



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 10, 2011

Zookeeper, Starring Kevin James

Kind-hearted Zookeeper Griffin Keyes (Kevin James) is in love with the beautiful Stephanie (Leslie Bibb), and as such, proposes to her. Unfortunately, she rejects his proposal because she is embarrassed by his profession as a zookeeper. Five years later, Griffin has moved up to lead Zookeeper, and apparently has acquired the ability to talk to animals.



After five years, Griffin's brother is getting married, bringing Stephanie back into Griffin's life, and Griffin is beside himself with optimism. However, despite the progress he has made in his career, he continues to behave in the same awkward, clumsy way around Stephanie as he did five years earlier, and requires some much needed advice that will help him win back his true love. That's where the talking animals come in. Unfortunately for Griffin, some of the advice offered by the animals does not transition well in the world of humans.

Meanwhile, Stephanie continues to encourage Griffin to consider a career change.

And, as if Griffin is not enduring enough, Stephanie's ex-boyfriend Gale also arrives on the scene, once again as Griffin's greatest rival. And the presence of a friendly female co-worker, Kate (Rosario Dawson), who seems to take an interest in Griffin, may prove to complicate matters even further.

Ultimately, Griffin is torn between two loves: his job, or Stephanie.

Zookeeper proves to be a perfect film for Kevin James, as it sets the stage for the niche that James has created for himself in films as a clumsy and awkward man who struggles to get the girl but is plagued with self-doubt. By the same token, James brings his classic brand of comedy to the screen for the very same reason.

The talking animals in the film serve more as co-stars than as movie props, and the interactions are both genuine and comical.

Joe (Sylvester Stallone) and Janet (Cher), two lions, engage in comical banter throughout the film, while Jerome (Jon Favreau) and Bruce (Faizon Love), both bears, engage in a friendly antagonistic relationship that often results in witty outbursts. Both relationships add a level of hilarity to the film.

The advice that Griffin is offered, and then follows out of desperation, provides for some of the most comical moments in the film. For example, Sebastian the Wolf (Bas Rutten) encourages Griffin to mark his territory in order to defeat all other rivals for Stephanie's affection, and this proves to be a



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wonderful moment in the film for James to showcase his comedic abilities.

Adult audiences may enjoy the adult innuendoes throughout the film, while younger audiences may enjoy the endless amount of scatological comedy.

Likewise, James, as one of the film's writers, is able to bring his brand of comical self-deprecation to the big screen in a variety of ways, including a scene in which Griffin attempts to ride an ostrich, but nearly crushes it as a result of his weight.

Voiceovers for the animals feature an array of prominent and comical performers, including Nick Nolte as Bernie the Gorilla, Adam Sandler as Donald the Monkey, and Judd Apatow as Barry the Elephant.

In addition to the humor, *Zookeeper* offers a positive moral, which is that one must stay true to oneself and should not feel the necessity to change in order to win another's affections.

It also emphasizes the importance of friendship and encourages the kind treatment of animals.

While the film proves to be both entertaining and comical, there are some areas that need work.

First, the film at times appears to cut out important steps in the story, in an unnecessary effort to fast-forward to the action.

Likewise, the movie entails a strong environmentalist message that compares animals to humans.

The film also makes an annoying reference to "negative energy" as Stephanie discusses her fen shui decorating style and her practice of yoga.

As James is one of the writers for the film, it may come as no surprise that the storyline includes two beautiful women who have somehow taken an interest in the protagonist. However, James' unique brand of likeability and sincerity will likely have moviegoers rooting for his happiness every step of the way.

A PG film, *Zookeeper* relatively remains within the confines of its ratings, absent explicit sexuality or vulgar language, and including violence only of the slapstick comedy variety.

Overall, *Zookeeper* is a cute and funny film, and could certainly qualify as a family film with enough elements to appeal to most audiences. But some of the innuendoes may perturb parents of children who are just old enough to understand the reference. Parents may also wish to address what seems to be a clear equating of animals to humans.



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