

# MONKEY by DAMIAN BRANT

## CHARACTERS

### MALE:

DREAMER

### FEMALE:

REASONABLE  
COMPLIANT

EITHER MALE OR FEMALE: [Many of these parts are designated 'He' in the script, but they need not be.]

LETHARGY  
VOLATILE  
PESSIMISTIC  
DETERMINED  
FORCEFUL  
SUPREME, THE GREAT LEADER

### NON-SPEAKING PARTS, EITHER MALE OR FEMALE:

CURIOUS  
TWO OLDERS  
A MONKEY  
A LEOPARD  
NIGHT CREATURES

The cast can be expanded to as many apes as wanted. To give additional speaking parts, Determined's lines can be divided between that character and another called 'KEEN.' Similarly, Forceful's lines can be shared with another character, called 'SURE.'

Though some ape-like movement is necessary, no attempt through costume should be made to make the apes realistic.

The play should be between half an hour and forty-five minutes in length, depending on the length of the movement sequences.

## EXTRACT ONE

***There is darkness. Quiet jungle noise. It becomes louder. The sun rises. Cautiously, apes awaken from their slumber. Slowly they begin to move in a co-ordinated rhythm. The noise builds. The sun which has been slowly rising, giving only a taste of its expected appearance, moves above the horizon. The tempo is increased and the whole group of apes is now moving as one. They dance and sing. The song - grunting and screeching - no words, but melodic. A large ape appears. It is the Great Leader. The apes respond with adulation. The Great Leader takes his/ her place. The Great Leader shows his approval and, with a gesture, summons his trusted Olders about him. The apes disperse several ways. One ape moves cautiously amongst the others, speaking as he goes. This is Dreamer.***

DREAMER Morning, Lethargy.  
LETHARGY Huh?  
DREAMER Hello, Volatile.  
VOLATILE Grrgh!  
DREAMER Morning, Pessimistic.  
PESSIMISTIC Morning? Is it still only morning? Will we survive the day? It's a jungle out there! Oh!

DREAMER Morning, Reasonable.  
REASONABLE Hello, Dreamer.  
DREAMER Another day starts with another tribute to the Great Leader. I suppose life has to be this way.

REASONABLE What do you mean?  
DREAMER Grunting and screeching our way through life. [*Silence.*] Why does Supreme wave his hands so much?

REASONABLE Because he's the Great Leader, and that's what Great Leaders do. And don't call him Supreme. You're too familiar!

DREAMER Does king lion wave his hands?  
REASONABLE No.  
DREAMER There, you see - and yet he commands a whole pride.  
REASONABLE Without any hands. Our hands are our saviour. They give us the ability to rise above other beasts. [*Pause, then thoughtfully - hiding a secret.*] But they're also our downfall.

DREAMER How do you mean?  
REASONABLE Did you see Ruthless this morning?  
DREAMER Yes, what of it?  
REASONABLE What was he doing?  
DREAMER I'd rather not say.  
REASONABLE Come on - what was he doing?  
DREAMER Well, he was, um, doing his toilet.  
REASONABLE No, I mean after that.  
DREAMER Oh, that's a relief - so to speak. Um, he was eating termites.  
REASONABLE Yes, exactly!  
DREAMER Exactly what?  
REASONABLE Well, was he using his hands?  
DREAMER To do his toilet?  
REASONABLE No. To get the termites. Really, Dreamer, I can see how you were given your name. Was Ruthless using his hands to get the termites?

DREAMER Yes, well, and his tongue of course. He was sort of licking them like this. [*He demonstrates.*] Slurping them up. They did look rather juicy.

REASONABLE I'm sure they did. Shame all the Olders get the first go at all the good food. I haven't had a decent termite meal for as long as I can remember.

DREAMER I know what you mean. I've been eating bloody bananas for the last six Golden God sleeps. I spend more time covering business than doing it these days.

REASONABLE Really, Dreamer, you seem to be obsessed with toilet duties this morning. What's got into you?

DREAMER I'm sorry, Reasonable, but I just think there must be more to life than this.

REASONABLE Than what?  
DREAMER Eating and sharing everything in our lives with other apes. The Orang-utans don't have to be sociable and they seem to do all right. Why can't we be like them? More individual!

REASONABLE You know the Orang-utans are a special race. If the Great Leader heard you say that he'd have you beaten.

DREAMER But why are they special? And why aren't we? And why do they call us monkeys? We're apes!

REASONABLE Apes! Monkeys! What does it matter? I don't know. Anyway, a young ape shouldn't ask those things. It's not safe. [**Remembering.**] Besides, what were you doing watching Ruthless at his toilet?

DREAMER I was just curious, that's all. Oh, not about his toilet - but about what the Olders do when they go beyond the permitted boundaries of the jungle.

REASONABLE Going beyond the permitted boundaries unless you're an Older is forbidden. You know that, Dreamer.

DREAMER Yeah, I know - but I didn't go too far. Not too far past the permitted boundaries anyway. I lost them as they went beyond the deep river. But I want to go further. I know they go elsewhere, to something special. I want to know what it is.

REASONABLE You think too much. Such apes are dangerous.

DREAMER Maybe, but dangerous is better than being here, socialising all the time.

REASONABLE Danger brings union with the jungle and you know that, Dreamer.

**Silence.**

DREAMER I'm sorry, I forgot. [**Silence.**] Anyway, Reasonable, why did you ask about Ruthless using his hands?

REASONABLE Well, he didn't use just his hands to get the termites did he?

DREAMER No, he used a stick, but ... hey, that's right - he had a stick but ... I mean - why?

REASONABLE **demonstrating** He pushed the stick into the termite mound, the termites climbed all over it and then he pulled the stick out and ate them.

DREAMER Wow, yes! Of course! He used a stick. But wait a minute - you said our hands would be our downfall. So what's the problem?

REASONABLE Hands that can make tools can also make weapons.

DREAMER Weapons? What are they?

REASONABLE I hope you never find out, Dreamer.

**She begins to go.**

DREAMER Hey, hang on a minute! If you saw Ruthless using a stick, you must have been beyond the permitted boundaries ...?

REASONABLE Perhaps I like being dangerous too. See you later, at dusk. I'll tell you a story if you like.

DREAMER Yeah, great! Thanks. 'Bye.

REASONABLE 'Bye....

**EXTRACT TWO**

DREAMER I know I'm an ape, mother, but even an ape can have dreams.

COMPLIANT Dream of new fruits, that's all you need.

DREAMER No, mother. I need more. Reasonable has shown me that, with her stories ... that there's more out there in the jungle ... more to achieve.

COMPLIANT And more to bring you crashing down. Apes break arms. [**An Ape Saying.**] Don't entertain these wild thoughts, son. Please - for me. You know they're foolish.

DREAMER What is foolish, mother? Wanting to be better?

COMPLIANT            There is no better than this. Do you want for food here? No. Do you want for shelter here? No. Do you want for company here? No! So what can be better than this?

DREAMER             Perhaps there is nothing better than this, mother, but maybe I want to be better in myself. Maybe I want to be ... different.

COMPLIANT            Dreamer, you're an ape. Apes don't look for being different.

DREAMER             This ape does. [**Exasperated.**] Don't treat me like a child, mother. I'm nearly three. And I will be different - something special - ape or no ape!

COMPLIANT            But what is special? Going the way of Reasonable's father? [**Now very caring.**] There is so much you don't know, son. Yes, we are apes; we live in the jungle. We are constantly aware of all the ways the great Golden God may take us, bring us to union with the jungle: by sending a leopard against us; a snapping branch under our grasping feet; an elephant's stampede or a lion's fury; or, when the Golden God is sleeping - a slithering python or a prowling panther. Or even, Golden God forbid, through encounter with the naked apes. But these are ways of union with the jungle we cannot avoid - unions that are part of our life. But Reasonable's father, he ... he went a different way.

DREAMER             A different way? What do you mean?

COMPLIANT            I have said too much already...

### EXTRACT THREE

THE GREAT LEADER    Apes!Apes! Apes! Apes! I call you apes for apes you are and apes you shall remain. You shall seek nothing more nor want nothing further. Which creature slashes with the sharpest claws in the jungle? The lion. But who has the fingers to climb the trees? Which creature snaps with the deadliest bite in the jungle? The snake. But who can crack nuts with a rock? Which creature springs the keenest ambush in the jungle? The leopard. But who has the intelligence to avoid the traps? Who? Who? Who? The apes! The apes! We are the apes! We are the masters of the jungle! And what keeps us masters of the jungle? You, the clan-Golden God, the Organisers who ensure the enforcement of these decrees, interpreted by your beloved Olders, and I, the Great Leader. [**There is general ape cheering.**] You are told you must remain within the permitted boundaries of the jungle. This is for the safety of all our nation. Only the Olders may stray beyond these boundaries. This is decreed by the Golden God. Do you believe in the decrees of the Golden God? [**Cheers.**] Do you believe in the decrees of the Golden God? [**Louder cheers.**] And what of those who disobey these decrees? What of those who would defy your Olders and your Great Leader? What of those who would jeopardise our peaceful existence? What do they deserve? For bringing danger to our way of life? What do they deserve? For seeking beyond the permitted boundaries of the jungle, where only the Olders should go? What do they deserve? Tell me, what do they deserve?

FORCEFUL             Let the Organisers make her a union with the jungle before her time!

***There is general cheering of agreement.***

THE GREAT LEADER     Bring forth the miscreant. Curious, you have ventured beyond the permitted boundaries of the jungle. You have rebelled against the sacred decrees of the Golden God. Your fellows demand one thing. - that you should be taken by the Organisers and made one with the jungle. Take her!

***Curious is taunted and then dragged away by Organisers. Much noise, which subsides almost immediately after Curious has gone. The apes return to their routine.***

#### EXTRACT FOUR

***They move around. The Great Leader moves forward. He seems very regal, protective and fair. Apes gather.***

THE GREAT LEADER     Hello, my little apes. Dreamer, isn't it?  
DREAMER                Yes, my Great Leader.  
THE GREAT LEADER     And this is?  
DREAMER                Reasonable, Great Leader.  
THE GREAT LEADER     Ah yes, of course. Didn't I know your father?  
REASONABLE          Many apes knew my father.  
THE GREAT LEADER     A clever child ape. I may have use for you. But tell me, what was your father's name?  
REASONABLE          One which suited him but which was not appreciated.  
THE GREAT LEADER     How intriguing the little ape is. I warrant your father was Questioner. A traitorous ape if ever there was one.  
REASONABLE          My father was no traitor.  
THE GREAT LEADER     No? Then why was he taken for a union with the jungle before his time.  
REASONABLE          Because his name suited *him* only.  
THE GREAT LEADER     Get it right, child. Your father questioned sociability.  
REASONABLE          And why apes are taken for a union with the jungle before their time.  
THE GREAT LEADER     That is sometimes a necessity.  
REASONABLE          Why?  
THE GREAT LEADER     Because sometimes apes forget they are apes.  
REASONABLE          My father was an ape!  
THE GREAT LEADER     Yes, but if he could have lost his hair he would dearly have loved to become a naked ape.  
REASONABLE          My father was a hairy ape - through and through.  
THE GREAT LEADER     He was a traitor to his kind.  
REASONABLE          He was a questioner.  
THE GREAT LEADER     He cared nothing for ape culture.  
REASONABLE          He followed the decrees of the Golden God.  
THE GREAT LEADER     He ventured past the permitted boundaries.  
REASONABLE          He was almost an Older.  
THE GREAT LEADER     He had no right.  
REASONABLE          He saw too much!  
THE GREAT LEADER     Silence! [***Silence.***] I see, young ape, you will not be happy until you have gone the way of your father. Organisers, hold her!

***The Organisers hold her.***

DREAMER                No!  
THE GREAT LEADER     What? Is this female your mate?  
DREAMER                No.

THE GREAT LEADER Not your mate? So why the concern?  
 DREAMER She is my friend.  
 THE GREAT LEADER Friend? I do not understand. We are apes. We do not have  
 'friends'. We share and socialise equally with all. Where is your  
 sociability?  
 DREAMER I don't care about sociability. I want to be an individual.

***Gasps of horror.***

THE GREAT LEADER Boy, how dare you breathe such blasphemies in my  
 presence.  
 DREAMER Is it blasphemy to want to live - to be alive?  
 THE GREAT LEADER Silence!  
 DREAMER You cannot bear to hear the truth! Why must we not question?  
 Why must we follow always? Why can we not be allowed  
 to think?  
 THE GREAT LEADER Organisers!  
 DREAMER We are just two of many, Reasonable and I. There have been  
 others and there will be more still. You will never be able to  
 keep all of us quiet.  
 THE GREAT LEADER Take them away! Give them union with the jungle!

EXTRACT FIVE

DREAMER Where are we? Do you know?  
 REASONABLE No, I've never been this far before. We're past the permitted  
 boundaries.  
 DREAMER Do you feel scared?  
 REASONABLE Kind of. It's strange not to be surrounded by other apes.  
 DREAMER I know what you mean. I wouldn't mind a social time right now.  
 REASONABLE I never thought I'd hear you say that.  
 DREAMER Well, strange circumstances make apes say strange things.  
 REASONABLE Yeah. The bananas are never greener on the other side.  
 DREAMER So now we're here, what do we do?  
 REASONABLE I don't know.  
 DREAMER What would your father have done?  
 REASONABLE He would have believed he was here for a purpose.  
 DREAMER A purpose?  
 REASONABLE A destiny, his destiny! He never believed that apes had to follow  
 the Great Leader.  
 DREAMER That's heresy.  
 REASONABLE I know. And he knew I would be in danger for being his daughter.  
 So he taught me to smile and swallow the fruits I found distasteful;  
 cheer and clap when my heart told me tears should fall; hold and  
 socialise when my arms would have been better served in  
 grooming my own hair; to praise the Great Leader and his words,  
 whilst wanting individual thoughts. And so I was named  
 Reasonable. I agreed with all and disagreed with none. But in my  
 heart I knew what I was. My father made me promise never to lose  
 my sense of destiny. He taught me to be reasonable and my  
 legacy is my ability to reason. I am an ape - my eyes tell me so -  
 but I am an individual with a destiny - my reason tells me so.  
 DREAMER I'm glad I socialised with you.  
 REASONABLE And me with you.  
 DREAMER We should choose new names.  
 REASONABLE Yes...

