

NIGEL THORNBERRY'S
ANIMAL WORLD



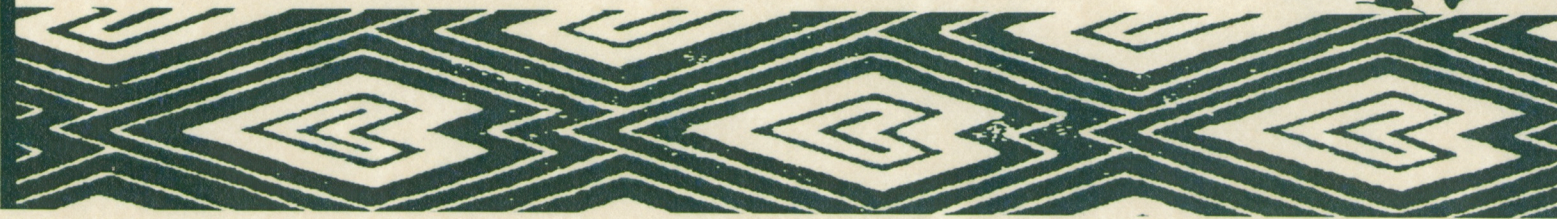
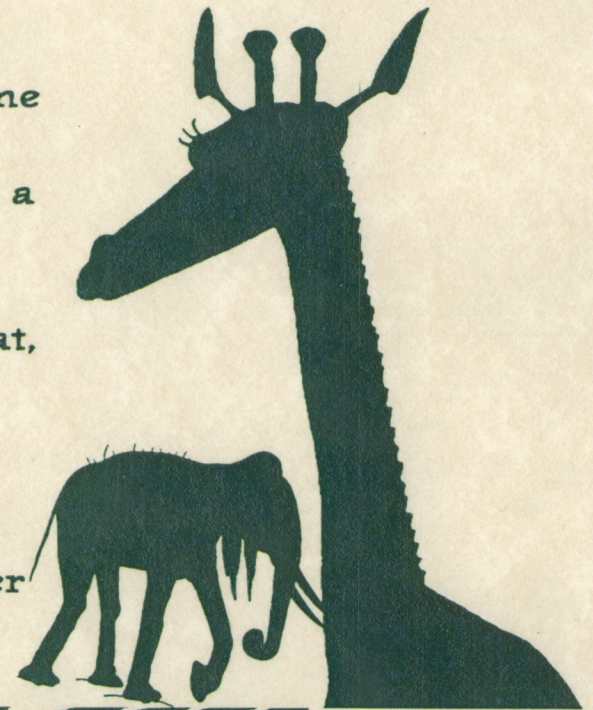
A silly looking man in a safari jacket and a bush hat steps into frame with a microphone. He speaks directly into camera in a funny, high-pitched, but very proper British accent.

"Hello, I'm Nigel Thornberry, smashing to see you again. And welcome to Nigel Thornberry's Animal World."

Before he can get out another word about his nature show, a wild looking boy in a loincloth swings into frame and lands on Nigel Thornberry's head. Flashing a maniacal grin toward the rolling camera, the boy takes a huge bite out of Nigel's hat.

"Oh, Donnie, stop it." It's a woman's voice. And with that, the camera stops rolling, and from behind it steps Marianne Thornberry, Nigel's wife.

"If you're hungry, you should have a sandwich. Would you like a sandwich?" The woman lifts the boy from her husband's head and carries him toward the family van.



That's the diversion that Eliza Thornberry, the couple's 11 year-old daughter, was looking for. And as Marianne carries Donnie back to the van, the precocious, adventurous Eliza grabs her best friend, a Chimpanzee named Bobo, sneaks past her teenage sister, Debbie, and heads into the jungle in search of adventure.

...and so begins another episode of our show, Nigel Thornberry's Animal World!



ELIZA THORNBERRY

Inquisitive, intelligent, sometimes infuriating. Age 11.

Eliza may look a bit bookish, but when you scratch the surface of this intelligent 11 year-old, you find a little girl who can't pass up a chance for adventure. She loves living the vagabond life, and is fascinated by the world around her. She also has trouble leaving a mystery unanswered, or a problem unsolved. This can create conflict in a family where the youngest member is supposed to stay out of the jungle, work on her homework, and grow up like a normal 11 year-old. And having the power to talk to animals, especially when it doesn't always work the way you want it to, can be a source of great frustration. Like any 11 year-old, Eliza would like to be seen as mature and a valuable contributor to the family. Being able to understand animals would go a long way in that direction, but Eliza can never quite get a handle on the



skill, so often times it becomes a frustrating secret--and the source of trouble!

Eliza has a very forceful personality. While it is her parents' stated mission to discover new species of flora and fauna, and expose the most significant injustices exacted on the animal kingdom, their position as scientists and producers of a nature show prevent them from interfering in the natural events they chronicle. As a naturalist, Nigel Thornberry follows a code not unlike the prime directive on Star Trek. He is in the jungle to observe, record and collect information. Eliza, however, refuses to take the same passive view of the world. And she can't help but set herself to work, trying to reconcile the conflicts that the Thornberrys run up against, both within their little clan and as they explore the animal world.

When Nigel wanders off on his wedding anniversary, Eliza sets an adventure in motion as she tries to get him back into camp without either parent knowing that she's gone. Or when the family travels to the edge of the rainforest to



focus on a factory that is eating through the precious forest at the rate of an acre an hour, Eliza is the one, with a reluctant Bobo and an unmanageable Donnie in tow, who will infiltrate the factory to try to foil these Eco-threats. Eliza's actions, consequently, often run in gentle opposition to those of her parents.

As she heads off on an adventure, she usually takes along her two closest companions. Very much opposite sides of the same coin, Donnie the jungle boy and Bobo the Chimp become the only two soldiers in Eliza's private army. One is athletic and unpredictable and the other is neurotic, overly cautious, and given to fits of anxiety. Like everything else in Eliza's world, things are a little skewed. And the companion most likely to climb a tree and rip down a banana is the little human boy. And if somebody's going to suffer paralyzing fits of fear it's Bobo the chimpanzee.

As Eliza presses Bobo and Donnie into accompanying her on her adventures, they become a little rebel band. A



funny team in which Eliza is unquestionably the leader. Bobo and Donnie are the only ones who see Eliza speak to animals, and the only ones who really understand the depth of this little girl. She sometimes exasperates the cautious Bobo. And sometimes she expects too much from the unpredictable Donnie. But as teams go, they're a pretty good one. Donnie and Bobo are the extra muscle she needs, the moral support she craves, and the peers she longs for as she wanders the wilderness.

"Have you ever been 11? I'm all grown up and I can talk to animals. What else do you need to get along in the world? If you can tell me why staying home and finishing my book report on Eli Whitney is going to be more exciting than heading into the jungle, I'll stay at home and learn about the Cotton Gin. But my folks are out searching for Wildebeest. And my sister's off searching for a diet soda. So now's my chance to tell Bobo to quit whining about the bananas around here, pull Donnie out of the Boabob tree and go see what's making that howling noise!"

Eliza's ability to talk to animals is as much an annoyance as an asset. Eliza's inquisitive character often forces her to



talk to animals, but more often than not she regrets it. From a distance, bystanders, eavesdroppers, and the audience themselves will hear Eliza growl or howl or chirp. But when we are away from prying eyes and pull in tight on Eliza and the animal in question, we'll hear what's really being said. What's more, when other members of her family happen onto her hopping around in a pair of her father's boots, trying to communicate with a group of Wallabies, she looks a little crazy. As you might expect, the chattering dialogue of a spider monkey isn't going to come across like the guttural, monosyllabic sounds of an angry Black Rhino. So while this exceptional talent is a source of pride for Eliza, it puts her in a strange position, literally.

Of course, when she first discovered she had the ability to communicate with animals, she ran off to tell her parents. Unfortunately, her mother is so self-conscious about raising her daughters away from civilization, that she took this to be some kind of cry for help from



Eliza, and immediately started talking about moving the family to Canoga Park where she grew up. So Eliza, who loves the way her family lives, has kept her secret to herself since then.

Now, before you start thinking that talking to animals means we're going to see a bunch of bunnies singing about springtime, think again. It's true a Witch Doctor's spell left Eliza with the ability to "talk" to animals, but as you've probably noticed, what passes for talk in the animal world can sometimes get pretty weird. Try to howl like a Hyena. If you don't get it right, you run the risk of asking for a bite on the ankle instead of directions home. While Eliza might have the skills to speak to various animals, there are two problems. First, the dialects she knows are predominantly African, and specific, so that to speak to a tiger, she's going to have to muddle along in Lion. Second, until Eliza can establish some kind of sympathy for the animals' ways and culture, they have no reason to trust, or talk to her. This means that Eliza may have to spin around three times and sit in the dirt before a Dingo or Timberwolf will howl her the time of day. She might have to swim or slither, bark or



growl, or flap her arms and scrape at the ground with her foot before an animal will trust her enough to begin a conversation.

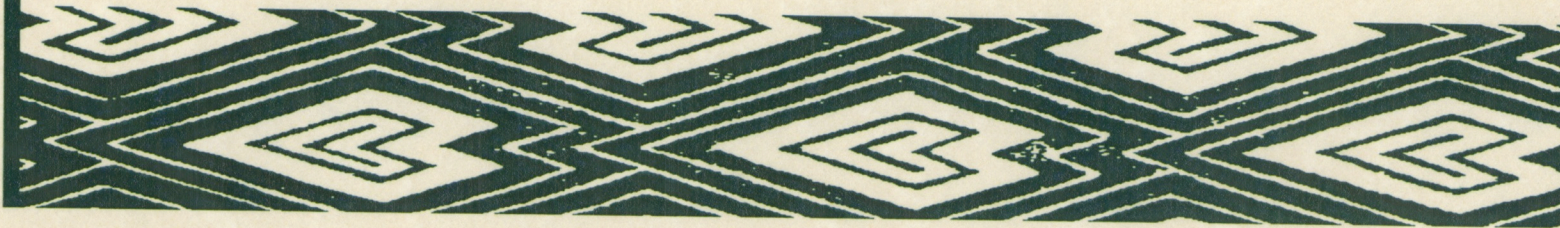
But Eliza can make the animals understand her. And as they communicate with Eliza, we're allowed a window into the animal world. And while making friends with animals may often times be more trouble than it's worth, it's a trump card that Eliza often has to try to play as she works to secure her place in the Thornberry family. While the animals provide texture and humor to our stories, they are only rarely the focus of an episode. Nigel Thornberry's Animal World is not about kooky animals, but about a family, and the 11 year-old girl who is struggling for a secure place within it.

Eliza's personality, her thirst for adventure and her desire to prove herself combine to create a dynamic character who can talk to animals if necessary, but might move through an entire episode without doing so, if it doesn't serve her specific needs. Most of the time, Eliza is just a regular, everyday eleven year-old girl, who is often shunted off to play somewhere with Bobo the chimpanzee and Donnie, the jungle boy. Despite the idiosyncrasies, Bobo and Donnie are Eliza's allies, her extra



hands and her co-conspirators as Eliza bends the rules in an attempt to see herself as more than a young girl at the folding table working on Geography homework.

As far as her relationship with her parents, Eliza loves them and sees them for who they are. She knows her father is a bit of a scatterbrain, and her mother may have a bit too much on her plate. But Eliza can also see that they, and her sister for that matter, all have good hearts. What gets her eleven year-old dander up, is that her parents seem to be satisfied just observing. It might be Eliza's most maddening quality, or her most endearing, but Eliza just can't leave well enough alone. Whether it's a problem with her sister, something wrong with Donnie, or the fact that a penguin is afraid of the water, Eliza is going to stick her nose into it. And in the end, even though Eliza may bend some rules and literally ruffle some feathers, things usually work out for the best.

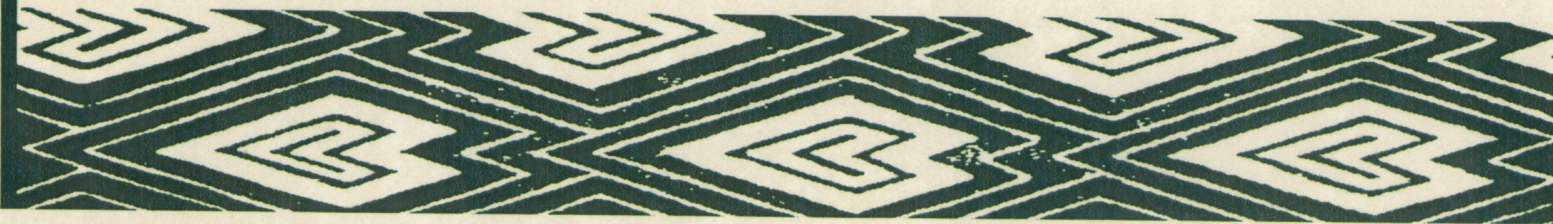


Nigel Thornberry

Enthusiastic, Positive, Clueless, 38 years old.

"These are the absolutely ripping accounts of my adventures in the wild. I am, you see, an adventurer of the first order, and a rather tip-top scientist as well. Oh, we have a smashing time, my family and I. Just ask them. I say, old man, have you seen my family anywhere? I can't seem to find them."

Nigel may, in fact, be the world's foremost authority on plants and animals. He can tell you the common and Latin names for almost every plant and animal he encounters. He has tremendous drive, and a thirst for an ever greater understanding of the natural world. He's one of those geniuses who can look like an idiot at times. Or perhaps he's an idiot who's capable of genius. Only members of the British peerage can have the sort of wide-eyed optimism that typifies Nigel. And only the same ancient system of Lords and



Dukes could produce as big a twit as Nigel. His greatest dream is to discover a new species that he could name after his lovely wife, Marianne. The problem is, he never finds a new species that measures up to his idealized picture of his wife. But Nigel has good reason to put his wife on a pedestal. Because while he has an encyclopedic knowledge of the natural world, the eyes of an eagle and the nose of a bloodhound, it is the focused, practical Marianne who actually makes the nature show happen.

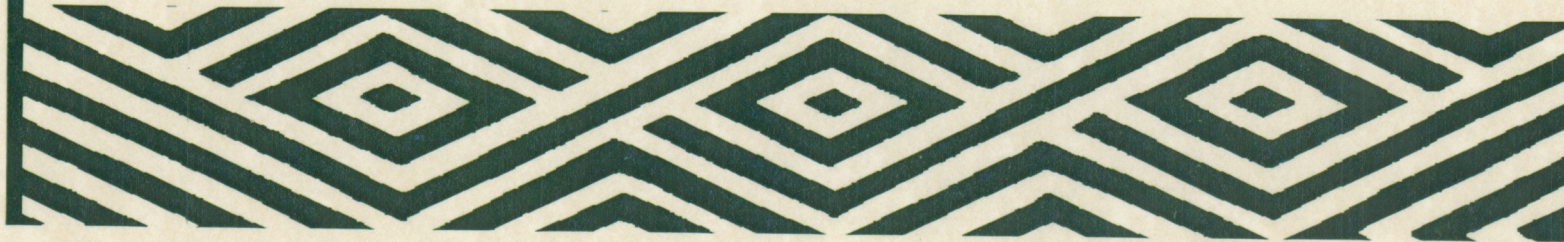
Fueled by a genuine love of nature, and a clumsy but sincere love for his wife and family, Nigel is like an innocent child filled with unbridled enthusiasm and a truly enviable sense of wonder. Nigel Thornberry can see every sunset as if it were his first. You may attribute this to a Zen-like wisdom, or an absolute lack of long-term memory. With Nigel it is never quite clear. But as far as his work goes, almost nothing can dampen Nigel's love for the outdoors, or his enthusiasm about what might lie beyond the next hill, or across the next ocean.

When he watches the Kombi get washed away by a monsoon, Nigel happily organizes an impromptu



rafting trip to retrieve the van. If he finds himself hanging from the branch of a tiny tree growing out of a rocky cliff, he'll discover an as-yet unknown strain of Kwambi vine, forgetting completely that he's a finger's slip away from certain death. We can't help but admire his genuine enthusiasm for the world around us.

As far as his family goes, Nigel is less of a genius. And while he loves and values his family more than anything, he's a little slow on the uptake when it comes to his two daughters. But Nigel can surprise you. Out of nowhere his childlike intuition will surface, and Nigel will say or do just the right thing to let his wife or daughters know how much he cares for them. Nigel's respect and admiration for his wife, Marianne, is boundless. He knows full well that there are a great many things that he's absolutely hopeless at doing, and cheerfully accepts his wife's friendly "suggestions" as far as map-reading, child rearing and other activities that Nigel doesn't have much of a handle on. Marianne also keeps Nigel focused and on track as they complete assignments for the television show. When she has to Marianne will tell her husband, honestly, what he's doing wrong and why his daughters have locked him out of the Kombi.

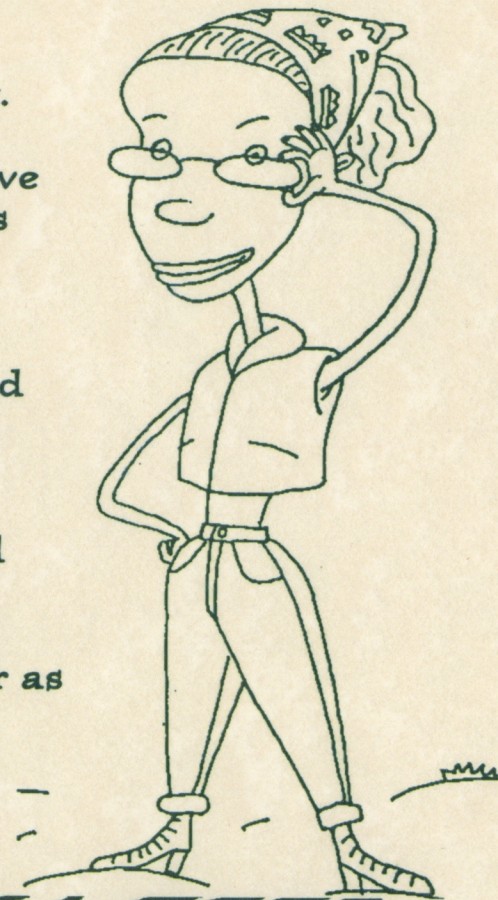


Marianne Thornberry

Committed Filmmaker, Nervous Mother, Wants to do the right thing all the time, 36 years-old.

If the Thornberry family doesn't complete their documentary assignments, they will lose their funding. If they lose their funding they will have to sell their Kombi and move back to Nigel's ancestral home and live with his aging Mum. The reason this doesn't happen is simple: Marianne Thornberry.

Marianne is the comic island of sanity amidst the whirlwind of the Thornberry family. As committed and knowledgeable as Nigel is about the natural world, Marianne is an equally committed and talented documentarian and filmmaker. But where Nigel is sometimes sidetracked by his skewed view of the world and unbelievably short attention span, Marianne's conflict comes as she tries to be both award-winning filmmaker and just as wonderful and devoted a mother as she can be.



Marianne does not just function as mother, and the technical end of the Thornberry TV team. She's also her girls' tutor, assigning the girls daily schoolwork. Because the Thornberry's are constantly on the move, Marianne, wants to give her daughters a very conventional home environment to grow up in. She encourages the girls to take on overly conventional hobbies. She pushes them toward conventional careers, and wants desperately for them to show no negative effects of their jungle upbringing. So after a morning with Nigel, and an afternoon in the editing bay, she still manages to serve a piping hot tuna and corn chip casserole. Of course, she has to substitute crispy Locusts for corn chips, which is a little hard on everyone but Donnie, whose tastes run in a buggy direction.

Marianne's concern for her children is, in fact, one of the reasons that Eliza keeps her ability to talk to animals a secret. Marianne is painfully sensitive about the fact that raising her children in the wild might have a negative effect on their abilities to live in more conventional surroundings. Her desire for her daughters to grow up as well-adjusted, normal young women is very, very strong. Eliza knows this, and knows how her mother would react if Eliza told her that she'd spent the day talking to a group of Hippos.

As far as her relationship with Nigel goes, Marianne sees her husband more clearly and lovingly than anyone. She sees the genius behind his scatterbrained behavior, and more often than not forgives his mistakes as she gently guides him back toward the couple's objectives both in the family and



in their television show. Marianne is the line producer of Nigel's life. Marianne doesn't see her husband through rose-colored glasses. She simply loves him for the things that he is good at, and forgives him for his many and comic shortcomings. She loves him the way someone would love a great but temperamental artist. And she provides the structure and the logic that if he were alone, his life would lack.

In her gentle, but unwavering way, Marianne is the force that keeps Nigel focused. She is in charge of getting the pictures and producing the show. And if she lets Nigel wander off in search of the lost city on Endor, the Thornberrys are not going to get their assignment, they're going to lose their funding, and ultimately find themselves living with Nigel's Mum. Something neither Marianne nor Nigel, both adventurers, sees as terribly appealing.

These assignments, and the family's funding, come from a mysterious and unseen foundation. It is like one of those totally unfamiliar groups that fund public television, like The Chubb Group, or the John and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The Foundation defines what the Thornberry's are looking to put on tape. And since getting the footage is directly connected to the Thornberrys' continued funding, The Foundation will supply an

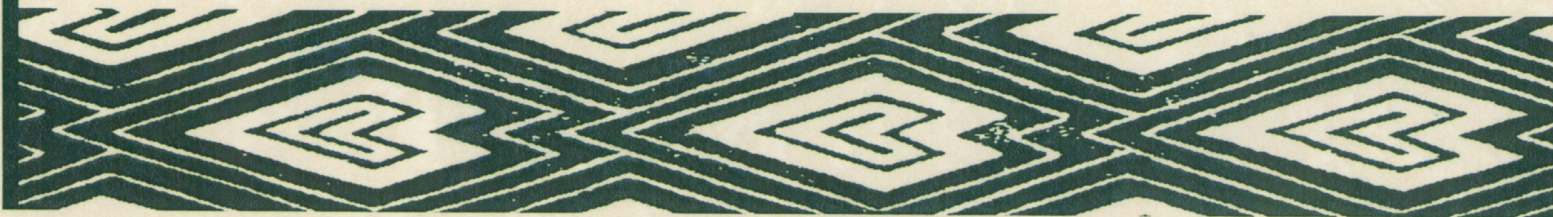


imperative objective for Marianne, and a distinct reason for keeping her husband on track.

It's not easy to rattle Marianne, but when she's rattled, she tends to spiral into melodramatic pessimism. A flat tire, even in the middle of the Sahara desert, doesn't bother Marianne. A flat tire and no water might worry Marianne the littlest bit, but she wouldn't show it. But add to that the disappearance of the can opener, and in thirty seconds flat, Marianne Thornberry will be convinced that Western Civilization, as we know it, has come to an end.

Ask Marianne what it's like to travel the world with her family, and this is what she'd say:

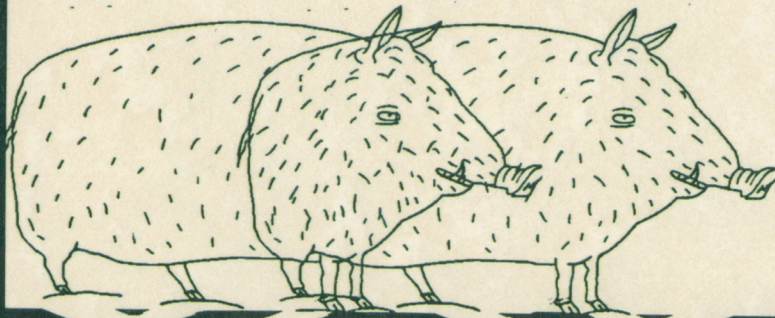
"I don't know, is it irresponsible for a mother to try to raise two daughters in the middle of nowhere? I don't think so. You just have to make sure their environment is as stable and regular as if they were all back in Canoga Park. Of course, that's a little tough when you sit down to dinner with a chimpanzee and a little boy who was raised by Orangutans.



D e b b i e

Pouty, Thin, Self-aware and self-serving, 16 years old.

Debbie Thornberry is an anachronism. She is a mystery. She is a combination of seemingly conflicting qualities constantly at war within herself. If this is getting too complicated, let's just say Debbie is a teenager. She loves her family more than anything, but would rather die than let any of them know it. While secretly she's proud and protective of her little sister, Debbie is still embarrassed to be seen anywhere near Eliza. Debbie just wants to be cool. But just like each of us, Debbie has "uncool" moments of genuine love for her



family and interest and enthusiasm.

On the surface, Debbie Thornberry is a walking, talking teenage stereotype. She is selfish and susceptible to every possible fad and fashion that she can pull off the short-wave radio. She would never want to leave the family, but still longs for a group of teenage friends to "hang" with. Debbie treats the family's travels not as an adventure, it's a prison sentence.

"Could you stand somewhere else, Dweeberella? You're embarrassing me."

But far from being just a whining teenager sitting on her butt, Debbie calls on all her intelligence and imagination to build, use, exploit and manipulate the world around her to make it more "teenage-friendly." She is the show's squeaky wheel, but rather than just complain, Debbie is capable of great courage and forcefulness, but only where her own interests are concerned. She doesn't complain about not having a shower. Instead, she cheerfully uses the last of the drinking water in order to shower. When she runs out of face-pack, she unrolls the topo map and heads for the banks of the Zambezi in order to get more mud. This of course, leaves Eliza alone to work her particular mischief,



puts Debbie into danger, and brings Debbie into the show in a real way.

Debbie is capable of acts of heroism and intelligence, but she finds the whole sentimental attachment to family a little nauseating. She criticizes her sister's inquisitive nature, her father's love of the wild, her mother's desire to see her be polite and well-mannered, and Donnie's manic behavior. Debbie's contempt for her younger sister is born of a genuine respect for a Eliza. Even though Debbie has no idea her sister can speak to animals, she sees that Eliza is capable and intelligent. Debbie will abuse Eliza to no end, but if someone else insults Debbie's younger sister, watch out!

But Debbie is not simply a petulant, complaining teenager, because as sour as Debbie may seem, she's actually not that adept at playing the role of dissatisfied teen. She's given to fits of actual enthusiasm, which are no end of embarrassment to her.

Throughout ensuing episodes we will get a sense of Debbie's deep love for her family. And throughout the show, we will appreciate Debbie's grudging respect for Eliza and her parents. In truth, Debbie's only problem may be that she's a teenager, and as such, hormonally predisposed to being somewhat disagreeable. Life in the jungle simply doesn't agree with Debbie.



Donnie

The feral Jungle-boy, maybe 4 years old. A terror.

Did you ever wonder why Tarzan, raised by apes, spoke any English at all? If a child was left in the jungle, isn't it more likely that he'd act a lot more like an animal than an English Lord in a Speedo? Donnie is that child: manic, destructive, mysterious and maddening.

Donnie was discovered eating bugs from Eliza's collection of beetles while the family was visiting Borneo. With Nigel's help, Marianne trapped the growling, screeching child and took him to the nearest group of headhunters to see if he belonged to them. The Dyak tribesmen, known for their viciousness, hid in their huts when they saw Donnie coming. The Chieftain pointed Marianne toward a family of Orangutans who had raised him,



but they didn't want this holy terror either.

With nowhere else to take the child, the Thornberry's adopted this whirlwind of a jungle boy. Since then, Donnie has been a constant source of mischief, eating beetles, climbing into the mouths of pythons, waking sleeping lions, and forcing Eliza, Bobo and sometimes even Debbie to come to the rescue. He is agile, surprisingly strong, and completely untamable. He also has some of the same heroic qualities as Lassie the Collie. Donnie knows when something is wrong, and can apply skill and strength to saving the day just as easily as he can to dismantling the camper. But try to thank him for saving your life and he'll bite your leg and scamper back into the bush.

But there is one strange thing about this force for chaos in the Thornberry family. His very mysterious past sometimes manifests itself in interesting ways. If he was simply raised by Orangutans, why, when you least expect it, does Donnie leap, screaming, onto the dinner table and set each place perfectly? Somewhere in Donnie's past is a very regal upbringing. Marianne almost obsesses on the question of Donnie's mysterious origin.



Logically, each character will want to mold the seemingly amorphous Donnie into what he or she wants the child to be. For Nigel the naturalist, it may be the missing link. For Marianne the mother, it might be a polite child. That drive is a great cause of comedy and confusion when you consider that just beneath the surface, the feral Donnie has a much greater understanding of manners and culture than anyone. If Marianne tries to teach Donnie to eat custard, he will fight her, not because he is untamed, but because he'd prefer Creme Brulé.

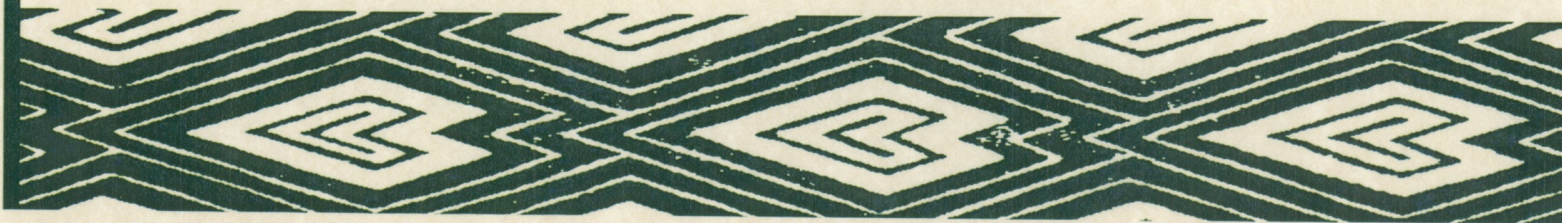
Donnie's mysterious past is also the source of some loneliness in Donnie. The range of emotions he may display are as vast as in any member of the Thornberry family. The difference is when Debbie gets upset she pouts. When Donnie gets upset he's probably going to chew up Nigel's favorite shoes and dismantle the short-wave radio. He's Tarzan, if Tarzan had been played by a young Harpo Marx.

Donnie speaks almost exclusively in grunts



and hand signs. When a word, or even a sentence slips out, no one's ever sure if Donnie has any idea what he's just said. When asked about living with the Thornberry family, Donnie replied:

"OOOOG, BhaaaPFFT, Woof, Itchy, itchy. Bug Steak Caviar? Ooph. BaBaBaRrrraahhh. Pleasure to make your acquaintance. Brrrruppt--Yaaaaaaa!



B o b o

A fastidious, neurotic, overlay dramatic Chimpanzee. Age unknown.

In a family this size you'd expect one member to be completely, totally, ill-suited to life in the wild. There is one: Bobo, the Chimpanzee. Since the day Bobo snuck into the Kombi and used all of Debbie's Prell, he's stuck so closely to the Thornberrys (and their grooming products) that they've come to think of him as just another hairier member of the family. As long as they have human food, grooming aids and bug repellent, Bobo will always be nearby. Bobo has rather delicate sensibilities: he is clean to the point of being obsessive, and neurotic to the point of being phobic. But when Nigel and Marianne discovered that Eliza had taken a shining to Bobo, they welcomed him into their unconventional family. Of course, they don't realize that Eliza can actually talk to him. To the rest of the Thornberry family, he's just a moody, temperamental, somewhat neurotic, obsessive/compulsive Chimpanzee.

"Eliza? Where are you going? Didn't your mother



tell us we had to stay by the Kombi, Eliza? Eliza, wait for me. Honestly, you think I'd let you come out here alone? Now, all right, we're here. Now let's go home, okay? Monkeys? You want me to help you speak to a filthy bunch of monkeys? Not a chance. Eliza? Wait for me."

Bobo never wants to go along with Eliza on her adventures, but he never wants to be left alone either. He never wants to help, but he's a pushover for flattery, and has a deathly fear of being re-introduced to the wild. Basically, Bobo knows the protocol of the animal world, and is perfectly willing to make suggestions. But Bobo is not always right. Maybe 70% of the time he knows exactly what Eliza should do, and the rest of the time, they find themselves offending some very dangerous characters.

But Bobo is more than just a fastidious hanger-on. He has proven to be a good friend to Eliza, and a perfect lieutenant to her role as leader of their band of three. For Bobo to be a likable character he must be someone, who in spite of his own fears, will stand up for his friends (in this case, the adventurous Eliza). If Bobo was a healthy chimpanzee, his coming to Eliza's aid would not be terribly interesting, but as a neurotic Chimp, filled with fears and an exaggerated sense of self importance, Bobo's help often comes only after he can overcome his own problems. Bobo is a very



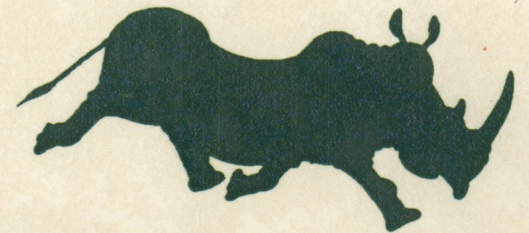
...introduction

Nigel Thornberry's Animal World is a half-hour action-comedy that revolves around the hapless, heartfelt and always hilarious lives of the loving, but very unconventional Thornberry clan. While the scatter-brained naturalist Nigel Thornberry lends the show his name, it is the entire Thornberry family that lies at the true center of Nigel Thornberry's Animal World. As the Thornberrys travel the world searching for new species, highlighting the habits of existing ones, and trying to document the plight of the embattled animal kingdom, their internal conflicts form the foundation for Nigel Thornberry's Animal World. On the way, they encounter every problem that any normal family of four might have, as well as all the things that can happen to this strange, but loving family as they find themselves in incredible situations and exotic locations all over the globe. While Nigel may be the patriarch of the Thornberry clan, and his own nature program may give the family its

motivation to wander the globe, he and his wife are fueled by a desire to slow the destruction of the natural world. But the true center of the family, and the focus of our program, is his intelligent, inquisitive sometimes stubborn daughter, Eliza. Like most 11 year-olds, Eliza Thornberry is often frustrated by her parents' tendency to see her as "the baby" of the family. Sometimes ignored, sometimes coddled unnecessarily, she always craves a more important place in the family's hierarchy. She's smarter than her parents realize and a little bored with the day-to-day grind of school work and chores, and she's often exasperated, and dismissed by her older sister. In other words, Eliza is growing up like a lot of us did. But beyond that, Eliza has a thirst for adventure that can often land the girl in hot water.

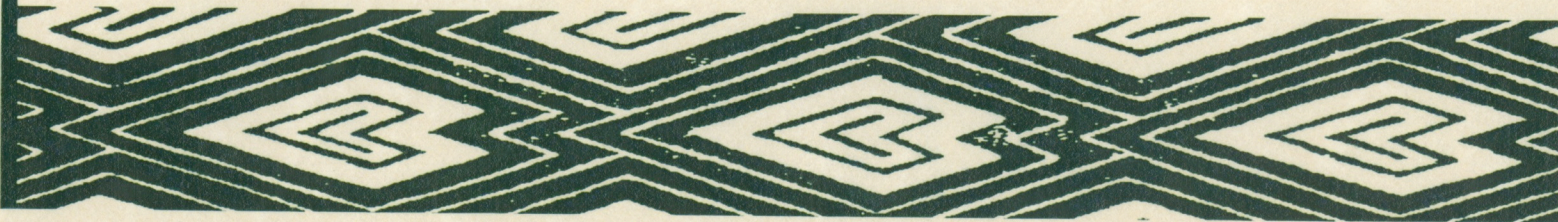
There is one other thing...

As her father lay on in impromptu operating table, suffering the effects of a Rhino stampede, Eliza wandered into the path of the witch doctor who was



putting Nigel back together. He was in the middle of calling on the animal spirits--and the net result was that Eliza walked out of the operation with the ability to communicate with animals. She exchanges grunts and growls and howls and snorts with all sorts of animals, often discovering that their cooperation, when she can get it, can be the key to keeping her family on track and resolving some of the conflicts that naturally arise when you live in the jungle with your somewhat scatter-brained father, your pragmatic film-maker mother, and a teenage sister that doesn't want to give you the time of day.

And while Eliza is still pretty clumsy in the art of animal communication, a few of the right words to the right animal are often just the thing to keep the family together and on track. Her ability to talk to animals is Eliza's edge, her wild-card, the inexact skill that she can sometimes call upon when the family's problems cannot be solved in a normal, everyday family way. And the Thornberry's problems, as they try to protect the animal kingdom through their documentary nature program, are not your everyday problems.



And they're not your everyday family. Not when you consider that aside from two daughters the Thornberry family includes a neurotic, phobic, very human chimpanzee, and a wild little boy of mysterious origins who cannot, or will not talk in anything but grunts and growls. While Eliza's actions put her in the center of most of our episodes, every character, from the wild, feral jungle boy Donnie to Eliza's petulant, self-obsessed sister, Debbie, are complex and complete enough to justify finding themselves at the center of upcoming episodes. And while we'll meet members of the animal kingdom, and learn about the natural world from one pole to the other--in the end, Nigel Thornberry's Animal World is about the family and how they live together, all the while discovering endless ways to get themselves in and out of trouble from Borneo to Burundi.



The Witch Doctor

An emotionally fragile magician responsible for Eliza's condition.

Sometimes, when Eliza has backed herself into a particularly nasty corner, and finds herself on the African continent, she can call on the Witch Doctor who cast the initial spell that enabled her to talk to animals. It is no easy task, summoning him to whatever cliff or cave she finds herself in, but it can be done. Eliza may set off the bush telegraph by asking an elephant to trumpet a call, or by handing a written message to a Swift on its way south for the winter. Once in a great while, he may even appear in some completely different context. He may climb out of the water in the South Pole, dressed in scuba gear, and on his way to a Witch Doctor's convention, or show up in Australia looking for someone to tune his Digeridoo. However she summons the Witch Doctor, when he does arrive, Eliza is never quite sure calling him was the best idea. While the tendency is to think of him as an Obi-wan Kenobi to her Luke Skywalker--forget it. He's a lot closer to the Wizard of Oz, especially after Toto pulled aside the curtain and revealed his true identity.



His power is not absolute or infallible. In fact, even though he appears to be rather menacing, he is light-hearted, and a bit clumsy. And often times he only arrives to report that he has no idea what to do. And considering that messages reach him over miles and travel by animal, Eliza's calls for help are often garbled beyond recognition by the time he gets them. He still shows up, but carrying a chamois instead of a blowgun. But somewhere in the midst of his faulty spells and seemingly useless talismans are a few words of wisdom, that will help Eliza find her own way out of her problem.

While he is an adult and an authority. His wisdom and importance never supersede those of Eliza's parents. Even though Nigel may seem misguided, and Marianne overwrought, they are still the ones who help Eliza when it matters. But there are some things that a little girl can't talk about with her parents. And when Eliza needs advice involving her conversations with animals, she often sends a message out to the Witch Doctor. Sometimes it even turns out to be worth it.

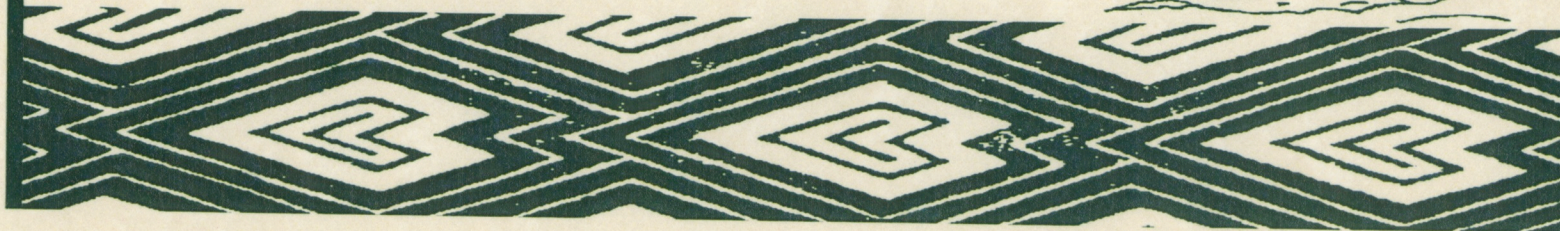
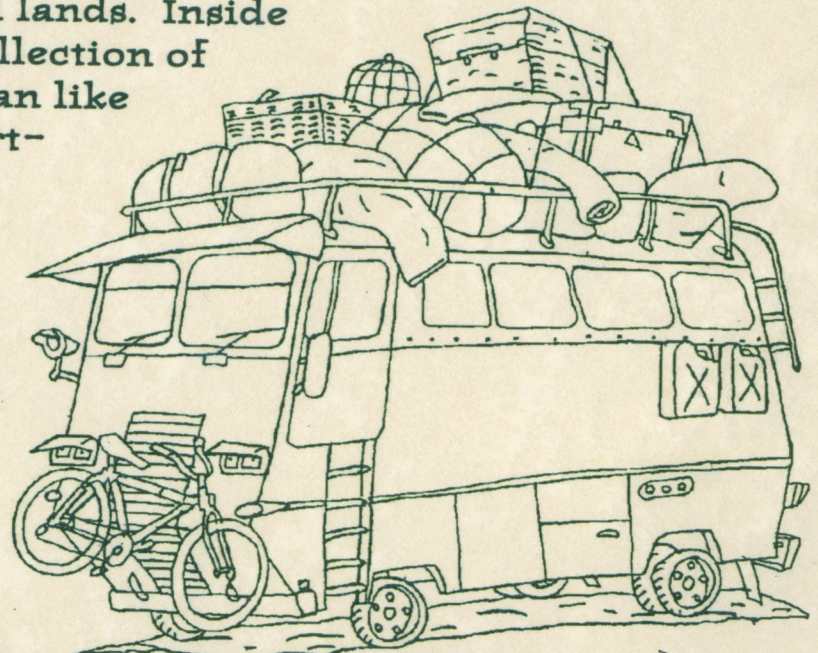


The Kombi

A VW van outfitted for traveling.

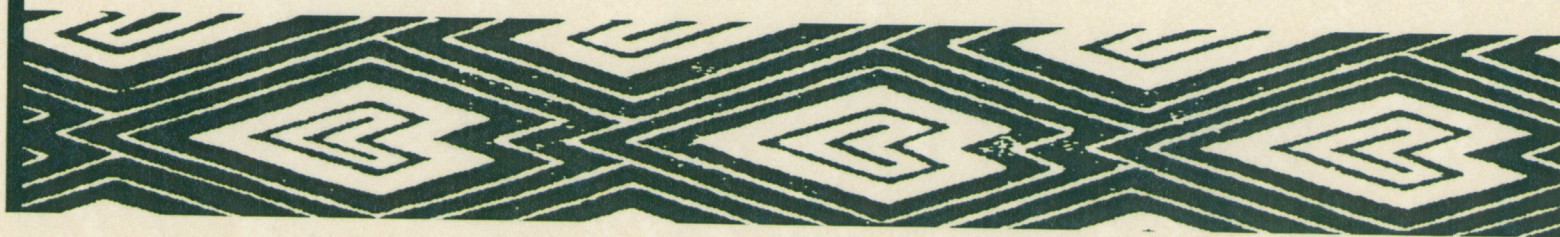
For the Thornberry's ramshackle bus, "outfitted" may be an understatement. The Kombi is the Thornberry's home away from home. Like Jacques Cousteau's floating laboratory, The Calypso, the Kombi is their refuge in untamed lands. Inside the Kombi are beds, a table, and an endless collection of useful items that fold out of the walls of the van like an editing deck, a microwave oven, and a short-wave radio.

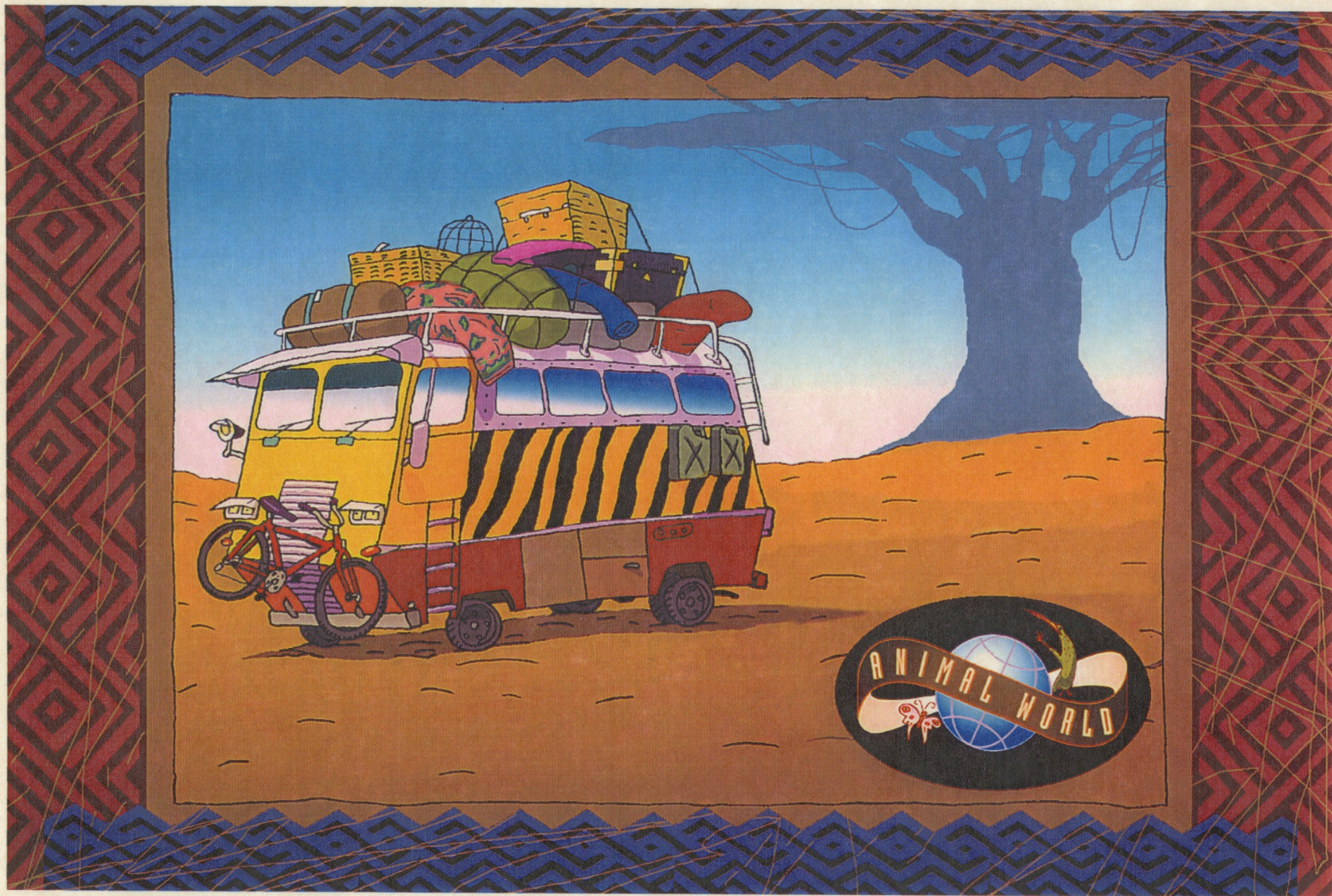
The Kombi is far from a super-vehicle, however. It is not always reliable, and has none of the magical qualities of Felix the Cat's inexhaustible bag of tricks. There is a lot that you will find in the Kombi, but nothing beyond what the family needs for their daily lives, the production of the television show and whatever foreseeable emergencies might arise.



When the Thornberrys need to travel by water, they will have to strap the Kombi to a barge. When they cross the desert, they may find themselves hiring a few Camels to tow the Kombi through the roughest spots. These realities may motivate stories as the family finds it necessary to customize the Kombi to meet the demands of the varied environments they find themselves in.

Most of the family business is conducted outside the van. Meals are generally served under a large awning that extends from the side doors. Except for Marianne's editing bay, the van is more of a closet than anything else, the family generally sleeping in large wall tents like the ones used by big game hunters in Africa, and American soldiers in the Civil War.





A d v e r s a r i e s

H u n t e r s , c o m p e t i t o r s , w e a t h e r

When you think of the Thornberry family traveling the world, don't think of it like a camping trip. The Thornberry's are often beyond the edge of even the most rudimentary civilization. They are often at nature's mercy. There are floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and every possible natural disaster. While these are attractive catalysts for stories, never think it's enough just to have the Kombi washed away by a flash-flood, or an earthquake create a crevice between Eliza and the other members of the family. That's not a story, but it is a good place to begin.

The same thing is true of all the humans the Thornberrys will encounter as they travel. There are hunters, seemingly wild tribes, poachers, and developers. But not all of their obstacles are animal-related. The funding for Nigel's films is always in danger of being pulled by The Foundation. Add to that his long-standing rivalry with another smarmy documentarian who will do anything to see Nigel fail. Plus, the family will cross paths with numerous thieves and con artists, animal activists and Eco-terrorists.

All these humans may appear in Nigel Thornberry's Animal World, and may cause some problems. But just as with the animals, think of each of these characters as an individual whose role as antagonist rises not out of the fact that he's simply a hunter, but



because of what kind of person he is. While these characters lend an element of action to the story, they also run the risk of moving us in racist and simplistic directions, so always think of them as individuals. Not every logger is bad, and not every tribesmen has a bone in his nose and a grass skirt. Our world is not so cut and dried, and neither is the one the Thornberrys live in.



The Location

A r e c u r r i n g c h a r a c t e r

Nigel Thornberry's Animal World is a show about the natural world, and in many ways the natural world is the show's true star. Every story, therefore, must be unique to the environment it is set in. Whatever the story's theme, and whichever character finds him or herself in the center of the story, always keep in mind the location and its physical characteristics.

The qualities of the location: the weather, the topography, the flora and fauna should play a role in every story we tell. A story about mistaken identity and mistaken assumptions will naturally be very different if it takes place in Africa rather than the Antarctic. The qualities of each environment we visit will define it much the same way specific character traits define each of the Thornberrys. The location, then, is as much of a character as any human character in the story.

To allow us to completely explore our locations, we will remain in each general location for five episodes. While we can travel within a location during that five episode stretch, the general environment will remain constant. This way we can take full advantage of the many aspects of each location that make it



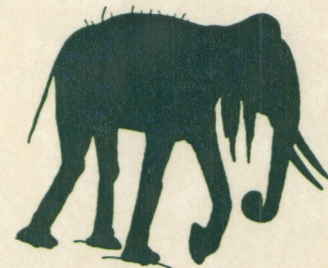
unique. Even though the stories share characters and elements unique to each environment, they are not linked in any other material way. The episodes themselves are completely free-standing.

Nigel Thornberry's Animal World is about a family traveling the world. The problems they encounter in the Savannah, and the way the Thornberrys solve those problems will be very different from the problems that confront them along the Amazon. It is a series about nature, and nature will function as a character, displaying all its moods and shadings.

For the first season we are looking for dramatic Eco-systems that are defined by their climate and biodiversity. This is a very preliminary list of locations that we expect to visit in the first season:

African Savannah and Grasslands to the edge of the Sahara
Amazon, Rainforests of interior Brazil
North Africa, Desert, Nile River
India North to Nepal and the foothills of Mount Everest
The Galapagos Islands and the Northern Andes (Machu Pichu)
New Guinea, New Zealand and the Great Barrier Reef
Southern Africa from the Zambezi River east to Madagascar
Southern Andes to Tierra Del Fuego and Antarctica

Expect these to change somewhat as the season goes on.

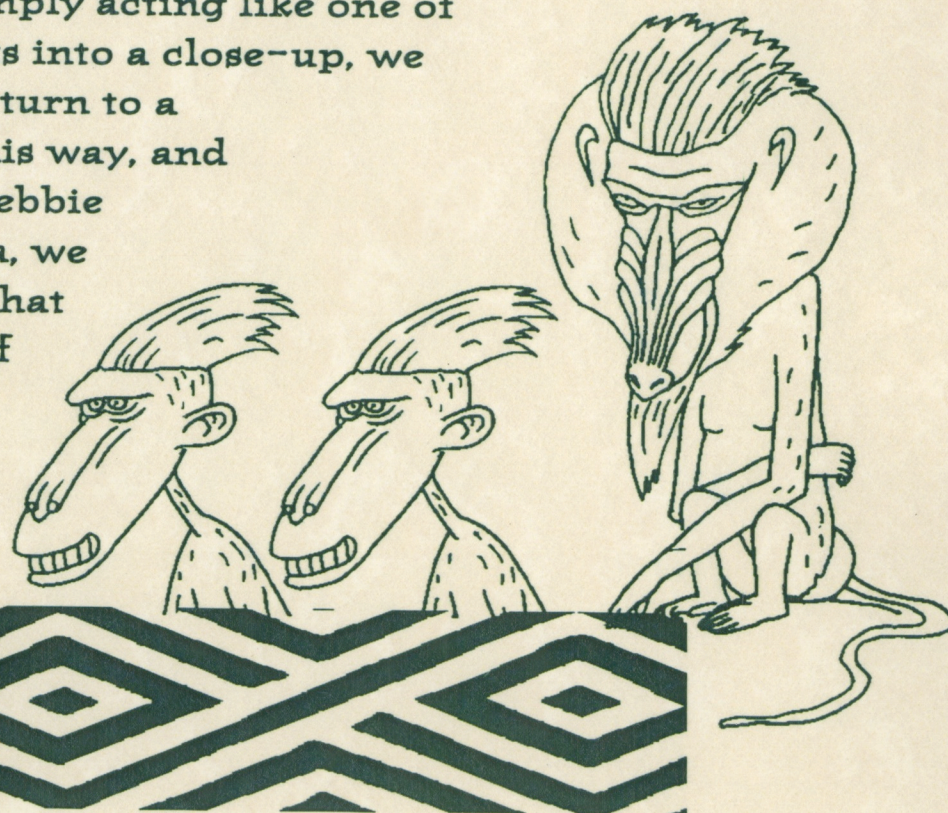




The Animal World

A parade of idiosyncratic characters used sparingly

As far as the mechanics of Eliza's animal interactions go, she can only communicate to animals in their own particular style. That means she will assume the stance of the animal, move like the animal if she can, and make noises similar to those that come out of the animal. If we see this activity from a distance, it will look as if Eliza is simply acting like one of the animals, but when the camera cuts into a close-up, we will hear the distant hoots and howls turn to a language we recognize. By cutting this way, and periodically letting bystanders like Debbie stumble onto a howling, braying Eliza, we will constantly remind the audience that Eliza is making animal sounds, even if we, the audience, often hear their speech as English.



Now, what about those talking animals? Well, these aren't the cutesy, perfectly voiced creatures of Bambi or the super-anthropomorphic characters of The Lion King. They are animals. And they're not necessarily easy to talk to. And the answers Eliza gets aren't always articulate.

Upper order animals, like Bobo, Orangutans and Gorillas are easy to talk to. And Eliza's conversations with Bobo, although sometimes whispered, sound very much like normal human conversations. And logically, these upper order animals have emotions closer to our own. Down the evolutionary ladder animals become less articulate. Think of a voice coming out of a hippo. It wouldn't sound like a chimpanzee, would it? And the animals we encounter can be just as petty as humans, and while they can communicate across species lines, rarely will an animal in the kingdom lower himself to do it. This often leaves



Eliza in a complicated position of navigating in an animal world that has much of the pettiness and ignorance of the adult world that we are all too familiar with. And the further we travel down the evolutionary ladder, the harder it is for Eliza to figure out a way to establish a rapport with the animals. By the time we get to bugs there is little that Eliza can do but crawl around on the ground and try to mime tiny signals to the passing ants and beetles.

There are other problems as well. Dangerous animals also tend to have volatile personalities. There is always an element of risk in communicating with Jaguar or a Wolverine.

But while the animals have distinct personalities, an animal will very rarely find itself at the center of a story. Animals sometimes prove to be very helpful, or very troublesome, but they are only a part of our story to deepen it. Nigel



Thornberry's Animal World is, after all about the Thornberry family, Bobo and Donnie. While we may meet an agoraphobic Camel, overcome by anxiety at having to face another trip through the Sahara or a group of Baboons who are touchy about their blue rear-ends, they will serve the story, not motivate it.

As far as Eliza's communicating with animals, it should never become something we see in every show. And it should never be something we see just because we expect it. When a plot involves animals, and one of them needs talking to, Eliza will talk. But it's just as possible that a story in Nigel Thornberry's Animal World will revolve around the family and never demand Eliza talk to anyone but family members and Bobo. Just as a plot in Nigel Thornberry's Animal World can exist without Eliza being at its center, a plot about Eliza can exist without animal communication being its reason for being.



...overview

Nigel Thornberry's Animal World is a half-hour action comedy. Using the entire 22 minutes to tell a single story allows us to explore not only the characters and relationships in each episode, but the tremendous opportunity for physical comedy offered by each of our vast and varied locations. In Nigel Thornberry's Animal World we are striving for equal parts of action and character. Nigel Thornberry's Animal World, therefore, is either a fast paced action/comedy, exceptional for its depth of character, or a character comedy unique in its almost constant action.

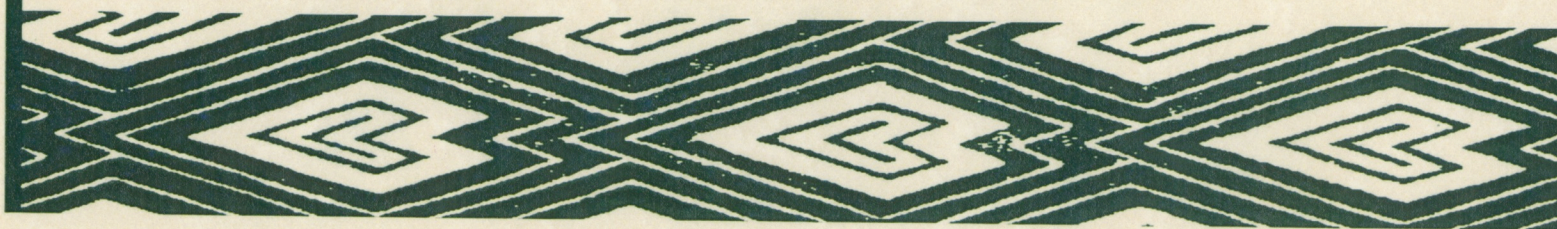
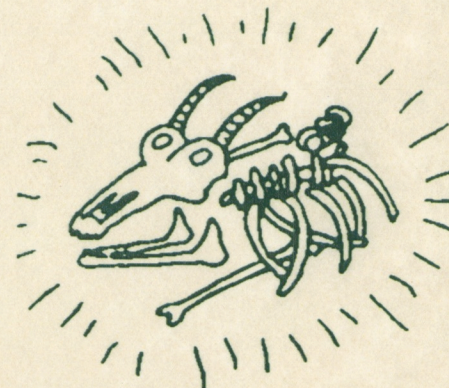
The Thornberrys may not look like a typical family, with their transient lives and their idiosyncratic companions, but in many ways, the Thornberry family should seem very familiar. First there is the optimistic, wandering adventurer of a father whose love for his family is not always clearly expressed, but is always understood. Then there is the embattled mother, balancing her career and her desire to provide a stable environment for her two daughters. There



is the intransigent, uncommunicative teenager whose seeming lack of interest masks a human, caring character. And finally, there is Eliza, an eleven year-old girl who knows and sees more than anyone imagines.

Eliza can talk to animals, and that makes her a doorway into a world that we actually know very little about. She is also a character who is somewhat misunderstood, and perhaps even undervalued by her family. That too will make her a familiar and sympathetic protagonist. But Eliza is by no means the only interesting member of the Thornberry family. And while the other characters will mature and "grow" into stories of their own, Eliza will remain in the forefront, a young person with a special skill, a penchant for trouble and a way of seeing the world that looks a lot like ours at home.

With the broad comedic strokes painted by Nigel and Donnie and the characterizations of the animals that Eliza encounters, the show should appeal to a broad audience. Younger kids will connect with the show's adventure and slapstick elements. Older kids will identify with the characters and what's at stake for each of them. Finally,



adults will get a kick out of the sometimes petty, always recognizable characterizations of the animals that populate the natural world, and connect with the realistic, but rather skewed dynamic in the Thornberry family.

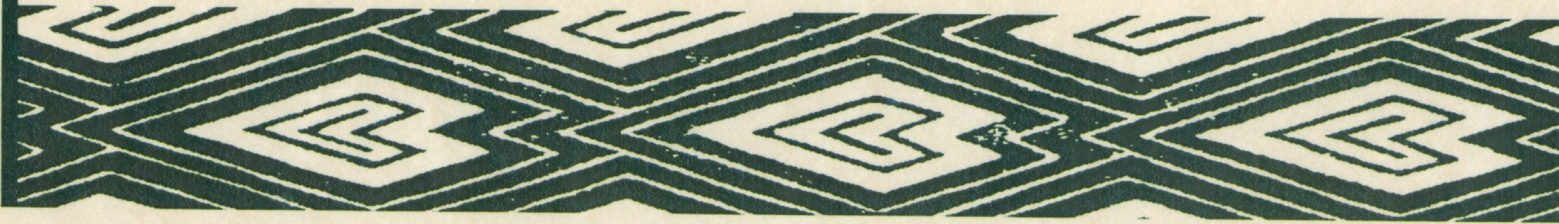


WRITER'S DO's AND DONT's

Nigel and Marianne love their children. And while they may be busy, don't make them seem aloof or disinterested. If they choose to exclude the kids and Bobo from a specific adventure, make sure they have a reason.

Eliza's ability to talk to animals is far from perfect, and takes some work. Use it only when it's necessary to the story. If Eliza is talking to an animal, it's because she has a distinct need, not just to do a joke. Explore the other characters as completely as you do Eliza.

Bobo is a cogent, capable ally for Eliza. But remember that his "delicate sensibilities" make his help often more trouble than it's worth.



Give Donnie lots of physical business. If he doesn't play a role in a particular episode, make sure he's in the background being destructive or disruptive. But never make him unrealistically destructive. He is just curious, and untamed.

Remember that while Debbie puts her own needs first, she has no problem getting along with her sister if she thinks Eliza can help her get something that she wants.

Remember that while Nigel will put himself in considerable physical danger, he may well be exceedingly overprotective about his family. Eliza may perceive it as an infuriating lack of trust.

Marianne often functions as a cheerleader, trying to convince Eliza that being left behind (in Debbie's care) is great and wonderful.

Marianne tries, sometimes against all odds, to be supportive of her dim-witted husband.



Nigel Thornberry is a dim bulb, but a positive, cheerful, enthusiastic one.

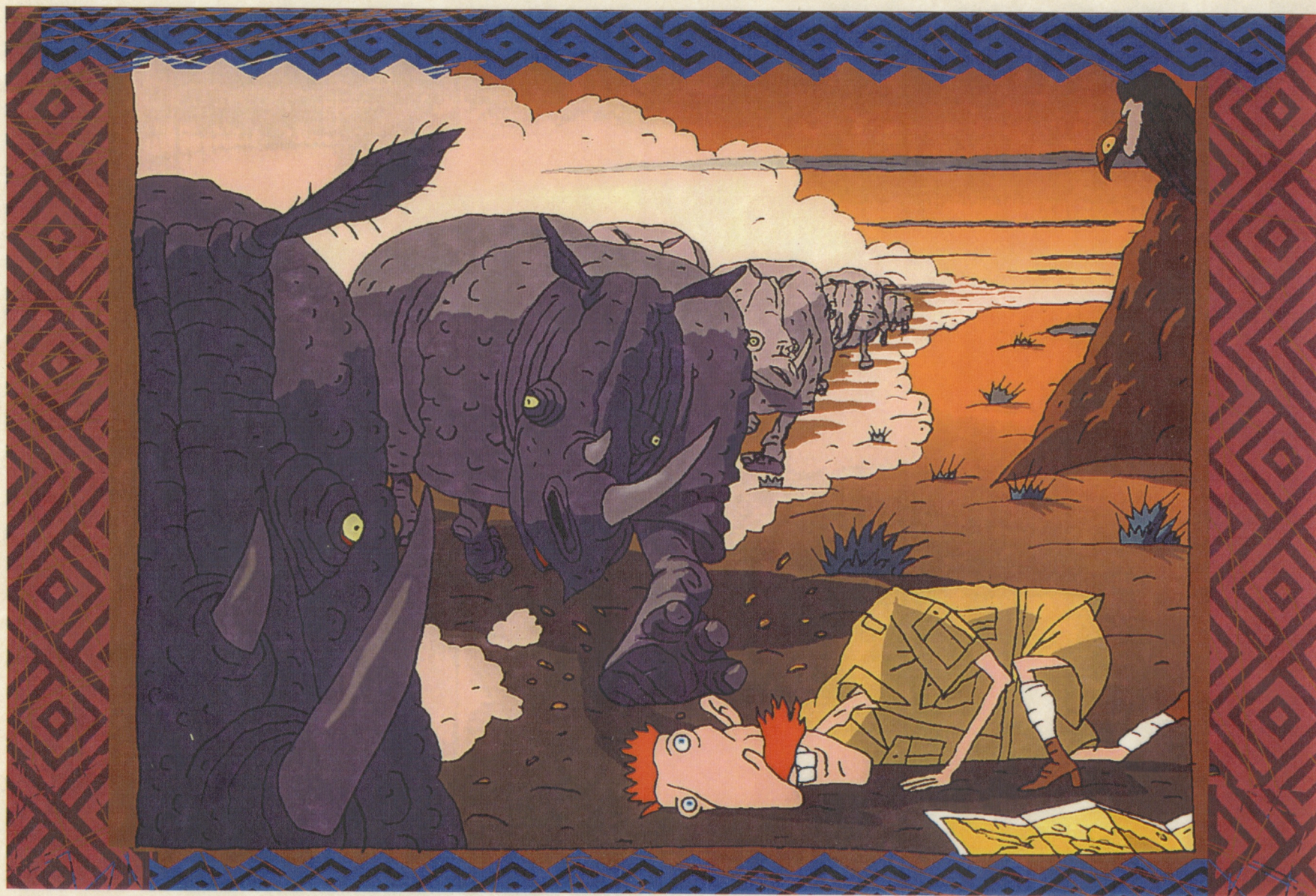
Keep cuteness to a minimum. Think anti-cute when writing animals. Being an animal is a lot of work, and no one knows it more than the animals do. Make clear and consistent character choices for the animal characters. It is not enough for a character simply to be a Penguin. Think past that. What kind of Penguin is he?

Try to have a reason for every choice you make. Remember, simply being funny, especially at the expense of story or character, is not a good reason to do anything.









Donnie



the wild kid





