

PERCY PANGOLIN WANTS TO GO VIRAL

By Evan Baughman

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SYNOPSIS: To spread awareness about his endangered species, Percy Pangolin wants to make a viral video, with the help of his friend, Amanda Panda.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(1 female, 1 male)*

PERCY PANGOLIN (m)..... Very upset about being an endangered species. *(63 lines)*

AMANDA PANDA (f)..... Percy’s best friend and confidant. *(64 lines)*

SETTING: Nowhere in particular

TIME: RIGHT NOW, BECAUSE THIS IS URGENT, PEOPLE!

PROPS

- Smartphone
- Piece of paper representing Percy’s notes
- Large soup pot

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Near the end of the play, Percy spills soup across the floor. This can be represented through sound effect and/or pantomime. It is not recommended that actual soup be dumped onto the stage.

COSTUMES

Costume designs are up to the discretion of the director. Full-body “pangolin” and “panda” costumes could be crafted. Masks would also work just as well.

AT RISE: *PERCY paces center-stage, next to a large cooking pot. He holds a piece of paper in his claws, quietly reading whatever's written on the page. Off to the side is AMANDA. AMANDA holds a smart phone in one paw, playing a game.*

AMANDA: Percy? Are you almost ready?

PERCY: Almost.

AMANDA: Because I've got some other things I kind of wanted to do today, and—

PERCY: Amanda, I thought you were here to support the cause. To support me.

AMANDA: I am, but you didn't say this would take so long. I have a life, some stuff I'd like to—

PERCY: Yes, I'm fully aware that pandas are beloved and supported by human beings across the globe and are experiencing a bit of a population increase. As long as people continue to find you majestic and fluffy, you guys will be alive for a while still.

AMANDA: I didn't mean it like that.

PERCY: This is serious business. My species needs this. I need to get it perfect.

AMANDA: Okay.

PERCY: I'm not just winging it, alright? I have to make it memorable. Powerful.

AMANDA: Right. I'm sorry. My bad.

PERCY: Sorry to snap at you like that. I'm glad you're here. It means a lot. I think it's just hard for you to really relate to our plight, because pandas are literally one of the faces of animal conservation. You and tigers and elephants and rhinos and gorillas—everyone loves you guys. Knows about your struggles. Sympathizes with you. Cares about you. Wants to see you thrive again.

AMANDA: I know. We've got it a little easier than you do.

PERCY: Not what I said. But today is about Pangolin Awareness. Today we get our moment in the spotlight. It's a big deal. I want to represent my kind as well as I can. You understand that.

AMANDA: I do.

PERCY: This video's got to go viral. Word has to spread like a plague. Nothing less will do. Otherwise, extinction is imminent.

AMANDA: Yes. Take your time.

PERCY: Thank you. I'll be ready soon.

He begins to read the paper to himself again, pacing. AMANDA approaches the pot, looks into it.

AMANDA: What type of soup is that?

PERCY: Huh?

AMANDA: (*Gingerly touching the side of the pot.*) Just as I thought.

It's not even hot.

PERCY: Why would the soup be hot?

AMANDA: Soup is usually hot. Who eats cold soup?

PERCY: *Gazpacho.*

AMANDA: What?

PERCY: *Gazpacho* is cold soup. It's a popular dish in Spain.

AMANDA: So this is *gazpacho* then.

PERCY: It is not *gazpacho*. I just opened a bunch of canned soup and dumped it in.

AMANDA: You're not going to heat it up?

PERCY: The soup is not for eating. Okay? No one's eating the soup.

AMANDA: Oh.

PERCY: I've explained what I'm doing. I'm dumping the soup over myself.

AMANDA: You weren't kidding about that?

PERCY: I'm trying to start a movement. Just like the "Ice Bucket Challenge" helped to raise awareness for ALS. This is the "Soup Pot Dare" to raise awareness for endangered pangolins.

AMANDA: Um. Okay...Why soup, though?

PERCY: It's symbolic. Countless pangolins are illegally butchered every year for our meat. We're often put into soups and stews. Often times, it's our babies that are eaten. Even worse: sometimes the fetuses of our unborn children.

AMANDA: Gross.

PERCY: Exactly. Disgusting, heinous atrocities. We're the most trafficked and poached mammal in the world.

AMANDA: Oh. Wow. I get the soup angle now.

PERCY: Good.

AMANDA: But no one's going to pour soup on themselves like you want them to.

PERCY: Why not?

AMANDA: People don't want to waste perfectly good soup. Soup's for eating. Not bathing.

PERCY: It's a symbol of the pangolins' strife.

AMANDA: I don't think it's going to catch on like you hope it will.

PERCY: (*Waving her off.*) What do you know? For many of these human monsters, our meat is just a bonus. More often than not, we're slaughtered for our scales. Our armor is peeled from us like skin off bananas. Like a wet Band-Aid off a bloody scrape.

AMANDA: Well, that's vivid.

PERCY: We need our scales to protect ourselves from predators. Scrunching up into a tight little ball can only do so much. You know, a leopard I can forgive. They're not too bright. They only attack us out of instinct and desperation! But people—they should know better! Does that stop them? Nope! They go out of their ways to snare us, to chop at us with machetes.

AMANDA: What's their excuse?

PERCY: Rumor has it that pangolin scales can bring good luck. But my mother certainly didn't carry me on her back for all those months just so I could become something dangling from a few key chains!

AMANDA: No one aspires to be an accessory.

PERCY: Others grind up our scales for medicine. Apparently, I'm a walking remedy for the stomach flu, a "cure" for cancer.

AMANDA: No, you're not. Are you? Really?

PERCY: Amanda. It's hogwash. Even it were true, it's not right that a person takes a pangolin's life to prolong his own. What selfishness!

AMANDA: People like putting themselves first.

PERCY: They don't even seem to realize that the keratin in our scales is made up of the same stuff that's in their nails. If they want to stay healthy, why do they have to butcher us, when they could just chew on their own fingertips or their toes?

AMANDA: It makes you wonder, doesn't it? Why do humans value themselves so much higher than any other creature? Why have they put themselves on such a pedestal? They think they're so much more "intelligent" than everything else, but look at what they've done to this planet. What they're quickly turning it into. Doesn't seem so smart to me.

PERCY: Exactly. They've cut down the trees where we've rested, torn up the ground where many of us have spent generations burrowing in peace. All for what? More buildings? More people? Why does the world need more people? It needs more pangolins! When we're gone, who's going to control ant and termite populations? Those things can be pretty pesky.

AMANDA: *(Nodding.)* The worst.

PERCY: Look: it's no easy task being a pangolin, as it is. I mean, we're not the cutest critters to begin with. We're anteater-turtle-looking things. Crawling pinecones. Clambering artichokes.

AMANDA: Don't be so hard on yourself.

PERCY: On top of that, it's our custom to be solitary animals, so I'm literally surviving on my own day in and day out. That's not always easy. Sometimes, I wouldn't mind a little help.

AMANDA: Ohhh. "Solitary." So that's why I'm the only one who's showed for this.

PERCY: I usually only see other pangolins during mating season, but lately it's been really slim pickings out there. Our homes are being razed. We're being souped and de-scaled at an alarming rate. These are hard times for guys like me. I get quite lonely. It seems like there's no future for my kind.

AMANDA: Try not to get so down. We all feel that way at one point or another.

PERCY: Again, you're a panda. People will mourn the loss of your species, if it ever comes.

AMANDA: Let's not go down that road. Stay in a happier place.

PERCY: That's no easy feat, Amanda. Who will care when the pangolins are gone? I know that millions of insects will simultaneously rejoice knowing they'll never have to hide from our tongues again. But people, in general, won't mind. They won't even take note, let alone shed a single tear. Who will weep for the pangolins? We aren't even going to go out with a whimper.

AMANDA: That's why you're making a video.

PERCY: I just hope it's not too little, too late.

AMANDA: It's worth a shot.

PERCY: If I can just catch America's attention, maybe things can turn around for us.

AMANDA: Why America?

PERCY: Americans can be loud. If they care enough about something, they can make waves. That's what we need. Tsunamis of Pangolin Awareness tearing down walls of ignorance.

AMANDA: You just have to get enough Americans on your side, I guess.

PERCY: After the video clogs up their social media feeds and the "Soup Pot Dare" takes off, things should start moving in the right direction. Hopefully. We just have to make sure we distance ourselves from the armadillos.

AMANDA: What's wrong with armadillos?

PERCY: The few I've met are cordial enough. But they look too much like pangolins. Americans already don't care about armadillos. Look at the highways in the southern U.S. and the thousands of armadillos annually pancaked on those roads. Americans don't bat an eyelash at their squashed carcasses, and I don't want pangolins to suffer from similar Armadillo Apathy.

AMANDA: I see your point.

PERCY: Pangolins are not armadillos. We have to establish separate identities from our directionally challenged cousins. And don't even get me started on skunks. If word got out that pangolins also spray foul-smelling chemicals from rear end glands, I fear Americans would never get on our side.

AMANDA: Your secretion... er... *secret* is safe with me.

PERCY: Thanks. Now do you see what I hope to accomplish with this video? Why I'm so desperate for it to work?

AMANDA: Yes.

PERCY: You understand why I have to do something as silly as pouring uncooked broth over my head? Americans have short attention spans. I have to "wow" them. I don't want them clicking away onto something else. I need them to hear what I have to say.

AMANDA: Right.

PERCY: It's going to be difficult to get Americans to care about us, because pangolins are Asian and African. We're suffering and dying all the way on the other side of the world.

AMANDA: Pandas are, too, though. And tigers and elephants and rhinos and gorillas.

PERCY: But we're not put center-stage in zoos like you are. We're secluded in dark corners away from the limelight. Who goes out of their way to come see us? We're mostly nocturnal. We don't venture out during the day to entertain anyone. We aren't immortalized as best-selling stuffed animals or even anthropomorphized into cartoon characters for kids to fall in love with at a young age. We're just...barely existing outside of most people's peripheral. The majority of humans are completely unaware that a "pangolin" is a real thing.

AMANDA: What do you think "awareness" will accomplish?

PERCY: I want people to know that we're hurting. To empathize with us a little. To get angry. To donate to organizations that will stand up to poachers and land developers on our behalf. To generate some drama, no matter how small. We should get the same amount of human interest as any other species. It's our right as members of Planet Earth.

AMANDA: Yeah.

PERCY: I'm so worried that we'll disappear and no one will care. We will have lived entirely unnoticed and unloved, and our extinction will have absolutely no impact on human life whatsoever. That's terrifying. To die and not even have it make a ripple.

AMANDA: But there would be ripples.

PERCY: Sorry, but that's kind of naïve. Species die out with regularity. People carry on like nothing's changed. Because, to them, it hasn't. I can't let things reach that point of no return. Human beings need to feel our loss. Now is the time for battle.

AMANDA: Well, you've got me convinced. Pangolins are ready for primetime.

PERCY: Let's do this, then.

AMANDA: Great. Just speak from the heart, like you've been doing with me. Bring that same fire. That passion.

PERCY: You know, you're right. I don't need this.

PERCY tears apart the paper he holds. Immediately regrets it.

PERCY: Oh, man. I don't know if I should have done that.

AMANDA: You've got it.

PERCY: Yeah. Um. Okay.

PERCY goes to the soup pot.

PERCY: Start filming when I say, "Action."

AMANDA: (*Readying the phone's video camera.*) Roger that.

PERCY lifts the soup pot, but it's obvious that it's heavier than he first thought.

PERCY: Wow... this thing is... I may have miscalculated the amount of...

AMANDA: We can pour some out.

PERCY does just that when he accidentally drops the pot. All of the soup splashes across the ground.

PERCY: Oh, no! No, no, no! Amanda! What have I done? I've...I've doomed us all!

AMANDA: You don't need the soup, Percy. You don't need the gimmick. You just need the message.

PERCY: But... but it's not what I planned. I put a lot of time and...and thought into this! I knew how to get people's attention, and I've gone and messed it all up! (*Sobbing.*) Rest in peace, pangolins!

PERCY begins to hyperventilate.

AMANDA: Come on, now. Relax. Deep breaths.

PERCY: I-I's all over! W-We're done for! B-Bye, cruel world!

AMANDA: It'll be okay, Percy. You've just put too much pressure on yourself. You can still do this.

PERCY: N-No, I-I c-can't!

AMANDA: Percy...

PERCY: I-I C-CAN'T! I-IT'S O-OVER!

AMANDA: Well, then, mind if I do it?

PERCY: W-What?

AMANDA: Yeah. It has to get done. This is too important. So, you film me. I'll get your message out there.

PERCY: B-But y-you aren't even a p-pangolin!

AMANDA: Exactly. I'm a panda. People love pandas. You said so yourself. They'll watch me do anything.

PERCY: Y-You'd do that for me?

AMANDA: Absolutely.

PERCY: *(Calmer now.)* But how can you...? I tore up my notes.

AMANDA: I listened to everything you had to say. It's stuck with me. I'll make you proud. Here.

AMANDA hands over her phone. PERCY still trembles a bit.

AMANDA: Hold it steady, Percy. It'll be alright.

She stands tall, ready.

AMANDA: Okay. It's time to go viral. Camera ready?

PERCY: *(Steadying his claw.)* Yes.

AMANDA: Awesome. 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... action.

Cut to black.

THE END