

SPOTTED IN THE WILD

Written by

Animal Advocate

FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET - SIDEWALK - DAY

DR. LILA CARTER (30s), walking, grocery bags in one hand, a small animal crate in the other, stops in front of the local COFFEE SHOP.

A SIGN ON THE WINDOW: "GROUNDS 'N' HOUNDS" *"We're Pet Friendly!"*

Lila smiles, hands full, attempts to push the door open with her shoulder. It swings open wide as she stumbles directly into...ETHAN RHODES (30s), boyishly handsome, crisp Polo shirt and khakis now soaked with the contents of his mug.

Lila stares wide eyed, embarrassed.

LILA
Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry.

Ethan looks down at his drenched clothing.

ETHAN
No good deed goes unpunished. I was just opening the door for a lady who had her hands full.

A RUSTLING from the animal crate, followed by a "SQUAWK".

CRACKLY VOICE (O.S.)
Unfortunate.

Ethan reels back shocked. Lila shrugs, lifts the cage to reveal a PARROT, bobbing its head and muttering unintelligibly.

ETHAN
What exactly is that?

LILA
It's a...parrot.

Off his questioning look...

LILA (CONT'D)
I'm the new Vet in town. I tend to carry animals around with me sometimes. He's just coming in to clinic today for a checkup. His name's Ernie.

Ethan looks to the bird with disdain, grabs a nearby stack of napkins and begins blotting his stained khakis.

ERNIE
Nice pants!

Lila shushes Ernie. Then, off Ethan's look of displeasure...

LILA
Sorry, he's really friendly...talks too much sometimes.

ETHAN
I'm not a big fan of animals.

LILA
Umm, you do realize this is a pet friendly shop?

She points to the sign on the door. Ethan shrugs.

ETHAN
Only coffee shop in town. A necessary evil. I steer clear of anything with fins, fangs, feathers or fur.

An uncomfortable beat.

LILA
Okay then, I've got to be going, I'm really not up for coffee anymore, got to get to work...with animals. Really sorry about the mess.

Ethan considers her, nods with another scornful look toward Ernie and Lila is out the door, parrot and bags in tow.

EXT. VETERINARY CLINIC - DAY

A SIGN: "SILVER PINES NATIONAL PARK VETERINARY CLINIC"

INT. VETERINARY CLINIC - DAY

Lila examines an EXOTIC CAT, an OCELOT, a handsome feline with a distinctive spotted coat, obviously tame.

LILA
Tango, you know you're my best boy, right?

She strokes Tango's fur as he nuzzles her hand, until...

The door BURSTS OPEN. A frantic VETERINARY ASSISTANT wrangles a LARGE DOG who barks wildly at the now panicked Ocelot. Tango leaps from the table, past the lunging dog and out the door.

LILA (CONT'D)
Oh no! Tango! Come back!

Then to the Assistant.

LILA (CONT'D)
Don't just stand there, stop him!

The Assistant continues to grapple with the lunging dog as Lila runs toward the open door of the clinic, only to see Tango bounding away into the nearby forest.

INT. VETERINARY CLINIC - DAY - CONTINUOUS.

Lila on the phone, frantic.

LILA
(on phone)
Yes, Park Service? This is Dr.
Lila Carter at the Vet Clinic. I
just had an animal escape. It looks
like he was heading directly into
the Park. I need help immediately.

She listens, then responds.

LILA (CONT'D)
Yes, it's a large cat, an Ocelot.

A beat as she listens.

LILA (CONT'D)
An "Oc - e - lot".

She rolls her eyes, exasperated.

LILA (CONT'D)
Yes, please. Send a Park Ranger, as
soon as possible. Please!

She disconnects the call, looks frantically out the window.

LILA (CONT'D)
Tango, please come back.

EXT. VETERINARY CLINIC - DAY

A PICKUP arrives. "*SILVER PINES PARK RANGER*" displayed across its side.

INT. VETERINARY CLINIC - DAY

Lila paces, spies the truck out front, flings the door open to reveal...Ethan, now attired in a RANGER UNIFORM.

Lila's jaw drops.

LILA

You? You're a Park Ranger?

ETHAN

Yes ma'am. At your service. What seems to be the problem?

Lila sputters, shakes her head in disbelief.

LILA

Like I told the dispatcher, I had an exotic animal escape.

ETHAN

Exotic animal?

LILA

Yes, a large cat. An Ocelot.

ETHAN

Wait, you're telling me we have a large predator on the loose in the forest?

LILA

He's not a predator. He's domesticated. He won't harm anything. But he'll be scared, defensive, he's never been in the wild before.

Ethan nods.

ETHAN

So like I said, a large predatory cat on the loose. Unbelievable.

Lila glares at him.

LILA

What's unbelievable is that I have a potential disaster on my hands and I'm stuck with the only Park Ranger in the world who's afraid of animals! That, sir, is what is unbelievable!

They stand tense, face to face, both unwavering. Ethan softens first, holds his hands up in surrender.

ETHAN

Okay, give me a minute to get my head around this and come up with a plan. Let me call headquarters, let them know what we're up against.

He exits, shaking his head.

LILA

(to the Vet Assistant)
Is this a nightmare? What kind of Park Service hires a Ranger who's animal phobic?

ASSISTANT

He's actually the best person they could have sent. He knows every square inch of the Park better than anyone else around.

Off Lila's skeptical look...

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

I've known him his whole life. His Dad was a Ranger before him. He grew up in the Park. He was cornered by a Grizzly once when he was just a kid, been wary of animals ever since.

Lila rolls her eyes, sighs.

LILA

Perfect.

Ethan returns inside.

ETHAN

Alright, I have an initial plan, Doctor...sorry, I seem to have missed your name.

LILA
Carter. Dr. Carter.

ETHAN
Alright, Dr. Carter, since you know
the predatory cat...

Lila interrupts.

LILA
Tango, a domesticated ocelot.

ETHAN
...Since you are familiar with the
"cat" and I am familiar with the
Park, it seems like you and I are
going to have to form a team in
order to retrieve...

LILA
Tango.

Ethan relents.

ETHAN
Tango.

LILA
I'll do anything I can to find him
and bring him home.

ETHAN
Fine. You'll need to gather some
things, we may be out quite awhile.
Possibly overnight. It gets cold
this time of year. Bring a jacket.

Lila considers him. Nods. Turns to leave.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
And it's Ethan. My name is Ethan.

She turns back, eyes him up and down, stoic.

LILA
Ethan. Fine...Lila.

Is that a hint of a smile? She turns, exits. Ethan shakes his
head, flashes an appreciative grin.

ETHAN
Here's to team work.

FADE OUT.