

Public TV Episode 3: Birdland

By

Anthony Wood

Writer's Guild #1666897

[tony@smokingmonkey.net](mailto:tony@smokingmonkey.net)

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. TV MONITOR

On screen we see the host of the TV show *Peace/Calm/Yoga* BEATRICE HITCHCOCK. She is a thin, sedate woman in her mid-fifties with a tight bun of gray hair and an orange leotard. She kneels on a yoga mat on a slightly elevated, carpeted stage. Surrounding her are images of birds, eyes and massage hands; set pieces that hang from the studio ceiling.

She speaks to camera.

BEATRICE

And after the Prana Yama we must  
bounce our legs. Bounce them. Relax  
and calm and bounce.

She sits with her legs straight out in front of her,  
bouncing her thighs on the mat.

BEATRICE

Now we are going to move on to the  
Dwi Pada Sirsasana. Remember, this  
will improve the hemoglobins in our  
bloodstream. For our viewers with  
anemia, this is so very helpful.  
So, heels up over head.

She puts her heels up and over behind her head. She faces  
the camera in her pretzled position.

BEATRICE

And remember to breathe. Breathing  
is so very important.

We hear the voice of CLAUDIA WYNN off camera.

CLAUDIA

Okay, hold...

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

We are in the studio. Claudia, wearing a headset and carrying a clipboard, enters the frame.

CLAUDIA

Beatrice, we just have to stop and reset camera two for the close. Can you hold that position for a sec?

BEATRICE

(Calmly.)

Of course, dear.

CLAUDIA

All right guys, let's reset two for host close.

The cameras move into position. Standing in the midst of the movement, eating a doughnut, is a FAT TECHNICIAN. He wears thick glasses, a flannel shirt and work pants. His hair is a thin, greasy comb-over. He stands in front of Beatrice, staring at her with her legs up over her ears. He is transfixed.

Claudia approaches him and notices an enormous bulge in his pants.

CLAUDIA

(Disgusted.)

Oh my freaking Christ. What kind of sick degenerate bastard stands there and does something like that?!

The Fat Technician turns to her. He looks down, then pulls a king-sized *Snickers* bar from his pants pocket. Hence the bulge. He looks down at her.

FAT TECHNICIAN

(Equally disgusted.)

Nice...

He walks away, insulted.

CLAUDIA

(Embarrassed.)

No..I didn't..I mean--Okay, whatever.

The cameras are reset.

CLAUDIA  
 (Directing.)  
 All right, rolling on close in  
 three, two...

She signals to Beatrice.

BEATRICE  
 (To camera.)  
 That's all the time we have  
 for *Peace/Calm/Yoga* today,  
 gentle viewers. And always  
 remember; "Life is love. Love  
 is life. And living life is  
 the love of a life worth  
 living...love." Shakti,  
 shakti, shakti.

The image fades to black on the monitor.

CLAUDIA  
 ...and out. Thank you, Beatrice.  
 Great job, everyone.

The camera crew disperses and the studio work lights come  
 on.

Claudia, rubbing her neck, approaches Beatrice.

CLAUDIA  
 Thanks for holding for me,  
 Beatrice. Hope it wasn't a bother.

Beatrice straightens and stands.

BEATRICE  
 Oh not at all, dear. I sometimes  
 have my heels up over my ears all  
 night long.

CLAUDIA  
 (Jokingly.)  
 Whoa, got his number?

BEATRICE  
 (Confused.)  
 What?

CLAUDIA  
 Nothing.

Beatrice notices Claudia rubbing her sore neck.

BEATRICE  
Is something wrong, dear?

CLAUDIA  
Oh, no, I just...slept on it funny  
last night. New pillow, you know.

Beatrice reaches up for Claudia's neck.

BEATRICE  
Better let me have a look.

CLAUDIA  
Oh, no...

BEATRICE  
Trust me, dear. I lived on a  
commune for a year and a half with  
a Champi massage therapist from  
Nepal.

CLAUDIA  
(Happily conceding.)  
Oh, well then, sure.

Beatrice feels around on Claudia's shoulder and neck.  
Claudia winces, but smiles, as she does.

BEATRICE  
You see, what happens is that your  
Trapezius can become conflicted  
with your Scalenus Medius and your  
Sternocleidomastoideus.

CLAUDIA  
(confused.)  
Well sure, that makes sense.

BEATRICE  
Do you have excessive amounts of  
red meat in your diet?

CLAUDIA  
I did have a braised pork chop last  
ni--

Beatrice twists hard on Claudia's neck, while  
counter-twisting on her shoulder. Claudia screams.

CLAUDIA  
HAAAAA!!!! Waaaa...ahhhh...

BEATRICE  
 (Smiling.)  
 Is that better?

CLAUDIA  
 (Hiding her agony.)  
 Oh...oh...whoa...whoa...

She smiles weakly and shakes her finger in the air like an old flapper dancer.

CLAUDIA  
 (In pain.)  
 Vo-do-do-dee-o-do....you know...the  
 old...cartoons. I gotta go...But,  
 thanks, Beatrice.

BEATRICE  
 Always glad to help.

Claudia exits the studio, mumbling in extreme pain.

CLAUDIA  
 Oh God...Oh my God...Oh sweet  
 lord...

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDITS

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICES - THAT DAY

Claudia sits at a cubicle desk in front of a computer. Her head is tilted upwards because of the spasm in her neck, which makes it hard for her to look at the screen as she types. TOM BIRCH approaches her. He leans over the cubicle wall.

TOM  
 Hey, what's up?

CLAUDIA  
 (Wincing.)  
 What do you want?

Tom watches her as she types. He follows her twisted gaze up towards the ceiling.

TOM  
Lose something?

CLAUDIA  
I have a stiff neck, that's all.

TOM  
(Grinning.)  
...and you had Beatrice take a look  
at it?

CLAUDIA  
Why do you say that?

TOM  
Nothing.

CLAUDIA  
She happens to be very qualified.

TOM  
(smiling.)  
Oh, I'm sure.

CLAUDIA  
What do you want?

TOM  
I was wondering if you could floor  
direct the *Pets Are People, Too*  
taping tomorrow? Lenny's home sick  
and I have to be in the booth.

CLAUDIA  
Why should I?

TOM  
You'll have my undying love and  
respect.

CLAUDIA  
(Making a raspberry noise.)  
Pppppbt!

TOM  
And a bottle of Ibuprofen.

CLAUDIA  
Fine. Just leave me alone.

LYDIA COOPER approaches, Tootsie Pop in hand.

LYDIA  
 (Peeved.)  
 What are you doing at my computer?

CLAUDIA  
 Hey--I just...I don't have one--

LYDIA  
 That's not my problem.

CLAUDIA  
 Because HE took it!

TOM  
 (Leaving.)  
 Thank you.

LYDIA  
 I don't want strange people's  
 greasy prints on my keyboard.

CLAUDIA  
 Just one more minute...

LYDIA  
 I don't know what kind of diseases  
 you got. Shoo...Shoo!

Claudia reluctantly leaves Lydia's computer and heads to  
 Denny's office.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S OFFICE

DENNY sits at his desk. He has a small bottle of baby powder  
 that he is carefully squeezing down the front of his pants.

His office is truly a shrine to old Victorian design. His  
 Victrola plays a scratchy old recording of Eubie Blake's  
*Memories of You*.

CLAUDIA  
 Denny, can we talk?

Surprised, Denny quickly opens his top desk drawer and  
 deposits the bottle of baby powder. He buttons his pants. He  
 looks up at her, then follows her eyes to the ceiling.

DENNY  
 Yes...Claudia, what's the scuttle  
 butt?



CLAUDIA  
I really need that replacement  
computer, Denny. It's been over a  
week now.

DENNY  
Has it?

He reaches over to the mass of notes taped on the wall over  
his desk. About three layers in he pulls out one of the  
notes.

DENNY  
Oh, sure, here it is. We'll get  
right on that.

CLAUDIA  
Promise?

DENNY  
Righty-o.

CLAUDIA  
Because I really, really need it.

DENNY  
Done and done.

CLAUDIA  
Thank you, Denny.

She exits. He puts the note back into the layers of paper  
and tape on the wall. He looks back up at the ceiling,  
transfixed.

CUT TO:

INT TV STATION BREAK ROOM - THAT DAY

Claudia sits in the break room at a table, nursing her sore  
neck. She chews carefully on a carrot she's taken from a  
small plastic bag in front of her. Each bite is agony.

Behind her stand two CHUBBY TECHNICIANS. They speak in low,  
hushed tones.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #1  
Know what's the best? Take a jelly  
doughnut, suck out the filling, put  
in peanut butter cups and stick it  
in the microwave for about fifteen  
seconds. Just till they get soft.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #2  
 (Overcome.)  
 That sounds awesome.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #1  
 It is.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #2  
 I think they got jellies over by  
 Master Control.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #1  
 What are we waiting for?

They exit.

From out of the break room cabinet emerges MICKEY ROONEY. He  
 sits quietly next to Claudia.

CLAUDIA  
 (Without looking at him.)  
 Hello, Mickey.

MICKEY ROONEY  
 Hi, Claudia.

He follows her pained gaze up to the ceiling. There is a  
 long pause.

MICKEY ROONEY  
 What are we looking for?

CLAUDIA  
 Nothing, my neck is just...forget  
 it.

She sighs, heavily.

MICKEY ROONEY  
 Rough day, huh?

CLAUDIA  
 Day...week...month.

MICKEY ROONEY  
 I remember when I was shooting  
*Babes in Arms* with Judy Garland.  
 1939. Judy was having a terrible  
 week. We were on overtime.  
 Fourteen, fifteen hour days. I  
 remember she had to rehearse the  
*Copa Cabana* number for sixty-two  
 consecutive takes. She was

(MORE)

MICKEY ROONEY  
 exhausted. I thought she was gonna  
 collapse like a pile of dried twigs  
 right then and there. But she said  
 something to me, something so deep  
 and so inspirational, that I'll  
 never forget it as long as I live.

CLAUDIA  
 What did she say?

MICKEY ROONEY  
 (yelling.)  
 "Who the fuck took my Seconal?! The  
 next mother-fucker to steal from my  
 dressing room, I will personally  
 rip open their jaws and shit  
 drunk-sweat diarrhea down their  
 miserable throats!"

There is a pause.

CLAUDIA  
 Thank you for that, Mick.

MICKEY ROONEY  
 Any time, sweetheart.

A pause. He points to the carrot bag.

MICKEY ROONEY  
 Are you gonna finish--?

CLAUDIA  
 No, go ahead.

He scurries back into the cabinet with the carrots as  
 Beatrice enters the break room. She sits next to Claudia.

BEATRICE  
 Oh Claudia. I heard you weren't  
 taking so well to my adjustment.

CLAUDIA  
 Oh, no, it's fine. Really.

BEATRICE  
 Sometimes, when the body isn't  
 ready, any small muscle  
 manipulation can lead to a  
 misalignment in the chakras.

CLAUDIA  
 (Confused.)  
 Uh-huh?

BEATRICE  
 The centers of our body that  
 control energy flow.

CLAUDIA  
 No. Yes, of course. Chakras.

Beatrice holds up a strange, roughly knitted piece of garment made of a brown, course fabric with large knots throughout. It has buckles and other straps hanging from it.

BEATRICE  
 This is a hemp Pazutra. A chakra alignment harness.

CLAUDIA  
 Oh...

BEATRICE  
 I made it myself, based of the ancient designs of Rhamdi Malhatra Numbi. A spirit healer from Burma...which is now known as Myanmar.

CLAUDIA  
 (Warily.)  
 So I strap this on...

BEATRICE  
 And all of your energies become aligned.

CLAUDIA  
 Uh-huh...

BEATRICE  
 It's made of hemp.

CLAUDIA  
 (Joking.)  
 So if it doesn't work I can just smoke it, right?

BEATRICE  
 (Unamused.)  
 That is a harsh fallacy put forth by the oppressive, corporate anti-hemp conspiracy.

CLAUDIA

No, it was a joke, so--

BEATRICE

Hemp is a wonderful, versatile material that, if adopted by close-minded Western society, could revolutionize our way of life and bring peace and economic stability to the world.

CLAUDIA

No doubt.

Beatrice places her hand on Claudia's and smiles.

BEATRICE

Just wear it for twenty four hours and all your energies will be aligned.

She stands to leave.

BEATRICE

And do try to be more open minded.

She exits.

CLAUDIA

(Calling after her.)

No, I'm very open mi--Ah fuck it.

She looks at the harness, trying to figure out how it works.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STATION.

The camera weaves it's way down the station hallway. We track past STAN FRITZEL, who pulls more wiring and cables from a wall electrical panel.

We move past two men doing hillbilly "Eefin", the act of rhythmically slapping your thighs and chanting and gulping in a weird, southern drawl.

We go past the break room where the two Chubby Technicians are huddled by the active microwave. They wait hungrily.

From out of the production office steps Claudia. Her posture looks strange. She seems a bit bent sideways as she saunters down the hall. Tom Birch sidles up next to her.

TOM

(Doing his best Walter  
Brennan.)

Well hey there, Gabby. When we  
goin' pannin' fer gold?

CLAUDIA

Up yours.

TOM

Slip a disk?

CLAUDIA

I'm aligning my chakras.

TOM

(can't get enough.)

Really...

CLAUDIA

Yes, my...Trampolinus muscles got  
all hinky with my  
Onomotopia...potus, so now I need  
to align my energy centers.

TOM

(Chuckling.)

God, she's really got you drinking  
the Kool-Aid.

CLAUDIA

What do you want?

TOM

I need you to get over to Set  
Design. Jimmy was supposed to have  
the animal set out by four.  
Nothing's up and we tape at 9 sharp  
tomorrow morning.

CLAUDIA

Got it.

TOM

Tell him the show's theme is birds.  
Big birds. Big birds means big  
seeds, means big poops. We'll need  
extra floor plastic.

CLAUDIA

Poop sheets, got it.

She strolls away from him. He stoops over, similar to her  
posture.

TOM  
 (Calling after her.)  
 "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!"

CLAUDIA  
 (Mock laughing.)  
 Ha, oh that's so funny...asshole.

CUT TO:

INT. SET DESIGN STUDIO.

Claudia enters, still bent, into the set design studio. It is dark.

Standing at the far end of the studio is JIMMY HANKEY. He is lit by dozens of candles sitting on chairs, wood blocks and on the floor. He is shirtless and covered in paint. He wears too-short shorts and sandals. He holds a brush in his hand as he stares at a tall, wide set piece that is spattered in paint.

CLAUDIA  
 Hello? Jimmy? Knock-knock.

Jimmy still stares, not moving.

JIMMY  
 Come on in.

Claudia warily enters the inner sanctum.

CLAUDIA  
 (Warily.)  
 Jimmy...we need to talk about getting the Pet set up for tomorrow.

JIMMY  
 (Turning to her, slowly.)  
 Claudia.

CLAUDIA  
 Jimmy.

JIMMY  
 Hey, can I talk to you for a second? You know, like girl chat?

CLAUDIA  
 Well, I really got to get over to the, uh--

He pulls over a wood block for her to sit on.

CLAUDIA  
Yeah, okay, sure.

He continues to stand, staring at the spattered set wall.

JIMMY  
Okay, this is gonna seem a little personal, but...I don't think I have anyone else to talk to. You know, I started working here twelve years ago.

CLAUDIA  
Uh-huh.

JIMMY  
And back then I was happy, and young, and energized and just...really, really gay.

CLAUDIA  
Oh...

JIMMY  
I mean I loved it all; giving cone, doing a brace job, giving some whaps...

CLAUDIA  
(Uncomfortably.)  
Sure, uh-huh.

JIMMY  
Butt diddle, punch the starfish, do some red eye, dance the chocolate cha-cha...

CLAUDIA  
Yeah, now about the set--

JIMMY  
Then, about a year and a half ago, I got approached by Darla...you know, the lesbian over in engineering?

CLAUDIA  
Oh sure; flannel shirt, blond goatee.



JIMMY

That's her, yeah. Well anyway, I had known her and her partner Patrice for a while through our LGBTBC...*Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual Transgendered Bonsai Club?*

CLAUDIA

Uh-huh?

JIMMY

You know, the little trees.

CLAUDIA

Bonsai, sure.

JIMMY

Well they wanted to have a baby. But they didn't want the whole impersonal process of sperm banks and fertility clinics. They wanted to do it naturally. So...they asked me.

CLAUDIA

Wow.

JIMMY

Tell me about it. I mean, I was very flattered, and they're really great gals, in love, stable home life...so I said "yes."

CLAUDIA

Wow.

JIMMY

Uh-huh. Now Patrice volunteered to be fertilized. She's not like Darla at all. She's very "lipstick." Tight white dresses. Ava Gardner hair. Curves in all the right places. So we arrange to meet at the Pine View Motel to...you know, plow the soil and plant the seed, as it were.

CLAUDIA

Right...

JIMMY

And I'm scared shitless. Shaking like a leaf. 'Cause I didn't want

(MORE)

JIMMY

to let them down, you know? So, I  
gulp a half-bottle of Aber Gut and  
three valiums and get to it.

(he whispers, huskily.)

And...I...really...liked it!

CLAUDIA

(Kind of stunned.)

Huh.

JIMMY

I mean, I'd never been with a woman  
before. Always guys. It was always  
lots of stubble and muscles and  
B.O. and sharp corners. But  
women...women are different...soft  
and smooth. Warm and moist.  
Creamy...silky...succulent.

CLAUDIA

(Really uncomfortable.)

Okay, I think we--

JIMMY

And the titties! Oh my God, the  
titties! I had no idea! These  
wonderful, firm, bouncing orbs you  
just want to stick your face in  
and--

CLAUDIA

--Yep, I own a pair myself. Really  
fun.

JIMMY

So we do it, like, twelve times  
that afternoon. And...nine months  
later, they have a little boy.  
Edgar.

CLAUDIA

Oh, that's so sweet.

JIMMY

And after all is said and done, I  
look at myself in the mirror and I  
only know one thing.

(he turns to her.)

I really love the pussy.

His back is to the camera, but it is clear from Claudia's  
reaction that he has an erection, about eye level with her  
as she sits. She sees it and stands.

CLAUDIA

Whoa! Okay, Jimmy, that...you need to put that away.

Shocked, he puts his paintbrush over his crotch.

JIMMY

I'm sorry, Claudia. It's just that I'm so scared.

CLAUDIA

Scared of what?

JIMMY

Of getting fired.

CLAUDIA

What are you talking about?

JIMMY

Twelve years ago this station hired a gay set designer. In good faith. And I delivered. Now I don't know whether they were hiring to fill a quota, but I'm not that same gay set designer anymore. If they find out about my new...lifestyle, they could cut me loose.

CLAUDIA

That's ridiculous Jimmy. No matter why they hired you, what they got was a damn good designer.

JIMMY

Really?

CLAUDIA

Yes. Hell, nobody spatters the teal and magenta like you do. The wooden blocks, the spheres, the cones with the black and white cow patterns. You're the Michelangelo of set people. They'd be crazy to let you go. Gay, straight or whatever.

JIMMY

You think so?

CLAUDIA

All I know is, despite what the twenty-four hour news channels want us to believe, the world isn't

(MORE)

CLAUDIA  
black and white. There are tens of millions of gray tones in-between. None of them wrong. And each of us falls somewhere in those zones. And we have the right, no matter what anyone believes, to change, to evolve, to move along the scale when it suits us. Just like you did.

JIMMY  
I wish I could believe that. But I can't risk it.

CLAUDIA  
So you're going to hide, in the closet, pretending to be somebody you're not just to protect your job? Can you really live like that?

JIMMY  
I'm going to have to.

She puts her hand on his shoulder.

CLAUDIA  
Well Jimmy, I hope someday, soon, we'll live in a world where you won't have to.

JIMMY  
Maybe...someday.

She hugs him, pulls away then looks down at his crotch.

CLAUDIA  
You really need to do something about that.

She exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. WMGT STUDIO BUILDING. - THE NEXT DAY

A beauty shot looking up at the TV station building.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STATION - THE NEXT DAY

There is waste can hammering at the reception area door. The buzzer blasts and Claudia enters, setting down the waste can as she does. She is really bent over now and walking in severe discomfort. She smiles weakly at the RECEPTIONIST.

CLAUDIA  
Good morning.

RECEPTIONIST  
Good morning.

Maurice Coomes approaches, heading for his office.

MAURICE  
Well, good morning, Claire. How are you?

CLAUDIA  
Its Cl--

She winces in pain.

MAURICE  
Why don't you limp on in here, I'd like a word.

She painfully limps into his office.

CUT TO:

INT. MAURICE'S OFFICE.

Maurice sits behind his desk as Claudia slides into the chair opposite.

MAURICE  
So, how are things going? You ready for the *Pets Are People* show this morning?

CLAUDIA  
Oh yes, right on schedule. I mean, we had a few snags with the set but, Jimmy's on it.

MAURICE  
You look a little worse for wear, can I get you something? Aspirin? Heating pad?

CLAUDIA  
Nope, fine.

MAURICE  
(Standing.)  
How about a cane?

CLAUDIA  
I'm sorry?

He goes to a cabinet behind the desk and opens it. It is filled with dozens of old, ornate canes of every shape and size.

MAURICE  
A cane? I have a small collection here. It might help you get around a little easier.

CLAUDIA  
Why do you have so many?

MAURICE  
I do RPGs on the weekends; *Shadowrun, Darkon, Windswept Castle*. I'm usually a wizard or a seer. The canes help me get into character.

CLAUDIA  
Yeah...yeah, it might help at that.

He takes a cane from the stack and holds it. It is dark, gnarled wood with a crystal orb fastened at the top.

MAURICE  
This one's my favorite. From *The Tomb of the Enchantress*.

He hands it to her. She takes it, but he holds on.

MAURICE  
But be very careful with it.

He pulls her closer, up and out of her chair.

MAURICE  
(He whispers.)  
It's magic.

He let's go and she heads for the door, leaning on the cane.

MAURICE  
 (Calling after her.)  
 Oh, and Claire?

She turns.

MAURICE  
 Let's just keep Jimmy's sexual  
 predilections between us, shall we?

CLAUDIA  
 (Confused.)  
 Wait, how did you--

He cuts her off, pointing above his head.

MAURICE  
 "The shadow of my sword, my dear.  
 The shadow of my sword."

He looks at her, eerily. She turns and limps out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STATION.

Claudia heads down the hall to the studio doors. Standing near the doors is Tom along with JUDD MICKELBURG, the host of *"Pets Are People, Too"*. He is a tall, clumsy fellow wearing a khaki bush jacket, shorts, knee socks and an Australian bush hat.

Next to Judd stands DR. IMELDA POTTS, bird expert. She wears a white lab coat and glasses.

Behind them are a bevy of large, wild birds; a turkey, a pelican, an albatross, a stork, an egret, a bevy of parrots, a pink flamingo and two emus.

TOM  
 (Seeing her.)  
 Hey Bilbo, how are things in the  
 Shire?

CLAUDIA  
 Oh, will you stuff it? Hi Judd.

JUDD  
 Claudia. This is Dr. Potts. She's  
 our bird expert.

CLAUDIA  
Nice to meet you.

DR. POTTS  
(Shyly.)  
Yes...thanks...nice.

TOM  
Is everything set in-studio? We got  
to get these critters in.

CLAUDIA  
Yep. All looks good. Just let me  
make a coffee run and I'll meet you  
in there.

She limps away.

In the hallway she is approached by Beatrice, who holds a  
small perfume bottle. The old kind with the spray bulb.

BEATRICE  
Claudia, I'm so glad I found you.

CLAUDIA  
Beatrice...

BEATRICE  
I realized that the harness I gave  
you won't do any good unless you  
supplement it with this.

She hands Claudia the bottle.

CLAUDIA  
Perfume?

BEATRICE  
It's Jao Shu, an ancient eastern  
herbal remedy that opens up your  
energy fields. When you get home  
tonight, before you go to bed, turn  
out the lights, spray this on your  
forehead and rest easy. In the  
morning you'll be as good as new.

CLAUDIA  
(Hesitantly.)  
Uh, yeah, I don't think--

BEATRICE  
Claudia...open mind, remember.



CLAUDIA  
Right. Thanks.

Beatrice heads off. Claudia looks at the bottle, shrugs and limps into the women's restroom. There is a pause. Then...

CLAUDIA  
(Screaming.)  
AAAAAAAAAAH!!!! AHHHHHH!!!

Tom and Judd come running down the hall and rush into the restroom.

CUT TO:

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM.

Claudia is on the floor in agony.

CLAUDIA  
Ahhhh! My face! My face!

TOM  
Jesus, what happened?!

We hear Lydia's voice from one of the stalls.

LYDIA  
Who the hell's in here? This is the ladies room, god damnit!

Beatrice enters.

BEATRICE  
Claudia!

CLAUDIA  
I sprayed, like you said! It burns!  
God, it burns!

LYDIA  
I am trying to pinch a loaf! I do not need an audience!

BEATRICE  
This solution is derived from the Poison Parsnip plant.

CLAUDIA  
You poisoned me?!

BEATRICE

It has healing qualities. But it also has caustic properties that are light activated. That's why I said spray it on at night with the lights out.

TOM

What should we do?

BEATRICE

Find something to cover her face.

Judd rushes out. Claudia's lips are swelling dramatically.

CLAUDIA

(Through swollen lips.)

I beel lipe my nips are schwelling.  
Are by nips schwelling.

TOM

Just a little. Not bad.  
(to himself.)  
Whoa, that's gross.

Judd re-enters with a white T-shirt.

JUDD

I found this in the dressing room.

LYDIA

In five seconds you people are gonna sit in my stink, and I won't be responsible!

Tom takes the shirt, knots the sleeves together and puts it over her head like a hood. She calms down.

TOM

Is that...is that better?

CLAUDIA

(Calming down.)

Yeah...yeah, I think so.

BEATRICE

If you can keep the light off of you for a few hours, you should be fine.

TOM

Let's get you home.

CLAUDIA  
No, no, no. I'm good. I can do  
this.

TOM  
You sure?

CLAUDIA  
(Standing.)  
Yep. Just cut me a couple of eye  
holes and I'll be good as new.

She starts to walk out, leaning on her cane. She walks head  
long into the paper towel dispenser.

CLAUDIA  
Ow...okay, paper towels.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO - DAY

Claudia is on the floor of the studio. She stands still as  
Tom cuts two eye holes into her T-shirt hood. The array of  
large birds stands on set behind her.

TOM  
There we go.

CLAUDIA  
Wow, yeah, that's much better.

TOM  
Hold up, though. I printed out a  
picture of your face and cut out  
the eye holes. I'll just tape it  
over the top, here...

He does, but as we are behind Claudia, we can't see the  
picture.

TOM  
...and then everyone will know it's  
you and not be too uncomfortable  
with the whole hood thing.

CLAUDIA  
Oh thanks, that's so sweet.

She turns to reveal the picture is actually Jerry Lewis  
making a huge, crazy face.

CLAUDIA  
How does it look?

TOM  
(Holding back a laugh.)  
Looks great. Looks really good.

CLAUDIA  
Super. Okay, let's get this going  
boys and girls. Cameras in  
position.

TOM  
I'm up to the booth.

He exits.

Claudia puts on the headset over her Jerry Lewis hood. She  
speaks into the headset microphone.

CLAUDIA  
Is everybody up? Talk to me guys.

CAMERAMAN #1  
Camera one is up.

CAMERAMAN #2  
Camera two is up.

CAMERAMAN #3  
Camera three, up.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO BOOTH.

Tom sits behind the console wearing a headset.

TOM  
Booth is up.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO.

CLAUDIA  
All right, we've got talent on set  
and in position. Roll tape, please.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO BOOTH.

TOM  
Tape is rolling.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO.

CLAUDIA  
And we're on in  
five...four...three...

She finishes the silent countdown and points to Judd on set.

Judd sits next to a nervous Dr.Potts. Music begins as the two sit in the dark. As the music ends the studio lights fade up.

JUDD  
Hello, and welcome back to *Pets Are People, Too*. I'm your host, Judd Mickleburg. And I know this isn't Sesame Street, but today we've got some big birds in the studio. And with me is bird expert Dr. Imelda Potts. Welcome. Dr. Potts.

DR. POTTS  
(Nervously.)  
Hello...Judd.

JUDD  
Well you've brought quite a menagerie with you today, Doctor. We have a pelican, a pink flamingo, an albatross, a wild North American turkey, lots of others, but lets start with the biggest ones here, the African emu. These are tremendous birds, aren't they?

DR. POTTS  
Yes...Yes, very imposing.

JUDD  
And it's hard to imagine these big creatures having any natural enemies in the wild, but they do, in fact, have one. Don't they?

DR. POTTS

Yes, indeed. The only real natural enemy to the emu is the African baboon. The baboons are known for raiding unattended emu nests on the ground and stealing the eggs. It isn't unusual for a grown emu to charge and decimate an entire baboon herd in one fell swoop.

JUDD

Wow, that is one angry bird.

DR. POTTS

Angry and dangerous.

JUDD

Well let's move on to this beautiful bird. We've all had plastic ones in our yard at one time or another, the pink flamingo.

DR. POTTS

Oh yes, a very beautiful and misunderstood bird.

As they talk, Claudia limps on her cane to get closer to the set. As she does, one of the emus pecks at her hood, pulling it off. Startled, she turns and looks up at the emu. Her face is badly swollen, to the point looking like a baboon. The emu screams. The other emu screams. Claudia screams.

The birds take off after her. She runs from the studio as fast as she can on her magic cane. The chaos causes the other birds to run, flutter and fly from the studio.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO BOOTH.

Tom leans back and smiles as he watches the monitor.

TOM

(whispering.)

I love my job.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STATION.

Claudia is being chased down the hall by the squawking emus. She rushes by Stan Fritzel as he pushes a cart full of electronic gear.

She runs past Maurice, who is reading a notice on a bulletin board. As she goes by, he sees her and calls after her.

MAURICE

I told you it was magic.

She rushes past Jimmy Hankey, Denny, Lydia, just about everyone sees her being pursued by the angry emus.

Eventually she runs down a corridor to a dead end. A locked door. She pulls at it, to no avail. The emus come up behind her, ready to attack. She turns, angrily, and screams.

CLAUDIA

AHHHHHHHHH!!!

The birds stop, hesitantly.

CLAUDIA

I am not a baboon! I'm a human being!

FLASH PAN:

The two Chubby Technicians watch her from the hall. They hold jelly doughnuts and their lips are covered with peanut butter cup.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #1

Yeah, like we didn't see that coming.

CHUBBY TECHNICIAN #2

I know, right?

BLACK OUT:

FADE UP:

INT TV STATION- THE NEXT MONDAY.

Claudia enters through the security door and into the reception area. She heads happily down the hallway. She is back to normal. No pain. No swelling.

She is approached by Tom. He walks along side of her.

TOM  
Well, you look back to normal.

CLAUDIA  
Yep, and none too soon.

TOM  
Finally found the right mix of  
herbal remedies?

She reaches in her pocket and pulls out three brown  
prescription bottles.

CLAUDIA  
Vicadin, Anti-Inflammatories and  
one I can't even pronounce, but it  
goes great with a bottle of  
Chablis.

TOM  
Don't you love a good health plan?

CLAUDIA  
I do indeed, sir. Hey, did they  
wrangle all the birds from the  
shoot?

TOM  
Oh yeah. Took about an hour,  
though. Those flamingos are tough.  
Tell you the truth, we still can't  
find the pelican. But it's gotta  
turn up, right? Where's a pelican  
gonna hide?

CUT TO:

INT. TV STATION STORAGE ROOM

In the vast storage room, in the far corner, sits Mickey  
Rooney with the pelican. It squawks as he feeds it pieces of  
canned sardines.

MICKEY ROONEY  
I think I'll name you Judy.

The bird squawks again.

CUT TO BLACK:



END CREDITS.