

Pandamonium

As rival news stations clamour to announce the birth of a new arrival at the zoo, one intrepid reporter gets more than he bargains for whilst attempting to get the inside scoop.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

An overly-enthusiastic TV presenter, DEREK, smiles cheesily into a camera lens.

DEREK

There's a palpable tension in the air as the world's media eagerly awaits news of the new arrival... After years of trying - could today be the day that Chi Chi the Giant Panda finally gives birth?

Next to Derek stands JANICE, equally effusive. Behind her, just in view, the prison-like bars of a panda enclosure.

JANICE

The zoo is enormously proud to be just hours away from successfully breeding pandas in captivity, and there's a palpable tension in the air as we eagerly await....

DEREK (O.C.)

Er, is there an echo around here?

PRODUCER (O.C.)

Cut!!

JANICE

Do you mind? I'm doing a report.

DEREK

Stealing all my best lines!

JANICE

Derek, it's a pregnant panda. There are no best lines.

DEREK

If you'd rather go report something more important, please be my guest.

JANICE

Nuh uh! Just knowing how badly you want this scoop makes all the boredom worthwhile.

She looks at the panda enclosure.

JANICE

Poor sod. Bet she wants some peace.

DEREK

Seriously, you should leave. This one's mine.

JANICE

Unless you're going to play midwife we'll all get the same scoop Derek. Now get out of my shot.

DEREK

That's what you think...

INT. PANDA ENCLOSURE - SAME

A large enclosure, in which sit two bored-looking pandas - heavily pregnant CHI CHI knits a pair of booties; her mate, YLANG YLANG slouches in his underpants, idly chewing a piece of bamboo. CHI CHI throws down her knitting needles restlessly and peers out the barred windows at the camera crews - waving, calling - and sighs heavily.

CHI CHI

You'd think we were an endangered species or something.

She waddles back to her pile of straw and picks up a book entitled 'Bumper book of best baby names'.

CHI CHI

Whenever you're ready, kiddo.

The door to their enclosure creaks open. Derek, dressed in a Zoo Keeper's uniform, creeps into the room, clutching a box. He sidles across the enclosure and climbs on to a crate. He takes an object out of the box and places it on the top of a wooden rafter. He fiddles for a minute, climbs back down and retreats out of the door. Chi Chi looks up to where he was. Amongst the rafters, a small red dot beams in her direction.

EXT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Derek peers into a small screen. In a hazy grey monotone, Chi Chi sits on her straw, staring directly at the camera. He fiddles with a small remote control. The image on the screen blurs, then gradually Chi Chi comes back into frame.

DEREK

You beauty. My prize-winning scoop.

INT. ENCLOSURE - NIGHT

Chi Chi paces up and down the enclosure, fuming.

CHI CHI

The arrogance! Such an invasion of
privacy! I'm about to give birth!

YLANG YLANG

Calm down Chi. Just move out of
shot when the time comes.

CHI CHI

It follows me! Look!

As she paces, the blinking red light follows.

CHI CHI

Why can't they just leave us alone?
The endless speculation about our
sex life was bad enough...

A Mountain Bluebird - LARRY - flies in.

CHI CHI

Oh great, now Twitter's arrived.

LARRY

Evening fuzzballs! Chi, I do wish
you'd hurry up, the other animals
are getting most impatient.

CHI CHI

Oh, why didn't you say? I would
have had my baby weeks ago if I'd
known I was putting anyone out.

Larry flutters onto her shoulder and pulls out a phone.

LARRY

Final predictions then. Weight 'n'
date. Hair colour. Distinguishing
features.

CHI CHI

Two black eyes. Much like you if
you don't clear off.

LARRY

Temper! What's got into you?

CHI CHI

A journalist just came in and
installed a camera in the rafters
so he can report the news first.

LARRY

What! How rude. Everyone knows I
get the scoops round here. Don't
worry, I'll keep him out of action.

Chi chi suddenly bends double.

CHI CHI

It's coming!!

Ylang ylang looks at his watch.

YLANG YLANG

Larry, put me down for a fiver! I'm
gonna say 5am.

CHI CHI

Ooh ow!

YLANG YLANG

Maybe earlier!

Chi Chi crawls to her bed. The little red light follows.

CHI CHI

Larry! I'll personally match all
the bets you've taken if you get
rid of that camera!

Larry looks at his spreadsheet and gives a low whistle. He
puts on his best determined face and dives to the rafters.

EXT. ZOO - SAME

Hearing Chi Chi growl, the reporters jump into action.

JANICE

Here goes! Come on Chi Chi!

Everyone jostles for position - everyone except Derek, who
sits hunched to one side, head inside his coat. His screen
shows Chi Chi panting and breathless. Suddenly - black. The
smirking face of a little blue bird. Then - his backside.

DEREK

What the...?! Get out of it! Scoot!

He yanks the remote control levers back and forth and looks back at the screen. Splat! Something white, green and sticky - smearing the whole lens.

DEREK
You little sh...!

INT. ENCLOSURE - DAY

CHI CHI
...Shintu. Let's call him Shintu.

Exhausted but content, she cradles a tiny bundle of black and white fluff. Ylang ylang puffs on a cigar.

CHI CHI
Thank you Larry. I owe you.

LARRY
You certainly do! We'll settle up later. I'm off to spread the news.

He flies out of the enclosure.

EXT. ZOO - SAME

Derek sits grumpily on a tree stump. The reporters look fed up. Janice dejectedly scrolls through her phone. She stops.

JANICE
Who's Larry the Mountain Bluebird?

DEREK
Dunno. Who cares?

JANICE
"Breaking news. Delighted to announce Chi Chi the panda gave birth to baby Shintu at 2.30 this morning. 150 grams. Mum and baby doing well. Hashtag Go pandas."

DEREK
How is that on Twitter already?!

He jumps up, ready to speak into camera. Larry flies past and, with precision timing, delivers a well aimed poo - right on Derek's head. Chi chi grins from within the confines of her cage and holds baby Shintu up to the bars in time for Janice to take the perfect shot.