

BR's Grand Opening

By Will Hightower

Cast

BR - A young business man who wants nothing more than to own and operate the best restaurant in the southwest.

Emiliana - BR's business partner. A Mexican-American business woman who has a strong sense of family and determination.

The Animals - A host of various animals that are portrayed using various puppets played by one puppeteer and possibly the actress playing Emiliana.

Setting

Set in present day Tucson/Phoenix Arizona during a not-too-hot Spring.

Lights up on BR as he sleeps peacefully in his bed. He smiles as his dreams are pleasant ones of his Grand Opening. This is shown by a series of silent puppet interactions above him: A scene of BR's restaurant with a long line outside, a scene of BR getting the key to the city, and finally a scene of BR and Emiliana on the front page with the title "BR'S BIG RESTAURANT-- BEST IN THE SOUTHWEST!" Suddenly, there is a frantic knock on the door that wakes up BR in quite a startle as the dreams disappear. He shuffles to the door in his pajamas and opens it to reveal a very distressed Emiliana.

Emiliana
(Panicked)

BR, BR! There is a problem with the restaurant!

BR

Emiliana? What? Just let me get dress--

Emiliana

There's no time!

Emiliana pulls him out of his house as they rush to the restaurant. There is police/caution tape all over the front of the building covering the "Grand Opening" sign. There is a sun puppet to show it is day time. [The actors can walk around the audience as the stage is set for the next scene. All of the scene changes are simply suggestions of location using puppets]

BR

What happened to my restaurant? What could be so bad that they had to close us down!?

Emiliana

They told me that we can't open *our* restaurant because we have an ant problem.

BR looks inside the window.

BR

How did all those ants get in there? We can't get a bug guy out here on such short notice and we have to open today because of all those ads we put out! How are we going to serve up the best American food Arizona has ever seen with all these ants?

Emiliana

Don't forget about my family's Mexican recipes.

BR

I told you, we can't serve American food *and* Mexican food; it would be too much. We'd never sell all of that.

Emiliana

Well, we can't sell anything now with all these ants.

BR

You're right. What are we going to do now?

Emiliana

Well, in times like these, my mother would always say, "Hija, Acocote nuevo, tlachiquero viejo. Si se puede."

BR

What does that mean?

Emiliana

It means that there is hard work to be done and we must do it. Yes we can.

BR

But how?

Emiliana

Well first, let's do our research.

She pulls out a laptop and begins searching.

Emiliana

I got it! I Googled this type of ant and it says here that their natural predator is the Cactus Wren.

BR

Hey, that's our state bird!

Emiliana

So all we have to do is get a few birds, let them in, and they'll eat all of the ants, problem solved!

BR

I'm sure we can find plenty of those. But where do they live?

Emiliana

It says here that their natural habitat is in the Sonoran Desert inside Saguaro Cacti.

BR

Perfect, I am on my way!

He takes a walk around the audience as the scene changes to the desert. There is a cactus with a nest and cactus wren in the middle of it. BR approaches.

BR

Hey there Cactus Wren. I need your help. You see, my restaurant is filled with ants and I can't have them crawling on the food, but we have to open today. Will you and your friends help me by getting rid of the ants?

The Cactus Wren agrees then sings to her friends. Several other cactus wrens appear and fly over BR as he walks back to the restaurant.

BR

Thank you!

BR and the birds arrive at the restaurant.

Emiliana

You did it; you were able to get a whole flock! Okay. Now we let them inside...

Emiliana lets the small flock in the building.

Emiliana

...And then we watch.

BR

Look at them swoop!

Emiliana

And loop!

BR

And dive!

Emiliana

Excelente! Looks like they ate all of the ants.

BR

Alright, I'll let them out.

*BR opens the door to let the birds out.
Nothing happens. He looks inside.*

BR

Uh, hello? Cactus Wrens? You're all done now; you can go back to your homes in the Sonoran Desert.

Still no birds come out. BR begins to look discouraged.

BR

Emiliana, they won't come out! They made nests inside our potted saguaro cacti!

Emiliana

Well, acocote nuevo, tlachiquero viejo. Si se puede. Let's do more research.

She pulls up her laptop again and begins searching with BR over her shoulder.

Emiliana

Ah-ha! It says here that the cactus wren's natural predator is the gray fox.

BR

What? I don't want to hurt them!

Emiliana

We just want to scare them out, that's all. No one will get hurt.

BR

Ok, but where do I get gray foxes?

Emiliana

It says here that their natural habitat is the desert's rocky canyons.

BR

Great! I am on it!

BR takes a walk around the audience as the scene is set for the rocky canyon. Inside he

meets a gray fox.

BR

Oh a grey fox!

The fox begins to leave

BR

Oh please wait Mr. Fox. I need your help. You see, I need to open my restaurant today but there were ants inside. So I asked the cactus wrens for help to eat the ants. But now they won't leave! I know you are their predator, but I just want you to scare them, not hurt them. Okay?

The fox looks disinterested and lies down.

BR

Hmmm...I got it! How about I name a menu item after you? We can call "Gray Fox's Great Fries"! How about it?

*The fox ponders for a moment then agrees.
The fox lets out a call and other foxes join in following BR.*

BR

Thank you so much!

As BR takes the walk back the stage is set for the restaurant. Emiliana is awaiting their arrival.

Emiliana

Look at that skulk of foxes! How did you do that?

BR

Well, I just offered to name a menu item after them. "Gray's Fox's Great Fries".

Emiliana

French Fries? How are *French* Fries American food?

BR

Exactly, that is why they are "Great Fries".

Emiliana

Why not Guacamole de Zorro Gris?

BR

Because who is going to put guacamole on their fries? Gross!

Emiliana

Well, let's let them inside so we can get to it.

*BR leads the foxes and they rush inside.
There is some noise from within as BR and
Emiliana watch.*

Emiliana

It's not working; they are just cohabitating!

BR

They're what?

Emiliana

Cohabitating; Living together in the same environment.

BR

Oh, well what do we do now?

Emiliana

Let's try again!

She pulls out her laptop and searches again

Emiliana

Bobcats!

BR

Yes, bobcats! What is their habitat?

Emiliana

It says here that they inhabit the desert rim rock environment.

BR

I'm on it!

*BR rushes off the stage. The rim rock
location is set and a bobcat is seen milling
about.*

BR

Excuse me Miss Bobcat, Hi. Will you help me? I have to open my restaurant today but it was filled with ants. So I asked the cactus wrens for help but now they won't leave. So I asked the grey fox to scare them out and now *they* won't leave! Bobcat, will you please

help me by frightening the foxes into scaring the cactus wrens out of my restaurant?

Bobcat just yawns and begins to walk away

No wait! I'll even name a menu item after you! How about "The Bobcat Breakfast"?

The bobcat considers and agrees. She lets out a cry and other bobcats now follow BR back to the restaurant.

BR

Many thanks!

BR takes a walk and we are brought back to the restaurant front to meet Emiliana.

Emiliana

A clowder of bobcats, purrrfecto! Did you offer them a menu item too?

BR

Yup, the "Bobcat Breakfast!"

Emiliana

Can it come with chorizo?

BR

I guess we can make that an option. In you go!

BR leads them inside and again we hear some noises from within and see some activity through the window. BR opens to the door to let them out.

BR

Well?

No animals exit.

BR

Not again! What now?

Emiliana

Says here coyotes should do the trick. Quick we are running out of time!

BR

Where can I find those?

Emiliana

Their natural habitat appears to be in the Sonoran Desert foothills.

BR

Going, going, gone!

BR takes a walk around the audience as the scene is set for the foothills. Inside he meets a coyote.

BR

Hello Coyote sir?

The startled coyote moves back but listens with his ears perked up.

BR

It's okay, I just have a request. Okay, so my restaurant is supposed to open today but I was having an ant problem. I brought in cactus wrens to eat the ants, gray foxes to scare the cactus wrens, and bobcats to frighten the gray foxes, but it isn't working! I was hoping you could help by chasing the bobcats into frightening the foxes into scaring the cactus wrens out of the restaurant.

Coyote looks around and starts to wander off.

BR

How about I name a food after you? The "Coyote Casserole!"

The coyote gives a confused/disgusted look and turns away.

BR

Yeah, that does sound kinda gross. Coyote Cupcake? No. Coyote Crunchy Oaties? No. How about the... Coyote Quesadilla?

The coyote gets excited and then lets out a howl. Other coyotes join then and they rush back to the restaurant.

BR

Really? Coyote Quesadilla? Thanks a ton!

They arrive at the restaurant.

Emiliana

A pack of coyotes, wonderful! Let's try again.

BR lets them inside and again we hear some noises from within and see some activity through the window. A hopeful BR opens to the door to let them out. Nothing.

BR

Really? Nothing? Aw Man!

Emiliana

Okay, I got it! This has to be it.

BR

Awesome! Lay it on me, I'm ready for anything.

Emiliana

Black bears.

BR

WHAT?!?

Emiliana

They live in the Sonoran Desert riparian area. It has to work, it's our only hope.

BR

I can't, it's too dangerous.

Emiliana

But we're so close, you have to! Si se puede.

BR

... Oh boy. Here we go!

BR rushes off to the riparian area to find a black bear as the stage is set. He is looking around for the bear when it backs into one and they both let out a frightened scream/roar.

BR

I-I-I am so sorry Miss Black Bear. If you'll forgive me I would like to ask you for a favor.

The bear starts to walk off.

BR

Please don't go!

The bear stops and listens.

BR

My dream is to open the best restaurant in the Southwest and it is supposed to open today but I've just had so many problems. There are several animals in my restaurant now and the one favor I need is for you to startle the coyotes so they chase the bobcats so they frighten the gray foxes so they scare the cactus wrens out of the building. Do you think you could please help me?

The bear just sits down in her place, unmoving.

BR

Do you want a menu item? You can be the signature dish, I'll call it the Black Bear Burger...no, the Black Bear Burrito!

Black Bear's ears perk up and she gets excited. After a paws (pause) or two the bear lets out a roar that frightens BR. Another Bear shows up and they go to the store.

BR

I can't thank you enough!

They return to the return to the restaurant.

Emiliana

Way to go BR! That's a small sloth of bears!

BR ushers the bears inside. We hear all of the animals make noise and see much commotion inside. BR opens the door and crosses his fingers with his eyes closed. Silence. BR says the following still tense with eyes closed.

BR

Emiliana?

Emiliana

Yes BR?

BR

Did they all run out and return to their natural habitat so we can open our restaurant for the dinner rush?

Uh... BR...
Emiliana

Emiliana, tell me. Did they a—
BR

No.
Emiliana

BR lets out a groan of defeat and collapses onto the ground.

BR
It's hopeless! I can't do this anymore. I'm going home.

BR walks away from the restaurant and Emiliana follows him down stage. During the following conversation the animals remove the police tape and tidy up the front. A crowd of people (puppets) begin to gather in a line in front of the restaurant.

Emiliana
What? What about "Acocote nuevo, tlachiquero Viejo"?

BR
Hard work isn't working! Here is a saying for you, "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again. Then quit!" Look at the restaurant Emiliana, it's pointless.

BR continues to walk away as Emiliana turns around to see that a line of people waiting at the restaurant.

Emiliana
BR! You won't believe this, look!

BR
What now?

BR turns around and is stunned.

BR
What? What are they doing?!

They rush to look inside the restaurant window. We see the following puppet actions as they are said.

Emiliana

Not only are all the animals cohabitating, they are running the restaurant!

BR

The black bears are serving the tables!

Emiliana

The coyotes are taking dishes!

BR

The bobcats are seating guests!

Emiliana

The grey foxes are sweeping!

BR

The cactus wrens are refilling the drinks!

Emiliana

Well we better get in there to cook all that American food.

BR

Hey Emiliana, I was thinking, if these animals can cohabitate, why can't our food? We could have guacamole on burgers, tacos *and* hot dogs, a steak with chips and salsa! What do you say?

Emiliana

That sounds wonderful! Vamanos!

They rush inside and there is much commotion. The line outside diminishes as the sun flips over to reveal a moon. Emiliana and BR come out exhausted; the animals can be seen inside the restaurant, also tired.

BR

Well everyone, we did it. BR's Big Restaurant had a successful Grand Opening! They loved our mixture of American and Mexican foods.

Emiliana

I knew they would! But we couldn't have done it without the help of all the animals.

BR

That's right! You know what, because of all your help I think we'll rename the restaurant the Arizona Wildlife Critter Café!

Emiliana

Great idea!

All of the animals cheer/celebrate their success. A newspaper is tossed on stage in front of them.

Emiliana

Look, it must be the early edition. What's it say?

BR has a huge grin on his face.

BR

It says that our restaurant has been declared the best in the Southwest!

They all cheer and celebrate again.

Emiliana

What did I tell you?

BR

Si se puede.

BR

Yes we can!

Emiliana

Yes we can!

Blackout. End of play.