

To Silvio the monkey, the most famous resident
in Córdoba's zoo during my childhood years.
He always knew what freedom was.

A Monkey's Thing

By Sonia Daniel

This is a play started by monkeys, and in this play monkeys can talk. It is well known that they cannot speak our language, so I have taken the liberty of translating the play so as humans can understand it. To do so, I have used the "Monkey-English/English-Monkey" dictionary. Of course, it is said that any translation loses a little bit of their original meaning when being translated; and a very studious monkey friend of mine read it and told me that this is no exception. But well, one does what one can! I wish you a good read!

Scene 1

Light. Zoo. We see a monkey in a cage. He moves, grabs the cage's thick bars and makes usual monkey movements. In the back we can hear people going for a walk, laughing, kids and adults talking, some of them are walking, others running. And the music of a carousel can be heard from the distance.

Male voice-over:

Name: Silvio the Monkey.

Age: eighteen, (clarifying) approximately.

Weight: 75 kgs.

Height: 1.65 m. (clarifying) upright.

Diet: Bananas, apples, oranges and lettuce.

Weakness: Chocolate milk.

Hobby: Fruit throwing to visitors.

Escapes: One. Two years ago. It is said that he got to the bus station.

Character: He always seems to be in a bad mood. He jumps and screams shaking the cage's bars. He likes to scare visitors.

The monkey stops to curiously look at the padlock that keeps the cage closed. He moves it clumsily and scratches his head. From the shadows of the cage a white ape appears.

White ape: And you?

Monkey: What about me?

Ape: How did you show up in this cage?

Monkey: With a magic trick, I said abracadabra and here I am. (pause) Just kidding! The keeper brought me. Do I bother you?

Ape: I don't know yet. You have a bad reputation!

Monkey: Bad reputation? How do you know that?

Ape: I hear people talking when they come to see me here about changing you to another place again. Besides, they also say that they should be careful when giving you fruit because you throw them at the zoo visitors using them as moving targets. You are Silvio the monkey, aren't you?

Monkey: The very same. The famous Silvio the monkey. What's your name? As far as I know, you haven't introduced yet. Wait! Don't tell me... your name is Snowflake.

Ape: You're funny, huh? No, my name is Coco.

Monkey: I would've bet mi entire banana's portion that you were named Snowflake. So white, so light. We are completely different you and I. (Pause). Sometimes humans can be so uncreative. They didn't make much effort, though. Who named you?

Clarification! Let's stop here. As we have learnt the monkey's name is Silvio and the ape's Coco, so from now on we will call them by their names as appropriate. Do you think so? I can't hear you... well! I guess you're Ok with it.

Coco: I don't know.

Silvio: I don't know who named me Silvio either. (Pause. Silvio stands up and walks towards the cage's bars, jumps, screams and shakes the padlock. He calms down and turns towards Coco). As we don't know who named us, we will never know why they named us like this. Isn't it true Snowflake? (He laughs) Just kidding Coco. Sometimes I dream about things.

Coco: What things?

Silvio: I dream that I'm a little and my mom suckles me. It's warm. She caresses me, she hugs me and tells me my name.

Coco: How does she call you?

Silvio: I never remember. I woke up and try hard to remember but I can't. So I get mad and start throwing all the fruits I have the cage outside. I scream, howl, scare my partners, scare the people and they change me of cage.

Coco: I get it... You know what? I don't know what it's like to dream.

Silvio: You don't?

Coco: I'm old, I'm nearly forty years old, it's way too much for an ape's life. I've never dreamt about anything or anyone.

Silvio: But... (he scratches his head) When you sleep, what happens?

Coco: I just sleep, that's all. That is what usually happens to all of us here at the Zoo. You are the first one that tells me about a dream. *(Silence. Silvio stands up again, goes towards the bars again, jumps, screams and shakes the padlock. Coco interrupts him).* What is like to dream? *(Pause)*

Silvio: It's exciting. During all the time that you are dreaming you completely forget about being behind bars. You can travel to places unknown, meet with your ancestors, and smell the jungle... It's a shame that is too hard to remember them afterwards.

Coco: Has it have colors?

Silvio: Yes! And smells too! *(He jumps again shaking the bars).* *But nothing compares to real life.*

Coco: I don't understand you Silvio.

Silvio: Come, get closer. *(Coco approaches to the bars. Silvio starts pointing putting his arm outside the cage through the bars).* Can you see that thing spinning over there far away? That's the park's ferris Wheel.

Coco: Ferris Wheel?

Silvio: Do you see those little chairs that are hanging from that big wheel? People sit in those and the wheel spins... when you are on top, at the highest part, you can see the entire city. It gives you the chills.

Coco: How do you know all that?

Silvio: I also listen to the people when they come near the cage. Kids come carrying cotton candy. They are like cotton but pink or blue... I usually pull a bit

out of it from the kids and eat a little. Kids get scared, cry and run off. Once, a very brave child stood very still by the cage and stared at me. It was like a challenging look. I was eating the cotton candy while he wouldn't take his eyes off of me. Suddenly, he run off, but not with fear... he run determined. Later he returned with a caramelized apple in his hands. He put his hand through the bars and offered it to me.

Silence.

I want to get on the ferris Wheel, and feel butterflies in the stomach. Why can't I do it?

Coco: Because not. We are monkeys.

Silvio: So?

Coco: We don't get that chance. It's not appropriate for us.

Silvio: Who says that?

Coco: It is known that all monkeys don't have any rights.

Silvio: I do! (*Pause*). And if I don't, I will have them. I want to go to the park, get on the games, and eat cotton candy until my stomach aches. (*He starts to jump and shake the bars violently*) Coco, you are coming with me. You are going dream awake Coco; you cannot miss it. Come, jump with me Coco. Come on! With strength, we are almost there.

Coco: I can't Silvio!

Silvio: Yes you can! (*Coco starts to jump timidly*). Harder Coco! Come on, we can do this! Come on! (*Coco starts to jump with more and more energy every time*). Come on!

The padlock that closes the cage's door drops to the floor. The door opens. Lights out.

Scene 2

Light. Silvio is laying wounded on the floor of the cage while Coco takes care of him with tenderness and patience. He gives Silvio a glass of chocolate milk while he caresses his head.

Silvio: What happened Coco? Why did you come back alone? Weren't you having fun?

Coco: Yes Silvio. I was having a lot of fun. But after all that time walking around, when I saw that we were being chased in order to catch us, I got really scared.

Besides, I really don't know where I should've gone, what should I do if I got lost in the city? When I was born, they brought me to this cage. It's my fate. I'm a Zoo ape that is too old for adventures.

Silvio: (*Angry*). What's the difference between a monkey and an ape? Do we live a different imprisonment? You are not an ape, you are a monkey. Even more than a monkey, you are a puppet. Freedom is supposed to be defended Coco. You came back to the cage without fighting. I was watching you. When we were going into the park you suddenly stopped. Turned around and came right back to the cage by yourself.

Diste la vuelta sobre tus pasos y te volviste solito a la jaula.

Coco: I got scared.

Silvio: I lost because I was distracted, fascinated between the ice-cream cart and the hot-dog stand. But... what a beautiful dream! What a party brother!

Coco: (*Melancholic*). What a party...!

Silvio: With fire fighters and policemen, the press and your honour. All those people trying to stop us just because we wanted to try a little bit of freedom. I swear Coco, if they hadn't shot me with a tranquilizer dart, they wouldn't have caught me so easily. The last time I escaped, I made it to the bus station. Did you know that people actually get on those buses and go for a walk to places far away? I'm going to do that next time. I'll get on a bus and go all over the world.

Coco: Drink the chocolate milk. (*Silvio takes several sips and recovers*).

Silvio: Did you see that statue in front of this cage?

Coco: Yes, they are the three wise monkeys.

Silvio is talking about a statue of three little monkeys in different positions. The first one is covering his eyes, the second one his ears and the third one his mouth. This statue is known by the name of "The Three Wise Monkeys" but it seems that Silvio has another idea...

Silvio: Do you think it is wise not talk, not see and not hear? I think that this statue is a trick so that we won't see, say our opinions or even hear the opinions of others. *(Pause)*. I have a dream. Not one of those that you have when you are sleeping. One that I dream awake. I dream that one day us monkeys, apes and all the animals on this world have our own rights. That we uncover our eyes, ears and mouth. That we can be born and grow up beside our parents and that they be the ones that name us. Only then I won't have to dream about it because I'll know that I'm awake. That we don't live in cages but on branches of trees as we are supposed to. Dream with me Coco, come on, you can!

Coco: That... that the people who come to this zoo has to go to the park because there won't be any more animals in cages to see here!

Silvio: That every monkey and ape on this world can go around the world when they feel like it.

Coco: And that when we feel butterflies on our stomachs are of joy, not of fear.

Silvio stands up and walks towards the bars. He starts to shake it.

Silvio: Come on Coco, let's try again. Help me! Come on Coco! No padlock is strong enough to keep us from dreaming...

Coco joins Silvio and starts to jump as well; and the padlock starts to loosen again.

Male voice-over:

Name: Silvio the Monkey.

Age: twenty, *(clarifying)* approximately.

Weight: 80 kgs.

Height: 1.65 m. *(clarifying)* upright.

Diet: Bananas, apples, oranges and lettuce.

Weakness: Chocolate milk.

Hobby: Fruit throwing to visitors.

Escapes: Two. (*Commentating*). The last time he escaped with Coco the ape. It is said that they got to see the world around the park.

Character: He always seems to be in a bad mood, but he is just a inveterate dreamer... He loves freedom and he shakes the bars until he defeats the padlock.

The lights of the stage go out and this marks that the play comes to an end.