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Shakespeare’s Monkeys
First Printing, 2010
Printed in the U.S.A.
MORE GREAT PLAYS FROM
ORIGINAL WORKS PUBLISHING

KILLED A MAN IN RENO
by Robin Hack
3 Males, 1 Female

Synopsis: Kurt and Julie Lawry travel to Reno, Nevada for a wild weekend. The biggest little city in the world doesn't have all the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas, but it is able to offer its own "unique" activities. As soon as Kurt and Julie arrive in their room, the trusty hotel concierge is at their service, offering to get show tickets, reserve gaming tables, make dinner reservations, or let them kill a man just to watch him die. "It is what Reno, Nevada is famous for Mr. Lawry."

PLEASE REMOVE THIS STUFFED ANIMAL FROM MY HEAD
by Crystal Jackson
3 Males, 1 Female

Synopsis: A man has an appointment with the Bureau for Stuffed Animal Removal in hopes of getting a little stuffed lion removed from atop his head. The bureau subjects the man to a series of questions about his character and his motives, even forcing him into an interpretive dance to express his feelings, but he cannot be swayed. Ultimately, the bureau chief is called in for the final decision. The removal procedure is extremely dangerous, unavoidably life threatening, and comes with one severe long-term side effect.
SHAKESPEARE’S MONKEYS

A one act play
by
Trevor Suthers
CAST:

PROFESSOR ELDER: Eccentric, fussy and pompous. He borders on the manic with his obsessive pursuit of an unobtainable goal.

MR. MONKS: Essentially human but something of a human/simian hybrid. Displays ape-like mannerisms from having spent far too much time in the company of monkeys.

MZ. STERN: Straight-forward, down-to-business bureaucrat with a keen intellect and brusque manner.

SETTING:

Office setting with computer terminals.
S"HAKESPEARE’S MONKEYS

(NOTE: MR. MONKS IS SOMETHING OF AN ‘IGOR’ CHARACTER – APE-LIKE INTONATION – half man, half monkey)

MR. ELDER: Please remember Mr. Monks, it's important we create a good impression. Try and act as human as possible.

MR. MONKS: Lady give money. Pay bills.

MR. ELDER: That is our hope Mr. Monks. And she's due any minute now. Our future funding is very much dependent on this inspection, so remember, best behaviour and no monkeying around.

(MR MONKS GIVES AN APE-LIKE GRUNT)

Really Mr. Monks, you might at least have combed your hair (HANDS HIM A COMB WHICH HE STARES AT) and it wouldn’t have hurt to shave but….

(MZ STERN ARRIVES.)

MR. ELDER: Ah, it's Miss Stern, I believe.

MZ. STERN: Mz. Stern.
MR. ELDER: Quite right too and why not. And right on time.

MZ. STERN: It is the appointed time.

MR. ELDER: So it is, so it is. Let me introduce you to Mr. Monks who is in charge of the livestock facility.

(MR. MONKS IS STILL STARING AT THE COMB.)

MZ. STERN: Mr. Monks.

(HE LOOKS AT HER AND THEN RETURNS TO STARING AT THE COMB.)

MR. ELDER: And I, as you know, am Mr. Elder, Ezra Elder, Chief Executive of The Institute who's great pleasure it will be to show you around.

MZ. STERN: Mr. Elder.

MR. ELDER: And may I just say how I, we, all of us at the Institute have valued the support given to us over the years by the Centre...

(MR MONKS PUTS THE COMB IN HIS HAIR THEN PICKS UP A NUMBER OF PAPERS/RECEIPTS.)

MR. MONKS: Bills. We must pay bills. Need more money.
MR. ELDER: Yes, we’ll come to that Mr. Monks, don’t you worry.

MZ. STERN: The time allocated for my inspection is limited. So if we could proceed.

MR. ELDER: Of course. Firstly allow me to briefly explain how the institute works.

MZ. STERN: I have studied the files prior to this inspection.

MR. ELDER: Well then, you’ll no doubt aware that this Facility has been in operation now for almost one hundred and fourteen years.

MZ. STERN: A considerable amount of time.

MR. ELDER: Oh, considerable, considerable. But the mere blinking of an eye in the context of the whole time-space continuum.

MZ. STERN: However, I have not come here to inspect the time-space continuum Mr. Elder.

MR. ELDER: Indeed you have not. So, to begin. This is the front office where essentially we monitor and process the data. All computerised of course. At present we accommodate three hundred and forty six thousand, four hundred and twenty three monkeys.
MZ. STERN: Yes. A considerable amount of monkeys.

MR. MONKS: More monkeys, must have more monkeys.

MR. ELDER: I think you'll find the monkey population is in line with our current projections.

MR. MONKS: More monkeys. Come and see the monkeys.

(MR MONKS TRIES TO TAKE HER HAND – SHE RECOILS.)

MR. ELDER: We shall see the monkeys later Mr. Monks. The monkeys are, of course, very well cared for. They each have their own separate cubicles and specially adapted keyboards and the data they generate gets fed into here.

MZ. STERN: The data, yes. I will need to evaluate the data.

MR. ELDER: And so you shall, so you shall. But let us pause a moment and reflect. Looking round today, you know, it's hard to imagine the original set-up - a mere, what was it, ten thousand monkeys or so and the same number of old-fashioned typewriters.
MZ. STERN: I am aware of the history of the project.

MR. ELDER: I'm sure you are, I merely wanted to emphasis the great strides we have made in data collection. And the savings of course. Can you imagine the number of people we had to employ just to feed in the paper. Not to mention the terrible problems involved in carriage return.

(MR. MONKS TAKES THE COMB OUT OF HIS HAIR AND STUDIES IT.)

MZ. STERN: All very interesting, but can we get on.

MR. ELDER: As you can see, it's all very different today. Much more efficient and cost effective and, I would argue, much more in line with the Institutes original principles.

MZ. STERN: Ah, the hypothesis.

MR. ELDER: The hypothesis.

MR. MONKS: Monkeys make words.

MR. ELDER: Indeed they do. ‘Words words, words’ to quote the Bard. A hypothesis first postulated by Emil Borel in 1913 that given an infinite amount of time, an infinite number of monkeys would eventually type the complete works of Shakespeare. (Cont.)
MR. ELDER (Cont’d): With this Institute specifically established to test that theory under the guiding genius of our founding director Professor Dubious Frankenfurter.

MZ. STERN: Who was, I believe, subsequently confined to a lunatic asylum.

MR. ELDER: As, I’m afraid, was often the case with visionaries.

MZ. STERN: And lunatics.

MR. ELDER: Be that as it may, it is important to stress that with the steady rise in monkey numbers over the years we still need to employ quite a number of staff to take care of them and for training and breeding purposes. Not the staff of course, ha, ha, - the monkeys.

MR. MONKS: Breed more monkeys. Cost money. Need more money.

(PICKS UP THE RECEIPTS AND WAVES THEM ABOUT.)

Pay bills.

MZ. STERN: Let me get this right, you say each monkey, all three hundred thousand…
MR. ELDER: Three hundred and forty six thousand, four hundred and twenty three…

MZ. STERN: Each of your monkeys then is living it’s solitary life incarcerated in a cubicle with only a keyboard for distraction… I’m afraid Professor Elder, this in itself raises quite a number of animal welfare issues.

(MR. MONKS HAS SPOTTED A CREATURE IN HIS COMB.)

MR. ELDER: Indeed Mz. Stern, animal welfare is a key concern of this institute as Mr. Monks will testify.

MR. MONKS: Monkeys make words.

MZ. STERN: That is all they do then, all day, every day?

MR. ELDER: We have introduced one or two diversions for the monkeys – help keep them stimulated.

MZ. STERN: Such as?

(PAUSE)

MR. ELDER: Scrabble

MZ. STERN: Scrabble?
(MR. MONKS PROCEEDS TO EAT THE CREATURE HE HAS FOUND IN THE COMB AND FROM TIME TO TIME WILL REPEAT THIS PROCESS.)

MR. ELDER: A little innovation of my own. Large plastic letters scattered around the cubicle, nouns, consonants, all double sided. Something of a visual stimulant so each monkey has the opportunity to arrange the letters in sequences if they so wish. It’s produced some interesting results.

MZ. STERN: Really.

MR. ELDER: No words as such, well none that anyone has noticed, but some interesting arrangements.

(MR. MONKS PICKS UP THE PAPERS AGAIN AND WAVES THEM ABOUT.)

MR. MONKS: Monkeys cost money. Lady give money. Pay bills.

MR. ELDER: All in good time Mr. Monks, all in good time. (To Mz. Stern) Mr. Monks has a degree in accountancy, constantly preoccupied with cash-flow, isn’t that right Mr. Monks?

MR. MONKS: Cash flow. Need quantitative easing.
MR. ELDER: Don’t we all. But to return to what I was explaining with regard to processing and recording the data – it’s all fully-automated now and stored on disc. We still keep a small archive of the original paper data produced during the first sixty years or so. Our star exhibit of course is the original ‘Chumbawumba’ produced in 1937. The first real breakthrough.

MR. MONKS: *(DANCING AROUND)* Chumbawumba. Chumbawumba.

MZ. STERN: Hardly what you might call a dictionary defined word.

MR. ELDER: Oh no, not a word I grant you, but our very first word-like, multi-syllabic sequence. Oh we've come a long way since that I can assure you.

MZ. STERN: I sincerely hope you have.

MR. ELDER: Oh, we have, we have. Over here, this is our main computer, constantly scanning and searching for recognisable letter combinations. *[A BEEP]* That beep, did you hear it. Now every time there's a beep, that means a letter combination has been identified and immediately recorded.

MR. MONKS: Monkey make a word.
MR. ELDER: One of our monkeys has tapped on his or her keyboard – both sexes – and randomly stumbled on a sequence of letters to produce a recognisable word. I'll take you round the compound later so you can see the monkeys at work for yourself.

MR. MONKS: Monkeys work hard.

MR. ELDER: We all work hard Mr. Monks. In fact, we’ve recently managed to come up with a solution to the problem of monkeys defecating on their keyboards…

MZ. STERN: Professor, please, is this really pertinent?

MR. ELDER: Oh indeed, much valuable data has been previously lost due to….

MZ. STERN: If you’ll forgive me, I’m more interested in what these monkeys may have produced in the way of scientific advancement, rather than details...

MR. MONKS: Monkey poo make vegetables.

MR. ELDER: That’s very true Mr. Monks – nothing is wasted. You will be staying for lunch Mz. Stern?

MZ. STERN: If we might return to the main purpose of this inspection?
MR. ELDER: Certainly, certainly. Right now we're working on a syntax programme that will make processing of the data even simpler. Assuming we secure the funding, that should come on line in a year or two.

MZ. STERN: I don't know if you're aware Mr. Elder but this Institute has already swallowed up over twenty million pounds of public funding.


MR. ELDER: The current level of monkeys is, as you might expect, providing a fairly consistent supply of useable data, some of which, from time to time has proved remarkable. Let me give you some recent examples (TAPS OUT ON THE COMPUTER) Why only this year we have recorded 'The fish is..' 'Rubber on the..' and best of all 'My old man is a...' then gibberish unfortunately but still, very close to a sentence in itself. Single words are collected – [BEEP] there it goes again, another beep, did you hear that? Yes, as I was saying, we have a data-base which has registered over two thousand single words and somewhere between three and four hundred word combinations. But still, as we always say at the Institute 'it's early days.'