wrong. This is all
wrong...
(pleading)
Please, fix it, or do something...

It only takes a second. Gregg grabs a pillow from the couch and lays it against the top portion of the window. He gives it one swift karate chop, breaking out the glass. He methodically breaks out the remaining shards, dusts off the pillow, and carefully replaces it on the couch.

Jill just stares at him, open-mouthed. Gregg looks her straight in the eye.

GREGG
(quietly)
I'll do everything I can for you.

They hold each other's eyes.

JILL
(small voice)
Thank you.

Gregg walks out.

50B EXT. CONSERVANCY - NIGHT

50B

The conservancy is quiet at night, except for the occasional ANIMAL sound rising into the air.

50C INT. JILL'S CONDO - NIGHT 50C

Jill leans on her elbows, staring out her recently-broken window, a lost look on her face.

51 OMITTED 51

51A EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - THAT MOMENT 51A

The CAMERA LEAVES Jill's window and FINDS Joe, sitting in his man-made grassy field, looking equally lost and lonely. He is unsure of what to do with himself, confused by his surroundings.

PAN TO:

51B EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - ANOTHER ANGLE - THAT MOMENT 51B

The CAMERA FINDS Gregg, leaning against the bar at the edge of the moat. His face is soft as he watches Joe.

Joe lists his mammoth head and looks up towards the right corner of his habitat. Gregg follows Joe's eyeline and sees that Joe is looking at a TRANSFORMER. The ELECTRIC BUZZ reaches Gregg's ear... and he becomes aware of it in a new way. He hears its HUM the way Joe hears it -- strange, menacing.

Gregg shakes his head to himself -- why didn't the designers pay attention to this? He looks back at Joe, almost apologetically, and is startled to find that:

Joe is looking back at him.

It is the first time these two have had real eye contact, and for Gregg it is almost overwhelming. Man and beast read each other's faces, and it is in this moment that the giant ape becomes more than a phenomenon to Gregg. Gregg finally feels some of what Jill has been feeling. He connects to Joe.

And Joe connects to Gregg. It's just a blink of the eye, a turn of the head -- but it's there. And they both feel it.

51C OMITTED 51C
thru thru
54 54

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

55 EXT. CONSERVANCY - NEXT MORNING

55

Cecily runs up to the front of the main building, where Harry is waiting for her.

CECILY

Where's Gregg?

HARRY

Beats me. He collected his pay check. He's probably in some jungle by now, not using deodorant.

CECILY

I think he should be here. This is his discovery, after all.

HARRY

Excuse me, Gregg's expertise is pitching tents, not explaining primate behavior to the Chairman of the Conservancy Board.

CECILY

(disgusted)

Know what I think, Harry?

HARRY

I have a feeling I'm gonna find out.

CECILY

I think you're jealous.

HARRY (O.S.)

Of Gregg? Don't be ridiculous.

(beat)

I'm crippled with envy.

In the distance, we see a Cadillac approaching on the Conservancy roadway.

HARRY

Just once I wanted to go into the field and find a new species... mollusk, anything. Instead, he makes the zoological discovery of the century.

CECILY

And he still has a full head of hair.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

HARRY

That's not funny.

Cecily nods to the road.

CECILY

Heads up.

The Cadillac comes to a stop in front of them. A distinguished man in a business suit steps out. This is ELLIOT BAKER, the Chairman of the Board.

HARRY

Elliot. Good to see you again.

BAKER

Harry. Dr. Banks.

He claps his hands together.

BAKER

So? Let's go see him.

CECILY

Right this way.

56 INT. CONSERVANCY NEAR JOE'S HABITAT - DAY

56

Harry and Cecily walk with a conservative-looking man in his fifties, Elliot Baker, the Chairman of the Board of the conservancy. Harry is working for brownie points, excitedly pointing out his "important role" in discovering Joe.

HARRY

I always had a suspicion that the legend coming out of the Pangani forest might have some truth to it. It was just a hunch -- sort of a gut feeling -- but I sent my field zoologist to check it out.

Cecily shoots a look at Harry. She's not going to let him grab the glory away from Gregg.

CECILY

That field zoologist, Dr. O'Hara, had a theory -- and Joe's blood work confirms it. The gorillas in the Pangani carry a recessive gene that pops up every four or five generations with this rare form of gigantism.

(CONTINUED)

BAKER

(excited)

And that's where the legend comes from! That zoologist of yours-- what's his name, Harry?

HARRY

(begrudging)

Gregg O'Hara.

BAKER

Pretty damn sharp.

This kills Harry. Cecily snickers. They arrive at the fence surrounding Joe's habitat.

HARRY

Here we are.

They walk up to the observation railing. Baker cranes his neck. Joe's nowhere to be seen.

BAKER

Where is he?

HARRY

(calling)

Joe! Here, Joe!

(apologetic joke to Baker)

I told him the Chairman of the Board was coming and he promised to come say 'hi.'

Cecily gapes and mouths "kiss ass" behind Baker's back.

BAKER

Well I don't see him.

HARRY

Mmmm. We'll feed him. That'll get him to come out.

CECILY

Uh, Harry...

HARRY

I know what I'm doing. Let's open the gate.

Cecily hesitantly pulls out her keys to the security gate.

58A OMITTED 58A

58B INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - DAY 58B

Mementos, photos, and fabrics from home are strewn around, already adding Jill's warmth and personality to the place.

Jill is standing at the window hanging an African piece of fabric as a makeshift curtain when a piercing ALARM RINGS OUT over the compound. Worried by the urgent sound of the alarm, Jill steps down and hurries out the door.

58C EXT. CONSERVANCY GROUNDS - DAY 58C

Jill runs out of the building and almost collides with Gregg, who is rushing in..

GREGG

I was coming to get you.

JILL

What is that noise?

GREGG

Come on!

The two of them rush off across the compound. As they do, they pass...

59 JILL'S POV - BUNKER 59

A concrete building that's used to lock down wild animals. Jill watches, nervously, as conservancy workers with tranquilizer rifles stream out of the building and jump into vehicles, heading toward Joe's habitat.

CUT TO:

60 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - DAY 60

Jill and Gregg drive up to the habitat. As they come close, Gregg finds Cecily.

GREGG

What the hell is going on?

CECILY

It's Joe, he's gone crazy!

Jill and Gregg follow Cecily towards...

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

JOE'S HABITAT

Conservancy workers have entered Joe's habitat and have their guns trained on --

JOE

who is standing in a clearing, SNARLING and beating his chest. Which is scaring the crap out of...

HARRY

who, white as a sheet, hides behind a tree, his hands shaking. He doesn't dare move an inch, for fear Joe will spot him.

BY GATE

The conservancy workers are raising their tranq rifles, about to fire, when...

GREGG

Stop!

Jill and Gregg come running up behind them. Jill yells to Harry.

(CONTINUED)

JILL

Harry! Jump out from behind the tree!

He shakes his head. No way he's gonna jump in front of that gorilla.

JILL

Jump out and say 'You found me!'

GREGG

Do it, Harry!

Joe grabs a bush and tears it from the ground...

The guards aim their rifles, fingers on triggers...

And Harry, having nothing to lose but his life, jumps out from behind the tree...

HARRY

You found me!

There is a tense moment, then...

Joe stops growling. In the next instant, he starts spinning in a circle, gleefully. Then he dashes off and hides behind a very tiny tree.

ON HARRY

completely confused. Jill walks up to him.

JILL

He's playing hide and seek.

Jill starts rooting around in the trees, pretending not to see Joe.

JILL

Okay, where are you? Come out, big guy! Where'd he go?

(finding him)

There you are!

He screams with delight, and spins in a circle again.

As it dawns on everyone that she's actually right, and that he's really playing, the guards start to lower their guns. Then they start laughing. An embarrassed Harry slinks by Gregg, who can't help but chuckle as he leaves.

61 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

61

An exhausted Harry catches his breath at the gate around the habitat. Baker has a thoughtful look on his face.

BAKER

Put that girl in charge of the gorilla, Harry.

HARRY

What? Elliot, she's got no scientific...

BAKER

That ape is the best fund-raising tool this conservancy has ever seen. He's happy -- I'm happy. Put her on the payroll.

Baker turns and walks away.

62 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

62

Gregg and Cecily watch as Jill plays hide and seek with Joe.

Jill dashes away and runs over to Gregg. She is absolutely glowing, bouncing around with happiness. She grabs both his arms, jumping up and down.

JILL

He's playing! Did you see?

GREGG

(laughing)

I saw.

JILL

He likes it here! Isn't it great?

GREGG

It's great.

Jill surprises Gregg by giving him a hug. Gregg looks over her shoulder and sees that Joe is giving him the evil eye. He's jealous. Gregg stares back, equally challenging.

Jill, unaware of the competition, lets go of Gregg and happily runs back to Joe. Gregg and Joe continue to hold each other's eyes. Cecily sighs and shakes her head.

CECILY

Sorry, babe, but in a pissing match the monkey kicks your ass.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

What are you talking about?

CECILY

Oh please. I was wondering why you hadn't taken off yet. Normally, you're out the door soon as the animal's in his habitat.

GREGG

You've got an active imagination, Cecily.

CECILY

I don't think so. I think Mr. World Traveller has goo-goo eyes for the gorilla girl.

Gregg scoffs. But from the look on his face, it's clear she's hit a nerve.

A KNOCK at Jill's apartment door. She opens it and lights up to see Gregg standing there. Gregg looks past her into the room. She's made some changes; the bed's on the floor and a few large potted ferns crowd the room.

GREGG

Like what you've done with the place.

JILL

Too bad it's always so cold -- somebody broke my window.

She smiles at him and motions for him to come in. Gregg steps just inside the door and stops.

GREGG

I just came by to tell you that I think Joe looks real good out there...

JILL

I know! This is working out -- better than I expected.

GREGG

... and that I'm hitting the road.

Jill looks at Gregg keenly. He's acting like he's got something to tell her.

(CONTINUED)

JILL
Where you going?

GREGG
Back to Africa.
(pauses)
For a couple of months.

Jill stays light.

JILL
No kidding? When do you leave?

GREGG
Now.

Jill just nods.

Gregg is struggling -- this is more difficult than it's ever been for him. He tries to be nonchalant...

GREGG
It's the job, y'know. Always on the road. It's what I like, anyway -- can't stand to be caged up...

They meet eyes. They both know what that means.

GREGG
You and Joe will be okay...

Jill shrugs, acting like she doesn't care either.

JILL
Oh -- of course.

GREGG
Yeah. Well...

JILL
(overlapping)
See you when you get back.

GREGG
(overlapping)
I'll call you.

63A INT. CONSERVANCY CONDO - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION 63A

Gregg turns and heads back down the hall. Jill sticks her head out and calls after him.

JILL

(biting)

Say hello to Africa for me.

She slams the door to her apartment. Gregg freezes for a moment, then continues down the hallway alone.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

64 EXT. OUTSIDE JOE'S HABITAT - DAY 64

A CNN reporter delivers a remote.

REPORTER (V.O.)

... behind me you see the habitat of what experts are calling one of the most important zoological finds of this century. This is the home of what's believed to be the world's largest primate -- a two thousand pound gorilla named Joe.

We see a shot of Joe, in his habitat, with a conservancy worker in the f.g., for scale.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Joe has been at the California Animal Conservancy for a little more than a month now. He was brought here from Africa by Dr. Gregory O'Hara. According to Dr. O'Hara...

PULL BACK FROM the screen to reveal...

CUT TO:

INT. RAHA PRESERVE AND CONSERVANCY (BOTSWANA) - EVENING

Strasser, in the main room of his preserve, watches the news report, absolutely riveted. He is polishing a leather object that we can't clearly make out. Garth stands behind him.

Strasser is on the edge of his seat, watching the screen.

(CONTINUED)

STRASSER

(amazed)

My God. Pindi was right.

REPORTER (V.O.)

... Joe's remarkable size made him a natural target for poachers. Fortunately the California Animal Conservancy's program in...

The program continues with more shots of Joe. Strasser is overcome with desire.

STRASSER

(transfixed)

He's beautiful. The most beautiful animal I have ever seen.

GARTH

And the most valuable, that's for sure.

STRASSER

I want him. He belongs here with me.

GARTH

(thinking it over)

It'll be a bit tricky, won't it? They're not gonna want to part with...

STRASSER

Wait! Be quiet!

Strasser points to the television...

ON TV

Intercut with shots of Joe are shots of the conservancy staff. Jill is among them, and her look of displeasure with the photographing of Joe makes her stand out from the staff. This shot is replaced with side by side photographs of Jill and her mother, Ruth.

REPORTER (V.O.)

... was raised from infancy by Jill Young, the daughter of famed primatologist Ruth Young. Their closeness stems from a tragic bond.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

REPORTER (V.O.CONT'D)

Both Joe and Jill's mothers were killed by poachers, twelve years ago, in the Pangani Forest, orphaning them on the same night.

ON STRASSER

Emotion surging through him. He realizes now, all at once, exactly who Joe and Jill are.

GARTH

(surprised)

Bloody hell. That's the little monster that...

Garth stops abruptly, glancing at Strasser's hand. He knows better than to mention it directly. Strasser looks down...

CLOSEUP - STRASSER'S HAND

tanned, manicured, and missing the thumb and forefinger. The leather he's been polishing this whole time is his prosthetic hand. He straps it back on.

STRASSER

(softly, to himself)

I am always amazed how, if you wait long enough, the opportunity for justice finally comes.

Garth watches his boss, who seems lost in his private dream of revenge. It's a moment before Strasser looks back at him.

STRASSER

Book us two tickets to America. We're going to pay a visit to this incredible animal.

He looks back at the TV, where Jill is on screen.

STRASSER

I think I know how to convince his current owners to part with him.

And on that foreboding note...

CUT TO:

65 OMITTED
thru
67

65
thru
67

68 EXT. CONSERVANCY GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

68

CLOSE ON the sleepy face of a shaggy yak. PULL BACK TO a small group of V.I.P.s being led on a tour by Harry.

HARRY

This fellow is one of only three hundred wild yaks remaining on the planet. There are those who would ask, why should we care if this sub-species of yak survives?

We SPOT a man blending in with the group. We recognize Garth. He looks quite respectable in a suit. The antsy V.I.P. next to Garth interrupts Harry.

V.I.P. #1

Excuse me. Can we see Joe?

The other V.I.P.s echo this wish. Harry refocuses himself.

HARRY

(charming)

You certainly can -- for the mere price of a 'Diamond Circle Benefactor Ticket' to tomorrow night's benefit.

The V.I.P.s laugh and groan. Garth takes this moment to slip away, unnoticed. Harry twinkles at the V.I.P.s.

HARRY

It's all for a good cause.

68A EXT. CONSERVANCY GROUNDS - ANOTHER AREA - LATER

68A

Harry is waving good-bye to the V.I.P.s, who have completed their tour.

HARRY

Good-bye. Good-bye.

(under his breath)

Throw money... throw money...

Jill and Cecily drive up in an electric cart. Jill jumps out, wearing a conservancy T-shirt, and from the looks of things she's been working hard in the habitat all day. She's a lovely mess, head to toe.

(CONTINUED)

68A CONTINUED: (A1)

68A

She runs up to Harry, all energy and smiles.

JILL

Harry -- see what's in that cart?
That's all we have left of the
lobelia leaves for Joe. Did you
by any chance place that new
order I asked for?

HARRY

(guilty)
Of course I... actually, perhaps
I...

JILL

(sympathetic)
I wouldn't be surprised if you
forgot, considering you have so
much on your mind.

(CONTINUED)

68A CONTINUED:

68A

HARRY

I'll go rush order it for you now.

JILL

(beaming)

Thank you so much.

Cecily rolls her eyes. Jill winks at her conspiratorially.

CECILY

(to Harry)

She's nice. I'm not. If you forget to order something I need, I'll knock you upside the head.

Cecily and Harry walk off grumbling at each other like an old married couple.

HARRY

I keep telling you -- stop talking to me like that.

CECILY

Please. You love it.

Jill smiles to herself. She turns to get back to her other business, and almost walks right into:

Gregg. He's been leaning against a wall, and he's caught the whole thing.

GREGG

Lobelia leaves. Should have called me in Africa. I would have brought 'em back for ya.

Jill just stares for a moment, trying to decide how to handle Gregg's sudden reappearance. His clothes look travelled in, and another month in Africa has put a deeper shade of brown on his face. He's got the ragged look of someone who's just gotten off a 16-hour flight.

GREGG

Nice to see you running the place, Jill.

Jill nods and starts walking like someone with urgent business to attend to. Gregg falls in beside her.

JILL

You're back early. What happened? Run out of humvees to crash?

(CONTINUED)

68A CONTINUED: (2)

68A

GREGG

No -- just wanted to get back.

JILL

(frosty)

Really? And why is that?

GREGG

Guess I missed Harry.

Gregg smiles teasingly at Jill but she's in no mood to melt that easily. He continues.

GREGG

They want me to show my face at the fundraiser tomorrow night... and I guess I got my mind fixed on a good meal in a fine restaurant. Thought you might like to join me.

JILL

(cool)

No thanks. I still don't want to leave Joe.

GREGG

'Still'? Haven't you been out of here yet?

JILL

(flip)

What's to see? Beach is that way, mountains are that way, Mexico's that way, Canada's that way...

Gregg reaches out and slows her down. He wants to see her eyes.

GREGG

Come on. Have dinner with me, Jill.

(tenderly)

You won't find a better excuse to brush your hair.

Gregg reaches out and pulls a piece of straw from Jill's tossed locks. She can't help herself anymore -- and breaks into a slow smile.

JILL

I'll brush my hair if you take a shower.

GREGG

(grins)

Deal.

68B EXT. OUTSIDE JOE'S HABITAT - DAY

68B

Garth walks quickly -- but not fast enough to draw attention. He moves along the handrail at the edge of the moat. Takes off his sunglasses and looks for Joe.

GARTH'S POV - JOE

is moving slowly among saplings.

CLOSE ON GARTH'S HAND

as he reaches in his pocket and pulls out one of the poaching dog collars. Garth looks around -- then gives the metal clappers one loud shake -- quickly drops them back into his pocket.

Joe reacts immediately to the JANGLING sound. Imprinted deep in his memory. He rises up quickly and GROWLS furiously -- pounding his chest -- looking around for the danger. It's instinctive and frightening. Joe sees Garth and charges him. Joe's anger takes him into the electrified wire around the habitat. JOE ROARS at the shock and recoils.

GARTH

You remember, don't you?

69 OMITTED

69

69A EXT. VENICE BEACH - NIGHT

69A

It's a beautiful and lively night on Venice Beach. A few people have made bonfires along the water's edge, and the MUSIC of a DISTANT bar band wafts through the air. It's a magic night.

Gregg and Jill walk away from a funky food shack, festooned with tiny lights. They share a carton of fish and chips.

JILL

So this is what you call a good meal in a fine restaurant?

GREGG

(thinks about it)

Yeah.

Gregg grins at Jill, all boyish charm. She stifles a smile, struggling to hold on to her previous indignation.

(CONTINUED)

69A CONTINUED:

69A

JILL

Don't point that smile at me.
I'm still mad at you for taking
off and leaving me here all alone.

GREGG

(guilty)
I'm sorry -- I had things I had
to do...

JILL

(doesn't buy it)
Uh-huh...

GREGG

Besides, you weren't all alone.
You had Joe.

Jill nods at the truth of this. She continues, almost
to herself:

JILL

(softly)
That's right. Me and Joe. Just
like always.

There is a loneliness about Jill as she says this. Gregg
senses it.

GREGG

Growing up with him around --
what's it been like for you?
I mean -- most guys are afraid
of girls' fathers. I can just
see a guy telling Joe he'll get
you home by midnight...

JILL

(shrugs)
Never had anyone to bring home
anyway. All that stuff -- I
don't even know what it's like.

GREGG

All what 'stuff'?

JILL

(defensive/dismissive)
Whatever you want to call it.
Being in love.

GREGG

(smiles)
Well -- it's kinda like getting
bit by a makiki spider.

(CONTINUED)

69A CONTINUED: (2)

69A

Jill looks sharply at Gregg. Not so fast.

JILL
Oh yeah? How's that?

GREGG
(stepping closer
to Jill)
You'll get a kind of a fever...

JILL
Fever? Really. How high?

GREGG
Pretty high.

JILL
Interesting. Hallucinations
with that?

GREGG
Oh yeah... and you'll, uh -- find
yourself saying things. Lots of
things.

Gregg is very close to Jill. He wants to kiss her right now. Jill smiles. She knows what he's doing. Maybe she'll let Gregg kiss her.

Just then:

JILL
Aaah!

She pulls a beeper off her belt and checks the message.

INSERT - BEEPER READOUT

A message scrolls across that says, "GET BACK HERE!
NOW!!!"

JILL
Come on!

Jill and Gregg bolt for the car.

70 OMITTED

70

&

&

70A OMITTED

70A

71 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - NIGHT

71

JOE is on a major destructive rampage, pulling up trees,
ROARING, beating his chest.

PAN TO:

72 EXT. HABITAT - BY GATE - NIGHT

72

Gregg, Jill, Cecily and Harry watching Joe's rampage from outside the gate. Jack and Vern run over, covered in mud and overly excited.

VERN

He's ripping out saplings like
bam-bam-bam!

JACK

And taking out irrigation pipes.
One good yank -- on comes the
flood.

HARRY

He just pulled out another acacia
tree. You know what I paid for
those?

GREGG

(to Cecily)

Do you know what's wrong with him?

Cecily shakes her head "no."

CECILY

(to Jill)

Do you?

Jill's brow is furrowed with concern.

JILL

No.

HARRY

Well could you get in there and
calm him down before he pulls out
the rest of my landscaping?

72A EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - NIGHT

72A

Jill has done her job. Joe is calm but spent, leaning against a tree.

Jill sits in his lap, softly singing the same lullaby we heard her mother sing to her 12 years ago.

She caresses the palm of Joe's giant leathery paw, her tiny white hand almost disappearing in its black folds.

Gregg watches, leaning against a tree not ten feet away. It is the most intimate moment between Jill and Joe that he has seen yet. The tableau invokes myth: the beauty in the service of the beast; the man who has come to free her.

(CONTINUED)

72A CONTINUED:

72A

Gregg comes forward... slowly... but Joe suddenly lifts his head and GRUNTS at him, a kind of warning bark for Gregg to stay where he is.

Jill doesn't even notice. She lays her soft cheek against Joe's giant palm. He cradles her face.

She closes her eyes.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

73 INT. CONSERVANCY CONTROL ROOM - CLOSE ON BAKER - NEXT DAY 73

Looking fairly annoyed.

BAKER
(emphatic)
Impossible.

PULL OUT to find: Baker, facing off with Jill. She looks flushed with emotion as she follows Baker around the room, dogging him.

JILL
(adamant)
Please, Mr. Baker -- I wouldn't be asking you to postpone the benefit unless I thought there was something really wrong with Joe. And I do.

BAKER
From what I heard, you sang him to sleep last night like a baby. What's really wrong about that?

JILL
I swear to you, Joe's still not himself -- he's nervous and agitated. He shouldn't be exposed to a crowd of strangers right now. If you would only delay the party a few more...

BAKER
It's too late, Jill.

JILL
(adamant)
No. It's too soon.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

Baker gives Jill a hard look.

BAKER

Miss Young, let me give you some advice. Stop worrying about Joe, and start worrying about what you'll wear tomorrow night.

With that, Baker gives Jill his back and starts a phone call. Frustrated, Jill turns and walks out of the room.

74 EXT. CONSERVANCY GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS ACTION

74

Jill storms out of Baker's office stewing, head down. She's walking so fast that she collides into a man coming the other way.

JILL

Oh! Excuse me.

The man rights himself and smiles politely.

STRASSER

No, excuse me. My fault.

It's Strasser. He's tamed his looks and dressed himself in modest attire. With his damaged hand concealed in his pocket and a pleasant smile arranged on his face, he has re-invented himself. He comes across like a friendly conservationist.

He stares openly at Jill. It flusters her.

STRASSER

(feigning surprise)

I'm so sorry -- it's just -- you must be Jill Young...

JILL

Yes...?

STRASSER

("moved")

And -- you look just like her.

The words electrify Jill. She almost gasps.

STRASSER

I'm Andre Strasser. An old friend of your mother's.

(warmly)

I knew her when she was only a little older than you, and you were just a tiny thing. What an incredible woman she was.

(CONTINUED)

Jill is overwhelmed. She immediately melts. She reaches her hand out to him.

JILL

How wonderful to meet you. What are you doing here?

Strasser pretends to look uncomfortable.

STRASSER

I've come to talk with your Mr. Baker.

(pained)

You see, I am here for Joe. And, in a way, for your mother, too.

(passionate)

I believe she would agree with me -- a magnificent wild animal like Joe needs more space -- like the Raha Preserve I run in Botswana.

Bingo. Jill's face falls. The guilt is working already.

JILL

Raha? A preserve?

STRASSER

I have twenty thousand acres there where the animals are free to run. I would like to offer them to Joe.

(sighs)

Here, it's such a shame... to see Joe living in a man-made habitat and being used as an attraction to raise money...

Strasser shakes his head at the inhumanity of it all. His clever words work on Jill like a charm -- she looks absolutely crestfallen. He pretends to comfort her.

STRASSER

Oh -- I've upset you! Please... I only mean to offer an alternative. I will be attending the event tomorrow night. Maybe we can talk more about this matter then.

JILL

I'll look forward to it.

STRASSER

Good-bye.

Strasser walks off, leaving Jill deep in thought. He smiles to himself, certain he's landed a direct hit.

75 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - NIGHT 75

A tent has been set up outside Joe's habitat, the long end flush up against the railing that surrounds the moat.

CUT TO:

76 INT. TENT - NIGHT 76

A small, elegant and tasteful party. A collection of fifty VIPs, all dressed to the nines, mingle with the conservancy staff. Tables have been arranged in a wide semi-circle around a podium, which is on the moat edge of the tent.

BY BAR

Gregg, wearing a tuxedo, walks up to Cecily and Harry, also in black tie. Harry is stuffing his face.

Cecily looks admiringly at Gregg.

CECILY

Don't you clean up nice.

GREGG

Cecily -- you're ravishing.
Harry -- you got shrimp on your shirt.

Harry looks down at his shirt smeared with cocktail sauce.

HARRY

(dismayed)

Of course. I look ridiculous.

CECILY

No. You look fine.
(pointing at
Jack and Vern)
They look ridiculous.

Jack and Vern are off the dweeb-scale in their ill-fitting tuxes. They crowd the food table, gobbling down appetizers.

HARRY

Hel-lo. Look what we have here.

Gregg and Cecily turn to see what Harry's looking at.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

BY ENTRANCE

Jill has just stepped into the tent, looking absolutely stunning. All heads turn too look at her. Intimidated, she falters at the door, too afraid to enter.

BACK ON STAFF

Like everyone else in the room, Cecily and Harry admire Jill. Gregg is rendered speechless by her beauty.

CECILY

(proud)

I picked out the dress. Aren't I smart?

GREGG

Brilliant.

Gregg picks up a glass of champagne for Jill and starts crossing the room to her.

CECILY

Shut your mouth, Harry -- you're catching flies.

ON JILL

Feeling terribly insecure, Jill gratefully watches Gregg cross the room towards her. They can't take their eyes off each other. When he reaches her side, she grabs on to him.

JILL

(self-conscious)

Tell me the truth -- do I look stupid in this? Everyone is staring at me.

GREGG

(reassuring)

They're not staring at you.

(looks around)

They're staring at that... uh... banana tower.

Jill turns and sees a ridiculous-looking decorative mountain of bananas sitting on a table top just behind her. It's the creation of an over-zealous caterer.

Jill blushes, realizing Gregg's joking.

(CONTINUED)

JILL

Very funny.

ACROSS ROOM

Strasser and Garth observe the crowd.

GARTH

Quite a turnout they have here.

STRASSER

All the better.

BAKER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, can I
have your attention, please?

Strasser puts his drink down, taps Garth.

STRASSER

Let's go.

The two of them head for the exit.

AT PODIUM - WITH BAKER

BAKER

When was the last time you laid
eyes on something so unique, so
spectacular, that it literally
took your breath away? Well,
prepare yourselves, for tonight
you will have such an experience.

WITH STRASSER AND GARTH

Heading for the exit, they hear Baker's words and exchange a knowing glance -- if they have their way, tonight will be more of an "experience" than Baker is bargaining for. Garth slips his hand into his jacket, checking for the dog collar...

Just as Jack and Vern start coming the other way. Jack's already had one glass too many, and he's reckless on his feet.

JACK

(to Vern)

There's nothing in this punch,
man. I could drink twelve of
these and not feel a thing.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED: (3)

76

Smack! Jack collides with Garth, causing Garth to drop the dog collar. Vern stoops to retrieve it, (picking it up by a rusty key that is one of the clanking objects on the collar).

VERN

Sorry! Here's your... uh... key chain.

Garth grabs it back. Strasser nods coolly to Vern and Jack.

STRASSER

Thank you.

Vern and Jack stumble on, none the wiser.

Strasser and Garth slip out.

77 EXT. JOE'S HABITAT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

77

Joe is feeding on bamboo in the center of his habitat when something abruptly catches his ear. A slight JANGLING sound, the TIMPANI of WIND CHIMES, floating through the air. It GROWS LOUDER.

Joe stands up. The hair on his neck bristles. He moves towards the source of the sound, at the edge of the moat.

JOE'S POV

Garth stands at the railing surrounding the moat, rattling the dog collars. It's a sound that haunts him, from the darkest depths of his memory. He starts to GROWL and then he sees something that really drives him nuts.

Strasser steps into the light, joining Garth by the water's edge. He rattles the dog collar, and now...

ZOOM IN ON JOE

His eyes, locking with Strasser's. His pupils narrow, his nostrils flare, and Joe FREAKS OUT!

He starts tearing up the ground, beating his chest, then he ROARS and charges straight for them, stopping at the water's edge.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

ON STRASSER

locking eyes with Joe. This is the first time he has seen Joe since the animal bit his hand off twelve years ago. A smile creeps across his face.

STRASSER

(to himself)

So you haven't forgotten me. Good.

(holding up his
dead hand)

Have you forgotten this?

Garth is still rattling the dog collar, enjoying Joe's display of rage.

GARTH

What do you think the big guy is worth? A couple million?

STRASSER

I will get that for the paws alone. After we sell him off piece by piece, who knows how much we'll make?

Garth shakes the dog collar more furiously, making Joe rush at them again.

GARTH

Got you going now! That should rattle the jewelry off the ladies.

STRASSER

(indicating dog
collar)

Hang it there -- where he can see it.

(warning)

And come back for it -- after.

Garth hangs the dog collar on the fence. Joe can hear it clank in the breeze -- he is in a truly frightening state.

STRASSER

Come, we've done our job here.

As Strasser and Garth leave, Joe looks after them, beside himself with fury. Outraged, he turns this way and that way, finally focusing on a tall tree in his habitat.

78 INT. TENT - NIGHT

78

At the podium, Baker is making his presentation to the tony crowd.

BAKER

... and now to introduce our remarkable new acquisition, I would like to bring up to the podium the director of the conservancy...

A sudden ROAR coming from behind the curtain drowns out Baker's voice. The audience members jump in their seats, frightened. Baker is rattled, too, then regains his composure.

BAKER

Well! I suppose there's no need to add to that introduction.

The audience laughs and relaxes.

BAKER

Here's Dr. Harry Ruben.

Baker motions to Harry, who freezes with a sudden bout of stage fright. Cecily gives him a discreet push on the back and he stumbles forward.

JOE can still be heard GROWLING and beating his chest in the background. Jill and Gregg look at each other with mounting anxiety.

Harry reaches the mic.

HARRY

(into mic)

In the time it took you to drive here tonight, three species have disappeared from the Earth. Extinct. Never to return. We here at the conservancy say this is a tragedy...

Another O.S. ROAR from JOE. It is spine-tingling. Harry almost jumps out of his loafers.

HARRY

(nervous joke)

Obviously Joe agrees.

Everybody laughs. The audience doesn't know enough to be really afraid -- they're just excited and twittering.

(CONTINUED)

Jill is feeling increasingly nervous. She glances around the room and meets eyes with Strasser. He nods at her, his eyes indicating that he is "worried" for Joe as well. Jill nods back.

We continue to hear uncanny SOUNDS from behind the curtain. It's all Harry can do to stick to his speech. He keeps glancing nervously over his shoulder.

HARRY

But tonight, rather than focusing on what we've lost, I'm going to introduce you to something we've found.

There is a tremendous CRACKING sound from behind the curtain. The audience murmurs. Harry sweats. Jill grabs Gregg's hand tightly.

HARRY

Ladies and gentlemen, the California Animal Conservancy proudly introduces our newest member, Mighty Joe...

CRASH! Before Harry can say "Young," a TREE comes CRASHING through the curtain.

Gregg leaps forward, knocking Harry out of the way just as the tree crushes the podium into kindling.

Joe comes blasting through the hole in the curtain. He has joined the party.

Joe stands on the stage, his chest heaving. There is total silence. The party guests are frozen with fear, literally speechless. A few of them laugh nervously, wondering if this is really just part of the show.

But Jill knows better. She and Gregg exchange glances -- what the hell is going on?

Jill rises, trying to stay calm herself, and slowly approaches Joe, speaking in a soothing voice. She wants to get his attention.

JILL

(soothing)

Hey, Joe. I'm right here. You hear me? Good boy. Take it easy, Joe. We don't want to scare anybody, do we?

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (2)

78

Jill is within arm's reach of Joe -- it looks like he might turn his head to her, calm down, become docile...

But that's when he spots Strasser. Joe's face registers towering rage as Strasser stares back, provoking Joe further.

Joe takes off, knocking over a table that bangs into Jill and sends her flying backwards into a wall. She hits the wall and sinks down, stunned.

JOE

heads through the people towards Strasser. The party erupts with screams.

Joe makes his way towards Strasser, swatting people out of the way.

ON STRASSER

Frozen, in horror, as Joe plows through the party, heading straight for him. Tables are broken like match sticks, GLASS SHATTERS.

Joe catches up to Strasser, grabs his tuxedo jacket and hoists him into the air.

CLOSE ON MAN

It's not Strasser. Frustrated, Joe flings him aside. The man flies through the air, slamming into the tent wall, and then falling on the catering table.

ON GREGG AND JILL

As they watch Joe's rampage in horror.

JILL

My God. What's wrong with him?

GREGG

We've got to bring him down. I'm going for the tranq guns.

JILL

No -- let me stop him.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (3)

78

But Gregg's already taken off.

MEANWHILE

Mighty Joe is still looking for Strasser, as he heads back across the room.

A glamorous couple, (TERRY and RAY), crawls frantically on all fours, trying to stay ahead of Joe.

TERRY

(frantic)

Faster! Faster!

RAY

I'm trying!

JILL

is pushing against the tide of people to get to Joe. Somebody shoves against her hard: it's Baker, in a panic to get away.

JOE

continues to make his way towards Strasser. As he rushes towards him...

A security guard runs into the tent, raising his TRANQ gun and FIRES...

The dart misses, hitting a fleeing guest, who, we see as he crumples to the ground, is actually Baker.

STRASSER

is fleeing for the exit.

JOE

chases him through the tent. A guest falls in Joe's path and Joe heedlessly steps on his leg, crushing it. The man screams in agony.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (4)

78

JILL

is scrambling over broken tables and chairs to get to Joe, when he turns sharply away from her.

BACK TO SCENE

Strasser is trapped behind a table. JOE throws the table out of his way, ROARS and is about to crush a cowering Strasser into poacher mulch, when...

SFX: the EXPLOSION of a RIFLE. Joe looks surprised at first.

Joe drops to all fours, revealing Gregg holding a tranq gun. Other Animal Control Officers are with him, also holding tranq rifles.

Gregg lowers his gun, a pained expression on his face.

But one tranq dart is not enough to stop Mighty Joe. He rises again, ready to smash Strasser...

And a HAIL of TRANQ DARTS sail through the air as the conservancy workers pepper Joe with SHOTS.

Joe swipes several darts from his flank -- but the accumulation is too much even for him. He stumbles backward and falls.

Jill screams. Gregg looks sick at the sight of Joe falling.

Joe hits the ground hard. His eyes close.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

79 OMITTED
&
80

79
&
80

A81 EXT. CONSERVANCY - DAY

A81

A grim-faced FEMALE REPORTER faces the camera. The tent is sprawled on the ground in the b.g. As she starts to speak we PAN PAST a line of other TV news reporters delivering essentially the same report TO CAMERA.

(CONTINUED)

A81 CONTINUED: (A1)

A81

NEWS ANCHOR #1

Officials here are saying they don't know what caused the animal's rampage, which injured over a dozen people, eight of which are currently hospitalized. Three of those have already filed law suits, and word has it that the City Attorney is calling for the animal to be put to sleep. Standing with me is the chairman of the Conservancy board, Elliot Baker.

(CONTINUED)

A81 CONTINUED:

A81

She turns to her left and INTO FRAME we see Mr. Baker, steeling himself for the consequences of last night.

NEWS ANCHOR #1

Mr. Baker, what is the Conservancy doing to assure the public Joe won't attack again?

BAKER

Joe has been transferred to a special steel reinforced concrete bunker.

NEWS ANCHOR #1

And what about after you let him out?

BAKER

That won't be happening anytime soon. In the meantime, we will do anything necessary to ensure the safety of the public.

81 EXT. BUNKER - DAY

81

A animal control officer has been posted outside the bunker, the conservancy's lockdown building for animals that get out of control. He stands next to his squad car, a rifle at his side.

82 INT. BUNKER - DAY

82

A holding room. A cage criss-crossed by six-inch steel bars.

Joe stares out through one narrow window. He sees a bar-striped slice of blue sky. He reaches up one hand towards the window-- he can't even fit it through the bars. He still looks drugged and despondent. Hunched over. His head almost scrapes the ceiling. His breathing raspy.

On the other side of the bars, Jill and Gregg hover like distraught parents. Jill pets Joe's fur through the bars.

JILL

Joe... look at me. Over here, big guy.

Joe barely reacts. Jill is near tears.

(CONTINUED)

JILL

(to Gregg)

I knew something was wrong with him.

GREGG

What do you think happened out there?

JILL

(shaking her head)

Joe never would have hurt all those people unprovoked... something must have got to him.

GREGG

Something. Or someone.

Jill looks at Gregg, considering this for the first time.

HARRY (O.S.)

Jill?

They turn to see Harry, poking his head in the room. He still looks freaked out from the events of the night.

HARRY

Can I talk to you for a second?

Jill nods. She takes one last look at Joe, then walks out of the room, leaving...

Gregg, alone with Joe for the first time since Joe held him upside down in the jungle.

Gregg leans against the cage next to Joe. They have never been in such close proximity before. The expressive-ness in Joe's eyes is uncanny -- Gregg feels almost as if he could understand what he's saying.

GREGG

(deeply sorry)

Well this wasn't in the brochure, was it?

Gregg looks around at the claustrophobic space.

GREGG

I promised you wouldn't be put in a cage. I'm sorry, Joe. I helped put you here. And now I'm going to do everything I can to get you out.

Gregg reaches out for Joe's paw and lays his hand in it. Joe gently curls his fingers around Gregg's hand.

Jill and Harry are in the observation area, a glassed-off room that looks into the holding cell. Harry is still extremely rattled from the fiasco of the night before. He's trying to act tough but he's torn up inside, not sure who he's worried about more-- Joe or himself.

HARRY

The City Attorney talked to Baker. It wasn't my decision, and there's nothing I can do about it.

JILL

About what?

HARRY

Joe stays in there until they decide what to do with him.

JILL

(freaking out)

In there? Harry, look at him. He's depressed, he won't eat. If he stays in there, he'll die within days.

HARRY

So sue me. Everybody else is.

JILL

Listen, Harry, either you tell them you're getting Joe out of there or I will!

HARRY

Don't you get it? This is way beyond you, and me. Joe freaked out on some very influential people. He's a public relations nightmare. No zoo will take a two-thousand-pound killer gorilla...

JILL

(interrupting)

He's not a killer!

HARRY

... and unless you can write a check for millions of dollars to buy him a big back yard somewhere, Joe's got nowhere to go.

JILL

That's it? You're not going to do anything?

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

Harry looks at Jill's angry face-- he knows he's just lost her respect and it bugs him more than he'd like to admit. But there's nothing more he can say.

He leaves the room, brushing shoulders with Gregg, entering. Judging from the expression on Gregg's face, he's overheard the whole thing.

Jill and Gregg look at each other with determination in their eyes. There's no question in either of their minds about what needs to be done next.

JILL

I need your help.

GREGG

You got it.

84 EXT. BUNKER - NIGHT

84

An ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER stands guard outside the bunker.

Gregg, Cecily, and Jill walk casually towards the Officer. The Officer straightens up and looks tough. He comes forward halfway to meet them.

CECILY

(big smile)

Good evening.

A.C. OFFICER

'Evening.

Our three just breeze on by the Officer into the bunker.

A.C. OFFICER

Hey, wait a minute!

Gregg hangs back with the A.C. Officer as Cecily and Jill disappear inside. To buy time for Cecily and Jill, Gregg pretends to take the big lug into his confidences.

GREGG

(confidential)

We're conservancy doctors. Do me a favor -- stay here and guard the door.

The guard nods and looks confused. Gregg disappears inside.

85 INT. BUNKER - AT CAGE

85

Cecily takes a key from her pocket and opens the door to Joe's cage.

JILL

Come on, Joe. We're leaving.
Let's get you out of here.

The open door has a stronger effect on Joe than the sedatives in his system. He clambers to his feet and follows Jill out of the cage.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

A.C. OFFICER (O.S.)
What the hell are you doing?

They turn to see the Officer has a rifle aimed at Joe. He's terrified. JOE GROWLS ominously.

CECILY
I'm Dr. Banks, the head vet. And I'm taking Joe for a CAT Scan.

A.C. OFFICER
I take my orders from Mr. Baker. Put him back in the cage. Now.

The Officer trains his gun on Joe. Joe looks at the Officer menacingly and bares his huge fangs.

GREGG
(friendly voice)
Officer, you don't want to point that gun at him, believe me.

The Officer suddenly grabs his neck, which now has a tranquilizer dart sticking out of it.

Jill lowers a tranq gun.

JILL
(simply)
He didn't believe you.

The Officer slumps to the ground.

86 EXT. BUNKER - CONTINUOUS ACTION

86

Cecily steps out of the bunker and blinks a flashlight into the dark.

The red taillights of a trailer suddenly appear as a huge tractor trailer backs up towards the bunker.

Cecily calls out towards the bunker:

CECILY
Bring him out.

Now Jill and Gregg lead Joe outside as Cecily opens the doors to the trailer. Joe climbs inside.

87 EXT. TRAILER

87

Now someone steps out of the passenger side of the cab.

(CONTINUED)

It's Strasser. Avoiding the back of the trailer (where he would encounter Joe), Strasser stays where he is and calls out to Jill in hushed tones.

STRASSER

Jill, I got the plane. It's waiting at the airport. We must hurry.

Strasser holds his hand up in salute to Gregg and Cecily -- that's about as close as he wants to get to them. Using urgency as an excuse, he jumps back into the trailer before anyone can engage him in further conversation.

It's time to say good-bye. Cecily looks into the back of the trailer.

CECILY

I'm going to miss your ugly face.
Be good, Joe.

HARRY (O.S.)

Yeah. Don't start a fight with anyone bigger than you.

Harry steps out of the shadows. Everyone turns and looks at him. He feels their eyes on him and shuffles a little.

HARRY

You'd better leave out of the west gate. The guard there got called away. Urgent business.

Jill puts her arms around Harry. He's antsy and embarrassed.

JILL

You're not such a big coward after all.

HARRY

(as she keeps hugging)
Okay, okay, let go.

Harry disengages from Jill and disappears back where he came from.

Now Cecily turns to Jill. She hugs her with great emotion.

CECILY

Write me when Joe gets settled.

(CONTINUED)

JILL

I promise.

Cecily moves off, leaving Gregg and Jill alone to say good-bye. They look into each other's eyes, hating to part, everything they have to say to each other still unsaid.

JILL

(yearning)

You coming to the airport, or...?

GREGG

(strained)

I think I better stay here and keep people away from that bunker. Give you a head start before they realize he's gone.

Jill is crumbling. For her, it's awful to leave him, but he's not acting heart-broken at all. Confused, she tries desperately to stay light. She chatters like a nervous schoolgirl.

JILL

(stammering)

Well -- if you're ever in Botswana, come by and take me out to a good meal in a fine restaurant. That is, if you're not afraid to tell Joe that you'll get me home by...

She doesn't get the rest of her sentence out because Gregg is kissing her mouth. It's the kiss he's been wanting to give her since the day he first laid eyes on her.

He lets go of her again, leaving her breathlessly looking after him. He walks to the back of the trailer.

Gregg and Joe make serious eyes contact.

GREGG

(pointedly, to Joe)

Take care of her for me, will ya?

Gregg shuts the trailer door and walks off, not daring to look back. Jill is about to call after him when Strasser steps back out of the passenger's side of the trailer. He whispers urgently:

STRASSER

Jill! We must go!

Jill runs to the passenger side of the trailer.

87A INT. TRAILER CAB - THAT MOMENT 87A

Hopping into the trailer, Jill comes face to face with Garth, who is sitting behind the steering wheel. He nods to her, all business.

GARTH

Hello.

Strasser gets in on the other side of Jill, closing the door behind him. She's sandwiched.

88 EXT. TRAILER - THAT MOMENT 88

Gregg stops and turns around for one last look at the trailer as it drives off.

Cecily exhales -- this love stuff is too hot to handle -- and follows Gregg.

88A EXT./INT. TRUCK/STREET - NIGHT 88A

Jill sits nervously between Strasser and Garth as the trailer leaves the gate of the conservancy.

STRASSER

Don't worry, Jill. Soon Joe will be back home again.

Jill looks straight ahead.

88B EXT. CONSERVANCY GROUNDS - NIGHT 88B

Gregg and Cecily walk back through the conservancy.

CECILY

(wry)

How many minutes do you give it before the whole world knows he's missing?

GREGG

Five. How many minutes do you give it before we're both lookin' through the want ads?

CECILY

Six.

They smile warmly at each other, respecting the sacrifice they've both just made.

(CONTINUED)

88B CONTINUED:

88B

Just then, Vern and Jack drive up in a Blazer. They stop next to Gregg and Cecily.

GREGG

What're you guys doing here so late?

Jack and Vern hop out of the car. Vern is carrying a cardboard box.

JACK

Baker wants the tent cleaned up A.S.A.P.

Vern holds out the box.

VERN

Check out the loot we plundered in the wake of mass party panic! This is some weird lost and found, man.

Vern pulls a single high-heeled shoe out of the box and hands it to Cecily.

JACK

Yeah, and we've got the fun job of getting this stuff back to everybody.

(pulls out a toupee)

Somebody's head is cold!

Digging in the box again, Vern innocently pulls out the poacher's dog collar. It means nothing to him, but Gregg instantly grabs for it.

GREGG

(alarmed)

Where did you find this?

VERN

Oh -- that was by the habitat.

(to Jack)

Guess we've got to find those two guys again.

GREGG

(urgent)

What two guys?

(CONTINUED)

88B CONTINUED: (2)

88B

JACK

That, uh...

(to Vern)

What do you think that one guy
is? Russian? Lithuanian?

It takes less than a second. Gregg springs into action, grabbing the keys to the Blazer out of Jack's hand. He sprints to the car. Jack and Vern watch him go.

CECILY

(calling after him)

Be careful!

They watch him go.

89 INT. CAB OF CONSERVANCY TRUCK - NIGHT

89

Jill glances nervously back as they drive down surface streets. She looks over at Strasser. In the passing light of the street lamps, he is regaining his sinister sheen.

Garth is driving the trailer very fast. They hit a bump, making them lurch in their seat. Jill hears JOE go THUD in the trailer.

JILL

Please! Be careful...

STRASSER

Always worrying, eh? Your mother was a worrier, too. Always worrying about the gorillas. It made her a lot of enemies. It led to tragedy.

His tone has something vaguely malevolent in it. It rankles Jill.

JILL

My mother was brave.

STRASSER

So are you, my dear.

Jill looks at Strasser sharply. For the first time, she really notices his strange, leather hand. For reasons she's not yet conscious of, it scares her.

Strasser notices that Jill is staring at his hand.

(CONTINUED)

STRASSER

It's not so pretty, I know.

JILL

(looking away)

I'm sorry.

(beat)

What happened?

Strasser and Garth exchange amused glances.

STRASSER

Well... you could say I had an encounter with a monster.

(in Roumanian)

Monstrule.

Strasser and Garth chuckle -- they think they're just sharing a private joke.

But Jill has a troubled look in her eyes -- the foreign epithet has struck a chord from long ago... she struggles to remember...

Then she gets it. She sees herself crouching in the forest with Joe over 12 years ago, overhearing Strasser's curses, and her blood runs cold. She glances at Strasser, everything dawning on her at once. The hand... the face... it all comes together for Jill.

Strasser catches the look on Jill's face and knows something is wrong. Adrenaline is pumping through her. Unsure of how to make her next move, Jill tries to hide the realization that is crashing down on her...

She glances in the side view mirror of the truck and sees:

Gregg, driving up behind them in the Conservancy vehicle. Jill's face reacts ever so slightly, but Strasser catches it. He follows her eye line, looking where she looked, and as he also spots Gregg, Jill knows the game is up. She loses it and screams:

JILL

Murdering bastard!

Jill slams her elbow into Strasser's nose. Strasser's face reflexively goes down in his hands. Stunned, Garth swerves at the wheel. Fast as lightning, Jill grabs his hair and slams his face into the dash.

Before the men can recover, Jill kicks and claws her way over Strasser's back, fighting toward the open window...

(CONTINUED)

- 89 CONTINUED: (2) 89
- She reaches through the window and grabs onto the side view mirror. The truck door swings open and Jill sails out the door, dangling from her hold on the side view.
- The speeding truck swerves wildly, banging Jill again and again against the door.
- Gregg sees her and is horrified at the danger. He speeds up, trying to reach her...
- Strasser grabs for Jill, trying to pull her back into the truck... she kicks at him and loses her grasp on the side view mirror.
- 90 EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT 90
- Jill falls, hitting the running board and bouncing hard onto the concrete roadway.
- Two CARS swerve and CRASH around her.
- 91 INT. TRAILER HOLD 91
- JOE'S POV
- THROUGH the slats in the trailer, Joe sees Jill almost being hit by the cars. He goes crazy, trying to get out, rocking the trailer back and forth...
- 91A EXT. STREET - THAT MOMENT 91A
- Jill lifts her head off the concrete and screams futilely after Joe:
- JILL
Joe! Get out!
- 91B INT. CAB OF CONSERVANCY TRUCK - THAT MOMENT 91B
- Strasser looks back at Jill lying on the road and slams the truck door closed.
- STRASSER
(to Garth)
Drive!
- Garth FLOORS it. The truck speeds away.

- 91C EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT 91C
- Gregg sees Jill up ahead and SLAMS on the BRAKES. He jumps out of his car and races to her side. He reaches her and scoops her away, narrowly saving her from being hit by another passing car.
- 91D EXT. STREET/INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS ACTION 91D
- The wheel flies through Garth's hand as he tries to control it. Strasser's face is covered in blood.
- The trailer rights itself. Continues on.
- 92 OMITTED 92
thru thru
95 95
- 96 EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS ACTION 96
- Gregg checks Jill over. She is bruised and bloody, but she doesn't seem to notice. She just stares after the trailer and moans...
- JILL
(to herself)
What have I done? Mother, oh,
God, what have I done...
(to Gregg)
Do you know who they are?
- GREGG
I know.
- Gregg half-carries her to the truck.
- GREGG
Come on. Let's go get him back.
- They see the trailer disappear around the corner...
- 97 INT. CONSERVANCY TRUCK - CAB - CONTINUOUS ACTION 97
- Garth tries desperately to steer the truck as the steering wheel burns through his hands.
- 98 EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - WIDER SHOT - NIGHT 98
- The picture postcard version. Lots of neon. Tourists.
Movie theaters flashing elaborate marquees.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

Gleaming Harleys parked in a row.

INTO FRAME -- trailer --

-- weaves wildly. It clips a car coming the other way and begins to skid sideways through traffic. It enters the intersection kicking off sparks, sending cars swerving away.

WIDEN as the truck jackknifes -- and -- skids to a stop -- the back at an acute angle to the cab. A second of eerie silence as --

Out of the stores and theaters, people run towards the accident. They encircle the truck. People press closer trying to get a look.

A loud GROWL stops them cold.

TILT UP -- top of trailer.

-- Joe's fist punches through. WIDEN as Joe tears away the top and pulls himself free -- climbing up atop the truck. Its effect on the crowd is like Pandora opening her box. They all surge backwards.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

JOE'S POV

Looking down at the horrified faces simply shouting at him. Confused by the blinding headlights and BLARING HORNS. People stampeded trying to get away -- some stumble on top of each other.

99 LOW ANGLE - CAB

99

Garth helps Strasser from the wreckage. Neither of them are that badly hurt.

STRASSER

Wait.

Strasser reaches back into the truck cab. Garth looks around, nervously.

GARTH

Police'll be here any minute.

Strasser pulls a leather case from the truck. Then he reaches back in for his hunter's hat-- and sets it firmly on his head. We haven't seen Strasser like this since twelve years earlier: the hunter is back.

The sound of SIRENS reaches their ears. Garth is nervous as hell.

GARTH

We better go.

Strasser has the thousand yard stare. Garth has to drag him away.

GARTH

Come on! We need to get out of here!

The two of them leave the site of the accident, just as...

100 EXT. STREET - THAT MOMENT

100

Joe drops down from the truck. People on the street run up, take his picture, and run away.

TOURIST

Hey! It's that gorilla that was on TV!

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

BACK TO JOE

FOLLOW Joe DOWN the boulevard, as he moves in a four-point walk through the intersection and along the boulevard.

Two women coming out of a shop see Joe and scream -- that frightens Joe and makes him bare his fangs. Which only makes matters worse. He feints a charge -- and one woman collapses.

JOE'S POV

It is indeed an urban jungle -- made up of neon and steel.

ANGLE

Joe walks down the street and bumps into:

PARKED MERCEDES

Whose ALARM GOES OFF immediately. Joe wheels and smashes the car until the sound STOPS.

CLOSE ON JOE

The lights and loud VOICES blend into one single tumult -- dangerous and threatening.

The sounds of SIRENS tell us the police are coming fast -- a block away we see two BLACK & WHITES SCREECH INTO VIEW.

THROUGH the crowd we see a street kid, RAY, 13, come face-to-face with Joe. His eyes go wide with the wonder of Joe.

RAY

Whoa... Hey, Joe!

It's as if he's seeing a completely different animal than everyone else around him. It's a look we've seen in young Jill's eyes.

Ray looks down the street at the approaching cop cars and back at Joe. He understands the danger.

Ray points the right way for Joe to go, away from the police cars. Joe watches Ray closely, as if he were studying the boy's face. Then he moves off in the direction Ray was pointing, towards:

101 EXT. MANN'S CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

101

Where patrons hang fearfully by the doors. Theatergoers rush back inside.

CLOSE ON IMPRINTS

for John Travolta and Donald Duck-- As an enormous gorilla foot descends on them. They split down the middle, then crumble into dust.

INSIDE TICKET KIOSK

A Mexican-American female ticket-taker hyperventilates, boxed in her tiny glass booth. From HER POV, Joe ducks down and stares at her, bringing his giant face close to the glass. She is speechless with fright. Joe moves on.

Now the sounds of POLICE SIRENS can be heard APPROACHING. FIND Joe -- boxed in by the movie theater. Angry. He starts searching for a way out...

ANGLE - STREET

Just then -- two LAPD cars pull up. COPS jump out. They spot Joe...

COP

Up there!

The Cop points up to...

102 EXT. TOP OF MANN'S CHINESE

102

Joe uses his powerful muscles to scale the theater. He makes it to the top -- high over Hollywood.

Behind him are hills and trees. Something familiar.

BACK ON COPS

They've got their guns aimed, but Joe disappears over the top of the theater.

CUT TO:

103 EXT. BOULEVARD - GREGG'S CAR

103

Gregg and Jill pull up to the overturned trailer, see the wreckage... but no sign of Joe. Stunned, they whirl around, hoping he'll still be somewhere in sight...

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

GREGG

He couldn't have gotten far.

Jill is overwhelmed with frustration. In seconds, she climbs on top of the overturned can and screams at the top of her lungs:

JILL

(screaming)

Joe! Joe!

Gregg sees a group of EXCITED NEIGHBORS run down the street towards Mann's Chinese screaming to each other:

EXCITED NEIGHBORS

This way!

Jill hops down and she and Gregg tear off down the street towards the gathered crowd at the Chinese Theater.

CUT TO:

104 EXT. HOLLYWOOD SIGN

104

The world famous icon -- starkly white against the hill.

105 EXT. HOLLYWOOD SIGN

105

PUSH IN CLOSE ON the "O." A shadow moves across the opening.

CLOSER

beat -- then Joe steps through. He's at the apex of the urban mountain range.

JOE'S POV - WEST

A beam of light is sweeping back and forth across the night sky.

JOE

PUSH IN CLOSE ON JOE -- he GROWLS as if he recognizes it. From this distance it looks like a flashlight beam. In Joe's mind it means only one thing -- Jill. He ROARS -- and moves off across the hill.

CUT TO:

106 EXT. CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

106

As Jill and Gregg run up, Cops are interviewing witnesses to Joe's flight. One CREW-CUT COP speaks into his walkie-talkie.

CREW-CUT COP
Orders are shoot to kill. He's
extremely dangerous.

Jill hears this and flips out. She almost attacks the Cop.

JILL
(screaming at Cop)
No! He's not dangerous! You're
dangerous! You're dangerous!

The Cop gives Jill a look that says she's two seconds away from handcuffs.

GREGG
(to Officer)
She didn't mean that.

Gregg drags Jill away before she gets arrested.

JILL
(shouting back
at Cop)
Yes I did.

GREGG
Better cool it, baby.

JILL
They're going to shoot him.

Gregg looks up over the facade of the theater to the hills beyond.

GREGG
Not if we find him first.

POLICE HELICOPTERS BUZZ by overhead.

GREGG
Let's follow them.

They run back towards their car.

107 EXT. ALLEY NEAR HOLLYWOOD BLVD.

107

Garth and Strasser watch as Jill and Gregg head off after Joe.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

Strasser opens the case he retrieved from the truck, starts assembling a hunting rifle. Garth looks at it in surprise.

GARTH

What are you doing? You don't think we can get the gorilla now, do you?

Strasser doesn't even bother to answer the question. He finishes loading his rifle.

STRASSER

We need a car. Now.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD - NIGHT

108

A RUBBERNECKER sits in his car, a Range Rover, gawking at the police all over Hollywood Blvd. Then a hunting rifle ENTERS FRAME, pressing right against his cheek.

The Rubbernecker doesn't even seem scared. He just shakes his head, annoyed.

RUBBERNECKER

Fifth goddamn time this year.

He grabs his soda from the cupholder, his garage door opener (Guy's been through this before) but before he can reach for his Thomas Guide...

Garth hauls him out of the car and throws him on the ground.

RUBBERNECKER

Hey! I was going! No need to be so pushy about it.

Strasser and Garth jump in the car and drive away.

CUT TO:

109 EXT. SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

109

Homes built into the dark green hills. FOLLOW a wooden fence -- a long wooden barrier that's been blown out of its mooring. A MAN in BOXER SHORTS runs out of his kitchen door. His wife behind him. Their DOG is WHINING at something from underneath their deck.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED: 109

POV SHOT - LOOKING THROUGH BACK YARD

The couple can see all the way down back. Every fence has been knocked over.

We TRACK THROUGH the back yards, PAST overturned lawn furniture and downed clotheslines. People stepping out of the doors -- confused.

BACK TO MAN

on cordless phone, surveying the damage.

BOXER SHORTS MAN
(into phone)
Is this L.A. County Animal
Control...? You're not gonna
believe this...

110 EXT. SEPULVEDA PASS - NIGHT 110

FIND Joe -- emerging from the thick growth. He can hear the NOISE like a rushing river O.S. He moves to the top of the crest.

JOE'S POV - SAN DIEGO FREEWAY - NIGHT

Where the hills are split by the river of light. Joe looks out over the freeway.

111 EXT. NIGHT-SCAPE 111

Joe can see the searchlights in the distance.

The rushing river of light is an image Joe can't quite assimilate. But somehow Joe knows he must cross this "thing" to get to the hills on the other side.

112 EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT 112

Joe steps into the first eight lanes of freeway traffic.

We hear some SCREECHING and SKIDDING as the first four drivers of the first four CARS in each northbound lane spot Joe and slam on the BRAKES.

Miraculously, nobody crashes. Bumpers remain uncrushed. Almost ceremoniously, the oncoming traffic comes to a respectful halt as Joe hesitantly lumbers past.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED: 112

It's almost like church. The freeway becomes quiet. Nobody honks. Nobody screams.

Overcome with awe, a woman steps out of her car and just stands there in the middle of the freeway, watching Joe pass. Others follow suit.

Joe climbs the center divider. The same thing happens in the southbound lane.

As Joe disappears up the hill on the other side, the stunned drivers simply stare in disbelief. L.A. is in awe.

113 OMITTED 113

114 INT. CONSERVANCY VEHICLE (FREEWAY OVERPASS) 114

Gregg and Jill arrive on the scene.

They look down from the overpass and see cops swarming around the area where Joe was, shining their flashlights into the brush and talking to motorists.

GREGG

Any idea where he might've headed?

ON JILL -- drifting off, as something O.S. catches her attention.

JILL

Look.

She points out THROUGH the windshield.

LONG SHOT - JILL'S POV - THROUGH WINDSHIELD

Shining over the horizon, coming from somewhere near the ocean, is a searchlight, piercing the night sky. The image is as familiar to Jill as it was to Joe.

BACK TO SCENE

JILL

That's where he'll go. He'll think that's me calling him.

Gregg steps on the accelerator. As their car pulls away, PAN TO Strasser and Garth following a few car lengths behind.

- 115 OMITTED 115
- 116 HELICOPTER SHOT - MOVING ACROSS BAY - NIGHT 116
- The moon-striped water surges and ebbs as we SKIM the waves, RUSHING TOWARDS --
- 117 EXT. PALISADES OCEAN PARK - NIGHT 117
- A festival of lights. Rides, arcades, lots of people.
- CLOSE ON SEARCHLIGHT
- A kettle light rotating on its base. CAMERA CRANES UP THROUGH the klieg beams REVEALING the park -- CONTINUE TO CRANE UP 'til we see, towering over everything, the new Ferris wheel -- a neon blur spinning grandly against the moon-bright sky.
- 118 EXT. PALISADES OCEAN PARK - VARIOUS SHOTS - NIGHT 118
- Quintessentially American images of beach-side amusement park. A carnival-like atmosphere.
- ANGLE - ARCHWAY ENTRANCE
- Some couples stop to take their photos, kissing under the iconic neon arch that welcomes people to the park.
- YOUNG COUPLE
- stops to share the view -- and a kiss. Until a LOUD GROWL makes them jump back.
- Joe has appeared under the arch. The young girl screams -- her boyfriend pulls her back.
- JOE'S POV
- It's like a slow-motion panic. The noise and tumult of the crowded park keeps people from hearing the screams right away.
- One toddler smiles and waves at Joe until his mother snatches him and runs for dear life.

(CONTINUED)

AT FERRIS WHEEL

A crowd of kids waits in line. One of them, a particularly appealing little boy named JASON, is having a conversation with his MOTHER. She has the aura of a single mom about her, and she clearly adores her sweet-faced kid.

JASON

Mom, I don't think I can let you go on the ferris wheel.

JASON'S MOTHER

Why not?

JASON

Because the last time after you ate two hot dogs, you threw up, remember?

JASON'S MOTHER

What if I promised to throw up over the side?

They both giggle at her joke.

JASON

Mom, I think I should do this ride by myself.

JASON'S MOTHER

(reluctant)

Okay... I'll watch you.

TILT UP TO the wheel turning majestically -- filled with kids. Some wave from the chairs as they crest -- it feels like they're flying over the ocean below.

We NOTICE two girls (JENNY, seven, and EMMA, nine) as they come over the top. On the way down, they can see the crowd parting below as Joe ENTERS FRAME.

At the base of the great wheel -- parents are finally hearing the commotion.

BY LIGHT

Joe arrives at his destination -- the bright light that drew him here. He's confused by the fact that Jill's nowhere to be found. Desperately, he scans the park...

People scream and panic around Joe. The noise drives him deeper into the park, searching for Jill. Meanwhile--

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED: (2)

118

AT ARCADE - BIG SAFARI BOOTH

Three college guys shoot replica AIR GUNS at cardboard lions and elephants, setting off fake explosions in a "Big Safari" booth.

JOE

feels threatened and recoils. Then he continues past them. The rush of people away from him gets more frenzied.

119 EXT. PARK ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

119

Jill and Gregg run under the archway. People rush past them. They fight their way through the crowd.

JILL

He's gotta be here. Do you see him?

Gregg and Jill scan the amusement park, looking for the source of all the commotion.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

120

Garth and Strasser have parked at the edge of the amusement park. Strasser has the rifle out and propped up on one knee. He uses the scope as a viewfinder.

STRASSER'S POV THROUGH SCOPE - JILL AND GREGG

running towards the carnival games.

BACK TO SCENE

Garth puts his hand on the barrel of the gun and pulls it away from Strasser's eye. He's so nervous he's almost chuckling.

GARTH

(very nervous)

Hold on, now-- just who are you aiming at?

Strasser looks at Garth with deadly focus. His eyes tell the story. Garth realizes his boss's intentions with horror.

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

GARTH

No. You can't do that.

STRASSER

If that girl starts telling people who we really are, our whole cover operation will be blown.

Strasser aims his rifle again.

GARTH

She's not an animal. That's a human being you're about to kill.

Strasser fixes Garth with an icy stare.

STRASSER

Go wait in the car.

He raises the gun again, gets the sight lined up just as Gregg and Jill pass near the klieg light. Garth grabs the gun, just as Strasser is about to pull the trigger.

CUT TO:

121 EXT. PARK - NIGHT

121

BLAM!

Strasser's SHOT, altered by Garth, hits the klieg light behind Jill and Gregg.

The LIGHT EXPLODES -- GLASS SHATTERS.

Gregg pulls Jill to the ground, as...

Sparks shoot out of the klieg light, a few of them hitting the ubiquitous sawdust and straw that buffers the floors of many rides.

It takes only one second before there is a flame that begins to spread in a SIZZLING POOL of OIL right at the base of the Ferris wheel.

ANGLE - IN BACK OF FERRIS WHEEL

The FLAME dances over an oil slick and engulfs several sacks of sawdust. It smolders -- then ERUPTS in a much larger conflagration.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

FIND one parent (Jenny and Emma's MOTHER) who is nervously waiting for her children near the bottom of the Ferris wheel. She hears the HISS of the FIRE and sees the shadows cast by the flames. She moves away from the other parents -- into --

POV SHOT

-- as she now sees the fire attacking the Ferris wheel.

JENNY'S MOTHER

Oh God...

The Ferris wheel operator sprays an industrial extinguisher on the flames. He crawls underneath the machine where the fire is worst.

CUT TO:

122 EXT. PARKING LOT

122

Strasser, extremely pissed off, turns to look at Garth.

STRASSER

That was very stupid, Garth.

GARTH

You're not a hunter, you're a murderer, and I won't be a part of this...

Strasser flips the gun and cracks Garth squarely in the head with the rifle butt.

Garth hits the ground like a bag of sand.

STRASSER

Anything else on your mind?

Strasser turns to look back at the park. He no longer has a clear shot at Jill. He realizes he's going to have to move in close.

From his jacket he takes a .45 caliber semi-automatic Match Master and a barrel extension which he screws on with great concentration using his gloved hand.

Strasser begins to work his way into the park.

CUT TO:

123 EXT. PARK - NIGHT

123

Jill and Gregg pick themselves up off the ground.

JILL

What was that?

Then they spot the fire, spreading to the Ferris wheel.
Gregg turns to Jill.

GREGG

Go find Joe, get him out of here.
(looking towards
the wheel)
I'm gonna see if I can help.

Gregg moves off towards the Ferris wheel.

JILL

heads over to the carnival games.

CUT TO:

124 EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS ACTION

124

Strasser, calm and totally committed to his course of action moves through the pandemonium of the crowd, gun by his side.

CUT TO:

AT FERRIS WHEEL

Parents are shouting, crowding the Ferris wheel. Two operators are unloading children as quickly as they can.

They look like they are about to be overwhelmed but then...

Gregg ENTERS FRAME. He vaults the guard rail, starts unloading children right from their moving cars.

There is utter chaos, children screaming, fire and smoke. CRANE UP PAST the terrified faces of the children who have to wait, 'til we GET TO Jenny and Emma. Jenny turns to see the fire beneath them.

(CONTINUED)

FIRE

is really starting to burn out of control now. It has spread to the engine of the FERRIS WHEEL, which, heated to the bursting point, suddenly EXPLODES.

The ride operator with the fire extinguisher is blown through the air, and the Ferris wheel lurches to a halt.

JENNY AND EMMA

grip their safety bar as their bucket swings back and forth. Emma nearly falls out -- until Jenny grabs her and holds her tight.

JENNY

Mo-om!!

JENNY'S MOTHER

Oh my God! Somebody help!

Gregg -- sees the girls, their bucket having come to a stop about fifteen feet off the ground. Thinking quickly, he jumps up on the guard railing, then leaps across to their bucket.

He just grabs onto the bottom. The bucket shakes back and forth violently, causing the two girls to scream. Gregg looks up at them.

GREGG

Don't be scared. Climb down my back.

The girls look at Gregg, too nervous to move.

GREGG

Come on.

Tentatively, Jenny and Emma climb out of their bucket and onto Gregg's back, using him like a human ladder. They shimmy down to his feet, then drop off, one by one, into the waiting arms of their mother.

Gregg lets go of the bucket, drops a good fifteen feet, landing roughly. The girls' mother looks down at Gregg, thankfully.

JENNY'S MOTHER

Thank you! Oh God, thank you!

Gregg, winded, just nods.

CUT TO:

125 EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - PARKING LOT - NIGHT 125

A phalanx of cop cars races up to the park.

126 EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NEAR CARNIVAL GAMES 126

Jill moves through the maze of carnival games. She spots Joe, moving through the small buildings, clearly disoriented. She yells out...

JILL

Joe! Joe!!

But above the tumult, he can't hear her. Jill pushes her way towards him, when she comes face to face with...

Strasser. Just yards away. He flashes his sickening smile, raises his gun...

ON JILL -- a look of terror crossing her face as she realizes she's about to die. Then, as a shadow passes over her, her expression of terror melts away.

ON STRASSER -- seeing Jill's expression, his smile fades. Why's she so calm all of a sudden? He doesn't even need to turn around to know that:

Joe is behind him. As Strasser turns slowly around, Joe reaches down swiftly and hoists Strasser off the ground. The GUN GOES OFF, barely missing Joe. JOE ROARS and crushes Strasser's left hand in his paw, a bone-crunching, slow squeeze that makes Strasser scream in agony.

Then Joe swings Strasser around and grabs him around the chest with his right paw. He pulls him close to his face and blasts a DEAFENING ROAR into his face. Joe cocks his arm and heaves Strasser with mighty force into the air.

Screaming, Strasser hurtles through space with incredible speed, CRASHING right through the flaming signage of the "Big Safari" booth, sending out a SHOWER OF SPARKS...

... and continues flying through the air until WHACK! He hangs up on a power line.

Strasser slips down, catching his fall with his fake hand. This section of the LINE is safe, but directly below it is a cluster of electrical junction boxes. Cracked and blistered by the heat of the nearby fire, they are sparking dangerously-- to fall on to them would mean certain electrocution.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

Strasser's bad hand begins to slip from the wire. Desperate, he reaches up with his left hand to grab on-- only to remember that this hand has just been crushed by Joe, and is useless to him now.

Strasser helplessly watches as his prosthetic comes unclasped from his hand and he slips the last, fatal fraction of an inch.

Strasser falls onto the junction boxes, which explode in a shower of sparks. Strasser sizzles and dies, while above him, the prosthesis still swings on the wire.

127 EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS ACTION

127

Jill stands where she is, frozen at the horrible sight of what has just happened. A dozen people scream and recoil.

A swarm of policemen, led by Commander Gorman, watch Joe's violent action in stunned silence. Gorman motions to his men.

COMMANDER GORMAN

Get the marksmen up here! Now!

Jill knows what's coming. Convincing Gorman is hopeless. She runs to Joe. Fearing for his life, she calls for him to follow her deeper into the park.

JILL

Come on, Joe. Come on.

FERRIS WHEEL

Gregg is catching his breath on the ground near the Ferris wheel.

Jill runs up to him, Joe close behind.

JILL

(breathlessly)

Joe got Strasser. He was trying to kill me.

GREGG

I know. I just hope they do.

He motions to the cops, who have set up at the park's edge.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

CLOSE ON JOE

He's not looking at the cops. He's focused on the Ferris wheel. The fire is burning near the metal supports that hold it upright. With each passing minute, the wheel's moorings are getting looser.

PAN UP TO a bucket at the very top of the wheel. Two small hands hold on for dear life. He starts moving towards it.

JILL

Joe?

In the next instant, Joe has started running for the wheel.

JILL

Joe!

COPS

are getting into firing squad position. A SHARPSHOOTER follows Joe through his scope.

SHARPSHOOTER

(to fellow cop)

Talk about an easy target.

SHARPSHOOTER'S POV

He's got Joe right in his crosshairs, when...

GREGG (O.S.)

Stop!

Gregg and Jill run into the crosshairs, waving their arms.

GREGG

Don't shoot him.

Commander Gorman comes forward, yelling at Gregg.

COMMANDER GORMAN

(to Gregg)

Get out of the way. Get back.

(to cops)

Ready...

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED: (2)

127

JILL
 Stop! He's not dangerous,
 please...

The Commander is furious at these two civilians keeping him from his job. He barks orders to two cops:

COMMANDER GORMAN
 (to two cops)
 Get them out of here! Now!

The cops are about to move on Gregg and Jill when Jason's Mother, panic-stricken, runs up to Gorman.

JASON'S MOTHER
 Officer, help! I can't find my
 son! I think he's still on the
 Ferris wheel.

JILL
 Look!

Everyone turns to look at the Ferris wheel...

SHARPSHOOTER

follows Joe's ascent through his viewfinder.

HIS POV - TOP OF FERRIS WHEEL

A frightened six-year-old boy pops his head up from a bucket. Everyone is stunned as they see this lone child -- trapped at the top.

JASON'S MOTHER
 (in agony)
 Oh my God! Jason!

PAN DOWN to reveal -- Joe is heading straight for Jason. Massive muscles pulling him up higher, towards the endangered boy.

ON GORMAN

ready to shoot Joe.

Jill turns to Jason's Mother, quietly pleading.

JILL
 He'll save your boy.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED: (3)

127

Jason's Mother looks at Jill, panicking. She swallows hard and turns to Gorman.

JASON'S MOTHER

Don't shoot.

(beat)

Let him try.

Gorman looks at Jason's Mother, then at Joe. Then at the boy at the top of the Ferris wheel. He motions to his men.

GORMAN

Hold your fire.

128 EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NEAR TOP

128

Joe climbing with all his strength, comes to the top of the Ferris wheel.

ON JASON -- staring, wide-eyed, at this miraculous animal. He watches, in awe, as Joe extends a massive hand and lifts him out of his seat.

ON GROUND

All eyes watch, in awe, as Joe presses Jason to his massive chest.

ON JILL -- smiling through tears. Gregg puts an arm around her.

BEHIND THEM

Camera crews from local TV news stations have poured into the park. They film all of this.

AT BASE OF WHEEL

The wood attached to the metal supports has completely burned through. With a terrible CRACKING sound, the SUPPORTS begin to tear away.

Another EXPLOSION rocks the WHEEL. It SHUDDERS.

JASON'S MOTHER

Oh, please, no...

WIDEN SHOT -- The Ferris wheel begins to tip over.

ON JILL -- a look of horror passes over her face as well.

GREGG

It's going to tip! Everyone back up!

Everyone starts backing away from the wheel.

The wheel seems to fall slowly -- like in a dream -- sending debris and flames spilling across the park.

ON JOE

As he cradles Jason tight in his arms.

The wheel begins to fall towards the ground.

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

Joe jumps away from the burning wheel --

POV SHOT

As the ground comes rushing up at him.

JOE

hits hard, just clearing the falling wheel by inches. He doesn't move.

PAN the crowd -- an eerie silence falls over everyone. The only sound the CRACKLING of the FIRE.

JILL

breaks free from Gregg and runs toward Joe. Jason's Mother races with her.

ON JOE

Motionless on his back. Still cupping the boy, nestled and protected against his massive chest. A beat -- then Jason looks up from Joe --

JASON

Mom?

Jason's Mother bursts into joyous sobs as her son climbs into her arms. A general sense of relief passes through the crowd, except for...

JILL

She kneels by Joe stroking his great chest. Joe doesn't respond. Jill bows her head and cries deeply.

People back away to give her room. How strange to see this huge, powerful animal stilled.

Gregg comes and kneels by Joe's side. He checks for a heart beat. For wounds. Joe doesn't stir. Gregg is devastated, too.

PAN CROWD...

Firemen, paramedics and television reporters run through the park. The paramedics lead off the wounded.

(CONTINUED)

Still holding her boy, Jason's Mother comes forward. She recognizes what Jill is going through her own version of mother's grief. She approaches respectfully...

JASON'S MOTHER

I'm so sorry...

Jill is beyond comfort. She's in another world. Humming their lullaby, she rests her soft cheek in Joe's giant paw for the last time. Her blonde hair spills on his fingers...

And then, SLOWLY ENTERING FRAME, a giant finger reaches for Jill's cheek and strokes it gently...

It takes Jill a moment to realize she hasn't imagined this... she opens her eyes, sees the moving fingers, turns to look into Joe's face, just as his eyes open...

Elated, Jill moves up to Joe's head and kisses his face a thousand times. Gregg takes a deep breath, privately thanking God. Jason's Mother is tearful-- Jason is all smiles.

Jill tearfully blathers soothing words...

JILL

(kissing Joe's
head)

That's right, Joe-- that's right, big guy. That was a big fall but you're okay, aren't you? You're tough. You're so tough. Yes you are. Yes you are.

GREGG

(checking Joe over)

We've got to get him checked out.

(looking around
at crowd)

And get him somewhere safe.

Jill looks at Gregg with a heavy heart.

JILL

(bitter/rhetorical)

Somewhere safe? Where is that?

Jason's Mother breaks in timidly.

(CONTINUED)

JASON'S MOTHER

(stammering)

Perhaps... I mean, maybe...
isn't there anything we can do?

Jason pushes in front of his mother. He reaches out his little hand and pets Joe. He looks up at Jill and Gregg with a shining face and smiles hopefully.

(ALTERNATE END OF SCENE)

Jill shakes her head at the mother and continues to pet Joe softly.

JILL

(kindly)

No. I don't think so. Not unless
you have a few million dollars on
you to buy him a home somewhere.

Jason's mother nods hopelessly, comprehending the difficulty of the situation. But Jason has also heard Jill's words. He pushes in front of his mother, reaches into his pocket and pulls out a crumpled dollar bill. He hands it to Jill and Gregg with a shining face and smiles hopefully.

JASON

Here. For Joe.

Gregg and Jill are moved by the gesture. Gregg respectfully takes the dollar from the little boy while everyone looks on.

GREGG

Thanks.

Gorman and his men exchange glances, also touched by the little boy's deed. Now Gorman reaches into his pocket and pulls out a ten. He comes forward and hands it to Gregg.

GORMAN

For Joe.

Now the other cops are reaching into their pockets. They come forward with dollars in their hands.

COPS

Here. For Joe.

Gregg's hands and pockets are being stuffed with money as dozens of people begin to come forward with whatever they can afford. Gregg looks at Jill, overwhelmed by what's happening, and her face echoes his emotions...

CUT TO:

- 129 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY 129
- Jason walks up and down the aisle collecting pennies. He holds a collection can that reads, simply, "Joe."
- CUT TO:
- 130 EXT. NEW YORK SUBWAY - DAY 130
- Busy commuters rush through turnstiles -- but stop long enough to throw money into a big Joe bucket manned by a guy wearing a gorilla suit.
- CUT TO:
- 131 OMITTED 131
- 132 EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - DAY 132
- We see Ray and his street-tough buddies collecting money for Joe.
- CUT TO:
- 132A EXT. KWELI'S VILLAGE - DAY 132A
- Kweli walks through the outdoor bar, collecting money for Joe from a half dozen villagers.
- A hand, holding a few crumpled bills, taps him on the back.
- Kweli turns around and comes face to face with Pindi. Pindi stuffs the money in Kweli's can and grins.
- PINDI
For Mighty Joe, bro.
- 133 INT. POST OFFICE - PILE OF MAIL - DAY 133
- Dumped on the ground of the post office. PULL BACK as four more bags are dumped.
- PUSH IN CLOSE ON one envelope -- with an obviously foreign stamp simply addressed:
- "Joe Young, America."
- DISSOLVE TO:

134 INT. M.J.Y. WILDLIFE PRESERVE - DAY

134

The blue sky above Africa. CRANE DOWN to see:

An entry gate with the words "Joe Young Wildlife Park" printed across the top.

Beneath the gate: Kweli, standing with Jill and Gregg, is blowing a ceremonial horn, sending an ancient blessing into the air. As he finishes, we hear applause.

PULL BACK to reveal 35 people -- locals, villagers, friends -- applauding the opening of the park.

Voiceover begins:

JILL (V.O.)

Dear Cecily: I promised to write you when Joe was settled and now I finally can. We finally dedicated the Joe Young Wildlife Park last week and it was one of the happiest days of my life. At last I have kept my promise to my mother.

Under the gate, Jill jumps joyously on Gregg, and he whirls her around in a tight embrace.

JILL (V.O.)

Joe seems so happy here. I know he feels that he's safe.

Gregg looks O.S. and waves.

GREGG

Hey, Joe -- come on, big guy...

Joe comes walking INTO FRAME. Gregg smiles at Jill, very pleased with himself that Joe responds to him now, too.

JILL (V.O.)

He and Gregg have become good friends. They even play together. And that jealous rivalry they had? It's all gone.

Joe swats Gregg to the ground and takes his place next to Jill.

JILL (V.O.)

Well... almost all gone.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

Not completely amused, Gregg picks himself up and raises a warning finger at Joe. Joe looks over at him, and purses his lips at Gregg, as if laughing at his own rough play.

Joe turns and walks away up the hillside. Jill helps Gregg up. He puts his arm around her and kisses her hair. They watch Joe go.

JILL (V.O.)

It's been a long journey getting to this place, but Joe is finally home. I think we all are.

CAMERA PULLS BACK over the crowd of villagers who have begun singing a powerful African hymn.

As the sound of their singing rises into the mountain sky, we --

CUT TO:

AERIAL SHOT

TRACKING WITH Joe, who begins to run now, limbs outstretched with energy and joy, claiming his freedom.

The CAMERA RISES OFF of Joe to the verdant African landscape beyond. Joe's home -- protected and free.

FADE OUT.

THE END