

off the fence.

Baboon Mob

6 x 30'

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Who's Psycho?

Holly arrives at the Limpopo border post and enters a world of chaos: freight-trucks are backed up on the bridge between border-posts, and baboons are leaping onto the trucks to pillage processed foods, pursued by catapult-wielding truckers and novelty-hungry television news crews. Nobody's making sense – till she discovers Vito Papio, trapped in a concrete “dungeon” within the bridge, hideously injured, and willing to tell his family's saga before he dies. As the saga begins, we meet Sonny Boy, and watch the moment that catalyses the coming duel-to-the-death between him and Vito: during a helter-skelter raid on a tomato farm, the old boss, Claudio (Vito's brother, and Sonny Boy's supposed “father”), is shot dead. So, as Vito puts it, “Who's gonna be the new boss?” Vito's the expert in the family's traditional line of business – extracting “a modest percentage” from farmers. But Sonny Boy, returned home from “Harvard Business School” for Claudio's funeral, wants to take the baboons in an ambitious new direction. And starts by leading the “Young Turks” on a spectacular truck-raid.

2. Monsters

Sonny Boy's ambitions to diversify the family business don't stop at “freight-trucking”. In a bid to build his profile in wildlife tourism and films, he associates himself with “The Loch Ness Monster of the Limpopo”: Boonzilla, a hybrid monster – half-baboon, half-crocodile – that's reputed to feed on stray dogs and donkeys. Boonzilla becomes – to Vito's utter disgust – a media sensation, and Sonny Boy, as “Boonzilla's publicist”, reaps a bonanza of food from the fans. Sonny Boy also enjoys a steamy romance with the beautiful, mysterious Scarlett O'Chacma. But there's a price: some bipeds love their donkeys. Although the real donkey-snatchers are (as we see in one gruesome sequence) the river's regular crocodiles, snares are set for Boonzilla. They kill – not the monster, but Vito's innocent younger son. And put another nail in the coffin of Vito and Sonny Boy's relationship.

3. Plague

With Sonny Boy and his Young Turks focusing on “waste disposal” – scavenging off the flow of trash through the border posts and town dumpsites – is it any coincidence that a viral infection, possibly human in origin, hits the Papio family? And “gets personal”? Scarlett has produced a son, Charleston, whom Sonny Boy claims as his own. But when Scarlett and her alleged lover, Rambobo, die under agonising circumstances, the line between spreading a disease and deliberate assassination begins to blur. Meanwhile, Holly is starting to uncover a link between the Papios and the mysterious disappearance of a prominent biped: Congresswoman Oprah Oliphant,

who had been crusading for a cleanup of the Limpopo environment – a cleanup that would have put Sonny Boy’s faction out of business.

4. Carnivores

Unstoppably ambitious, Sonny Boy ventures into cigarette smuggling (in which we see the baboons harass a smugglers’ donkey-caravan) and child-intimidation – which ends with a battle in which stone-throwing township infants heroically drive off Sonny Boy’s “soldiers”. With Sonny Boy’s fortunes (temporarily) down, things are looking up for Vito. Baboons love fresh meat, and Vito leads the killing and consumption of a bushbuck fawn – an event that also makes him the star of the local Wildlife Society’s “Video of the Month”. But the video doesn’t hold the limelight for long – not after the wildlife paparazzi are treated to the sight of a crocodile emerging from the Limpopo with a shoe in its mouth. Did the shoe belong to Oprah Oliphant? Or is it a premonition of the watery death that will await Holly, if she persists in asking questions about the Bushmafia?

5. Razor Wire

Holly is determined to become “a real journalist”, whose investigations will “bring down the Bushmafia”. She’s hoping Vito will give her more clues about Oprah Oliphant’s fate, but instead finds herself entering the final chapter of the Vito-versus-Sonny Boy saga – in which Sonny Boy fakes reconciliation with Vito. He feasts Vito on tomatoes, then lures his satiated, unwary “uncle” into a razor-wire maze. Snagged on the wire, Vito faces a slowest and cruellest of deaths. But before Sonny Boy leaves Vito to his fate, Vito has a family secret to tell: Claudio, Sonny Boy’s supposed father, was impotent. So – “I am your father,” declares Vito. Sonny Boy pauses. He could heed Vito’s plea to help him get free of the wire. Instead, he walks away.

6. Dust to Dust

Sonny Boy’s truck-raiding at the border posts has gone too far. He and his soldiers are about to be culled by the angry biped establishment. Vito, meanwhile, has escaped the razor-wire maze – but the wire has left his foot horrifically mutilated, and he has, in his lameness, tripped and fallen into the concrete dungeon in which Holly is now interviewing him. While the interview is in process, Sonny Boy scores a public relations victory over the cull-advocates, and Holly discovers, to her horror, that her own company has been doing Sonny Boy’s media work. Before Vito dies, he reveals to Holly the “common thread” that binds every unnatural death we’ve witnessed across the series: biped technology. Biped environmental exploiters – the Bushmafia – are now working in cahoots with Sonny Boy. And Holly’s ambition to “bring down the Bushmafia” will (we discover as the final credits roll) be “short-lived” in a perfectly lethal sense.