

THE BIG DIVE

Logline: An ambitious but cowardly circus performer makes a daring move involving a dangerous dinosaur to impress his crush.

INT. CIRCUS/ARENA - NIGHT

A huge metallic structure with a high ceiling and a circular arena at the bottom. Above the sand, four TRAPEZE ARTISTS perform an aerial ballet to the dreamy MUSIC of VIOLONISTS with angel wings playing from a balcony on the side of the arena. Under them, scared iguanodons recoil against the walls, looking for an exit. One of the trapeze artist is DON (20s, tall, blond hair, muscular). He swings with grace and agility, his silver silk costume shines under the spotlights.

Around the arena, in the stands, an indifferent CROWD watches behind large, metallic grids. In the VIP section, wealthy people share drinks in front of a roasted pteranodon.

The MUSIC stops. The performers come down. EMPLOYEES with long electric sticks push the iguanodons toward the now-opened gate from where they came. Mild APPLAUSE mixes with the BUZZING of the sticks and the YELPS of the dinosaurs.

INT. CIRCUS/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

ROBYN (20s, fiery hair, a red dress that spirals down around her legs, big cowboy boots) admires from behind the curtain.

The trapeze artists enter backstage as a MATADOR with a metallic armor and a red flag exits. Robyn grabs Don's arm.

ROBYN

Hey Don, great show.

Don bows, then takes his shirt off. She blushes.

CHARLIE (20s, colored ragged clothes, green scales painted on his face, with glitter) watches her from a distance. He's hunched over, sitting on a small crate next to a cage covered with a black sheet. He's eating canned algae with his hands. His gaze changes from adoration, when he looks at Robyn, to jealousy and despise, when he looks at Don.

A BUMP inside the cage snaps him out of his contemplation. He opens the cage, grabs the handle of a leash. Five aquilops (little frilled dinosaurs, twenty inches long, with a beak) come out of the cage, each tied to the divided leash.

Charlie reaches in his pocket and takes out a bag of herb nuggets, pours some in his hand. He holds one above the dinos who stand on their rear paws, looking up. He throws one in the air and an aquilop jumps to catch it. He juggles with the nuggets, throws one to a dino, juggles some more, throws one...

Three GUYS in spandex suits walk by.

GUY

Hey Charlie, don't get the crowd  
too excited this time.

The others laugh as they walk away.

Charlie looks at Robyn again. She's putting a saddle on a  
parasaurolophus next to Don, who's stretching.

ROBYN

What I'd like to see is more shows  
with carnivores. I mean, I'd ride  
a T-rex if I could.

Don nods and flexes his calves.

One aquilop snaps Charlie's hand. He drops the nugget. As  
he picks it up, MARKUS (30s, long and curly black hair under  
a top hat) walks toward him. He's wearing a dark vest with  
large fluorescent buttons on each side, opened to reveal a  
hairy chest with a necklace made of dinosaur claws.

MARKUS

(shaking his head)  
No, you're doing it wrong.

He stops when the aquilops are at his feet.

MARKUS

You need to be in tune with their  
energy. Brenda and I, we connect.  
I feel her moves before she makes  
them. We dance together.

Charlie doesn't know what to respond to that. He doesn't  
have to. The circus OWNER (40s, fat, booming and raspy  
voice) arrives. He's wearing a purple suit, tried to shove  
his stomach in his pants so he could show off his golden belt  
buckle in the shape of a tyrannosaurus' head. His mustache  
spreads into little tentacles that bounce on his upper lip as  
he talks. He taps Markus on the shoulder.

OWNER

Here's my superstar. I got you  
some prime, bloody meat for your  
act. It's already being set up.

CHARLIE

(low voice)  
Sir?  
(then, louder)  
Sir?

OWNER

What!?

CHARLIE

I want a bigger act.

The owner stares at him.

OWNER

Are you having one of your episodes again? You can't do a bigger act. Some people are main acts, some people are fillers. You're filler.

CHARLIE

At least, let me take out my makeup.

OWNER

If you had stage presence or personality, you wouldn't need it.

(to Markus)

What's wrong with that kid?

(back to Charlie)

Just be glad you got work. You wouldn't last five minutes out there. If it weren't for your mother, may she rest in peace, I wouldn't even have hired you and you'd be eating trash and running from dinosaurs.

The owner reminisces for a moment. Clashing and trampling SOUNDS seep backstage from the arena.

OWNER

Shame what happened... At least we learned the silver rule of circus entertainment: No raptors. And what's the golden rule? Follow the audience! Entertain at all cost! You're not entertaining. If I listened to you, I'd have to go back selling manure.

Charlie puts the aquilops back in their cage and walks away while the owner chats with Markus. He stops by Robyn.

CHARLIE

Watch my act. I'll blow the roof off this place.

She gives him a weird look as he leaves.

The owner turns to the aquilops' cage.

OWNER

Charlie, you're up!  
 (looking around)  
 Where's that worthless fool? He  
 was there two seconds ago.

He pulls the curtain to look at the crowd. They watch the armored matador trying to avoid the horns of a triceratops.

OWNER

Nevermind, Markus you're up next.  
 Those people need something to wake  
 them up.

INT. CIRCUS/ARENA - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, please  
 welcome Brenda, the gorgeous  
 gorgosaurus, and the puppeteer!

A gate OPENS and the gorgosaurus, a carnivore ten feet tall with feathers on its back and head, steps into the arena. The flat, feathery tail drags in the dirt.

Above, on one of the ceiling-hung catwalks, a spotlight shines on Markus, arms open to take in the APPLAUSE. In front of him are the ends of ropes that go up to a pulley, then down above the stage. Hooks with large chunks of meat at the end of each rope let drops of blood fall around the dinosaur. Markus sits and closes his eyes.

FOOTSTEPS on the catwalk. Charlie, without makeup, with a backpack.

MARKUS

Excuse me, you're disturbing my  
 vibes here. I'm trying to connect  
 with my creature.

Charlie ignores him, stops in the middle of the catwalk. Markus shrugs, gets up to start the show. A pulley SQUEAKS. The meat goes down. The gorgosaurus looks up, mouth open.

Charlie climbs the railing, jumps, pulls the ripcord of the bag. A parachute DEPLOYS.

He circles above the stage, exhilarated.

The dino's head follows him, intrigued and hungry.

Charlie extends his arms like a bird, a big smile on his face.

He goes for a platform on the side of the arena, but gets entangled in one of the ropes. The hook pierces his pants, and he ends up head down, with the parachute hanging under him.

The dinosaur jumps, SNAPS its jaws. The CROWD goes wild.

MARKUS

(in two-way radio)  
Should I pull him up?

The owner peaks at the crowd from behind the curtain.

OWNER

(in two-way radio)  
If we stop the show now, we'll have a riot on our hands. Let him hang. He's finally entertaining.

The dinosaur jumps and pulls on the parachute, RIPPING it. Charlie's panicking. He takes off the backpack, drops it. His weight is pulling the hook down. He tries to rip out a chunk of the meat, but his hand slips. He looks around -- another rope. He swings himself forward, trying to reach it, in vain. The hooks starts TEARING his pants.

Don swings on his trapeze, grabs Charlie off the hook, and they both land on the platform under the BOOS of the disappointed, bloodthirsty crowd.

INT. CIRCUS/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Robyn kisses Don, praises his courage. Charlie watches, both horrified and detached. He looks down at his torn pants.

OWNER

You're fired.

CHARLIE

I did it.

OWNER

You did something dumb.

CHARLIE

(low, to self)  
I'm the main act.

Charlie smiles, satisfied. Proud.

EXT. CIRCUS - NIGHT

Charlie sets the aquilops free, throws the leash away.

He walks on a narrow path covered by a metallic grid and walled by tall fences with dents done from the outside, where wild dinos had tried to breach. He's not sure where to go, but he feels good.

ANGRY SPECTATORS come out the circus and run toward Charlie. They yell at him, push him down, and beat him to death. The aquilops watch from outside the cage-like structure.