

PARADISE PARK ZOO

Savannah Reich
2014

Cast of characters:

JENNY, a female monkey
PANCAKES, a male monkey

GERALD, a male human
CYNTHIA, a female human

TATIANA, a lioness
DEE, a lioness

A RED PANDA
A KOMODO DRAGON

Authors Notes:

The characters' genders are listed, but the actors playing these roles need not identify with the same gender as their character.

I imagine the "band" in this play as an experimental klezmer band, but I think a lot of different styles could work. Get your friend's band that you like a lot.

This play is written to be performed in a large empty space with the audience moving from cage to cage. However, it could also exist on a stage in front of a seated audience, with all the cages visible at all times.

Five large cages are lit from within.

There is a hand painted sign on top of each cage. One reads "Chimps", one reads "Humans", one reads "Lions", one reads "A Red Panda and a Komodo Dragon" and one reads "The Band".

The audience can move around and watch the animals hanging out in their cages. The band is playing from inside their cage.

Each cage could have a background painted with the animal's "natural habitat" (with a well-groomed city park for the humans and a dingy club for the band).

When the song ends, the lights in the Chimps cage grow brighter as the other cages dim.

Scene One: Chimps.

JENNY is moving around the cage to avoid PANCAKES, who is following her.

PANCAKES

I know this has been really hard for you.

JENNY

Ha!

PANCAKES

Look around you! We have a very limited... sphere here. We aren't rich in options.

JENNY

I don't care if I live here with you until I die
And I live to be a hundred million years old.
I am never speaking to you again. Ever.

PANCAKES

You're speaking to me right now.

JENNY

Shut up.

PANCAKES

Now you're just being childish.

She shakes her head in disbelief.

PANCAKES

I feel bad, okay?
I feel really really bad.
I liked Timothy.
He was a really/ kind individual-

JENNY

Don't talk about him!

PANCAKES

I'm sorry, okay!

JENNY

Pancakes.

PANCAKES

What?

JENNY turns away from him.

PANCAKES

What?

Look, Jenny, two males in a small territory, it's not meant to be. This was bound to happen eventually.

JENNY

I don't believe that.

PANCAKES

Oh, you can act like you don't understand, but I know you do. You were there, we started circling and then he growled at me, and the next thing I know I was charging him. I didn't know what I was doing. Anyways, once something like that gets started, there's only one way it's gonna go. It was either me or him.

JENNY

It should have been you.

PANCAKES

Look, I'm really sorry that it happened the way it did, but I'm not going to spend the rest of my life feeling bad about it.

Don't you remember the time before Timothy got here?

You and I had some great times.

It could be like that again.

I know you decided that you would rather be with him and I respect that decision

but you don't really have that option any more.

So can't we just make the best of it?

Jenny.

I know you can hear me.

I'm really sorry I killed your boyfriend.

JENNY

He wasn't my boyfriend.

PANCAKES

Well, fine.

JENNY

We hadn't talked about saying "girlfriend-boyfriend" yet.

PANCAKES

Whatever.

JENNY goes back to ignoring him.

PANCAKES

Jenny.

I happen to know you understand.

JENNY

What's that supposed to mean?

PANCAKES

Oh, please.

I remember what happened to Ginger.

JENNY

How dare you.

PANCAKES

Don't act like you're so high and mighty-

JENNY

That was a mistake!

PANCAKES

It was exactly the same!

They dropped her off and you felt threatened-

JENNY

I didn't mean to bite her hard!

We were just playing!

PANCAKES

Is that what you tell yourself?

JENNY growls at him and he tenses and growls back. The moment before the fight.

After a moment, Jenny shakes her head and turns away.

JENNY

Maybe we just shouldn't talk.

Pause.

PANCAKES

Jenny.

I was thinking-

Well, I was hoping

That maybe when you're feeling a little better

You would let me take you on a date.

We could just try to start over.

Pretend none of this ever happened.

I thought I would go behind the tree for a while

And then we could pretend that I was a new arrival.

Just dropped off.

I could change my name if you want.

I've never really liked Pancakes.

And we could go over there.

I noticed we never really sit in that corner,
so it could be, you know.

Fresh.

Pause.

JENNY

I have a bug in my hair.

PANCAKES

Okay.

He approaches her slowly. She does not move away. He eats bugs from her hair.

PANCAKES

Does this mean we're-

JENNY

No.

PANCAKES

Okay. That's fine.
Just eat the bugs, I can do that.
No problem.
I'm glad this is working out.

The lights in the Primates cage dim.

The lights in the "Humans" cage go up.
The humans begin to laugh. Their
laughter goes on for much too long,
becoming strained and nearly
hysterical.

Scene Two: Humans.

The man and woman, GERALD and CYNTHIA, are sitting on a picnic blanket in front of an array of plastic toy food. As soon as the audience is settled, they abruptly stop laughing and return to their picnic.

They are dressed like a 1950s advertisement and seem unsure of how to use their utensils.

CYNTHIA

Well! It's certainly an idea.

GERALD
You sound...

CYNTHIA
What?

GERALD
"It's certainly an idea."

CYNTHIA
Well...

GERALD
Never mind. It's a stupid idea.

CYNTHIA
No! It's not stupid at all. I just can't quite picture it.

GERALD
Well, I think it would be a lot like this. Only... more...

CYNTHIA
More so.

GERALD
Yes.

CYNTHIA
We would eat... natural foods.

GERALD
Nuts and roots.

CYNTHIA
Oh my.

GERALD
Wild herbs.

CYNTHIA
(Scandalized)
Wild herbs!

GERALD
It's a kind of plant. But with more smells.

CYNTHIA

I know what they are. I just...

GERALD

What's the matter, Cynthia? Are you afraid to leave your curling irons and your roller skates and your cherry puff pie?

CYNTHIA

My what?

GERALD

I don't know.

CYNTHIA

Gerald. You know what.

GERALD

(Pronouncing his name with a hard G)

It's pronounced "Gerald".

CYNTHIA

Oh. Gerald. You know what.

GERALD

Yes Cynthia?

CYNTHIA

I think it's a wonderful idea.

GERALD

Do you really mean that?

CYNTHIA

I've always had a kind of- vision, I guess you could call it, of walking through the forest with my hair in two braids, and picking the birds off the trees and snapping their little neckie-necks and putting them in my... my woven basket.
Woven from bark, and plant string.

GERALD

My god, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

Yes?

GERALD

You're spectacular.

CYNTHIA

Could we live in a shanty?

GERALD

I think we'll have to.

CYNTHIA

I'd like that.

GERALD

It will be difficult at first, of course.
We'll be forever saying, "which way is north?"
"How can I make a hat, and out of what?"
"My face hurts very badly".
But soon, sssssssss...Cynthia-

CYNTHIA

(Flirtatious)

Oh, Gerald!

GERALD

Our natural manly instinct will kick in. We'll begin to
just... just shoot our arms out and... squeeze things.

CYNTHIA

Oh, Gerald!

GERALD

We'll wake up just before dawn and feel the wind in our
hair. We'll gallop or canter to the very edge of a giant
cliff, you and I, we'll be covered in filth, and our teeth
will be spiked, and we'll look out over our domain and it
will be real, Cynthia.
Not like any of this. Real-real.

CYNTHIA

Oh, Gerald!

A bell rings. Something that looks like
dog kibble comes streaming out of a
tube and falls loudly into two metal
bowls that are lying on the ground.
GERALD and CYNTHIA abandon their
conversation and rush over to the

chute, where they get down on all fours and shove their faces into the bowls. They eat with loud chewing noises and heavy breathing.

Their light dims. The lights come up in the Red Panda / Komodo Dragon cage.

Scene Three: Red Panda / Komodo Dragon.

The RED PANDA scampers endlessly in circles in the cage, unable to stop.

The KOMODO DRAGON squats on the ground, staring blankly into space, occasionally sticking its tongue out to taste the air.

RED PANDA

I don't want you to judge me. I only tell you all this stuff because- well, I don't know, because I guess I get the impression that you care for me, that you want me to be happy, happier. But I could be wrong. It's more a feeling than anything else. Am I wrong? Are you just wishing I would shut up and leave you alone?

The KOMODO DRAGON shakes its head very slightly.

Good. That's a relief, to tell you the truth, because you can actually be a little bit hard to read. Not that I'm so good at understanding emotions and all that. I'm actually incredibly self-centered. Well, of course I am, how could I be any other way, our whole environment literally revolves around me. And you, of course, but you're more... you're not so...

The KOMODO DRAGON twitches its eyebrows.

RED PANDA

You just kind of stand there. So you're not, I mean, not to toot my own horn but I am extremely cute and fuzzy. It's just a fact. Can you even imagine how that warps your mind? I'm probably a complete monster at this point, but I've lost any frame of reference. I heard it helps to just call

your own name, several times, out loud or in your head, it helps you return to yourself. Have you ever heard that?

KOMODO DRAGON

No.

RED PANDA

Oh.

KOMODO DRAGON

Where would I hear that?

RED PANDA

I don't know.

KOMODO DRAGON

Where did you hear that?

RED PANDA

I don't know.

KOMODO DRAGON

You don't even know your name.

RED PANDA

Right, and doesn't that just sum up the whole problem?

KOMODO DRAGON

What problem.

RED PANDA

Well, the one I've been talking about.

KOMODO DRAGON

Which part.

RED PANDA

I don't think I have a very good perception of time. I want to say, the problem I've been talking about for the last... but how long have I been talking? Ten minutes? Ten hours? I mean, do you remember yesterday?

KOMODO DRAGON

Yeah.

RED PANDA

You do?

KOMODO DRAGON

It was a lot like today.

RED PANDA

Well, exactly. That's it exactly. And I'm sorry to talk your ear off again and I'm sure you just want to strangle me at this point, I know I would, but the thing is that I feel like I'm just on the verge of some kind of breakthrough, and I just have to get to the bottom of this somehow, I just have to understand it, and then when I'm on the other side I'll be all stoic and accepting like you are. I really admire you, I really admire the way you just are.

The KOMODO DRAGON gives the world's tiniest eye roll.

RED PANDA

Because it's always gonna be like this, you know? Every day is gonna be pretty much like the one before, and I can either worry and pace and freak myself out or I can just accept it, you know, the way you do. It all seems incredibly obvious and then I just kind of forget to do it. Or, I don't forget, I just... don't do it. Can't. No, don't. Can't?

KOMODO DRAGON

You want some advice from me, kid?

RED PANDA

Oh my god, that would be amazing. Thank you.

KOMODO DRAGON

Stand still.

RED PANDA

(Still pacing)

Stand still. Interesting. Oh, interesting. So you think the movement itself is actually creating movement in my mind, and I can create change from the outside in by just changing the way my body interacts with the world. I have this theory, well, I've been developing this theory-

KOMODO DRAGON

Stand still.

RED PANDA

Oh, you mean now. Okay. Great. Good challenge. Okay. Here I go. Here I go. Right... now.

The RED PANDA stops pacing and stands still, trembling with the effort of it.

RED PANDA

Wow. This is... wow. I have really rarely taken the time to stand still, to just exist, to just let myself sink into the present moment. Wow. This is really intense. And you do this all day, that is really incredible, I am really in awe of that.

The KOMODO DRAGON sighs.

RED PANDA

Wow, I'm really aware of my breath right now. It's really special to just practice acceptance, like yes, I am here, yes, this is happening, yes, I am standing here, not moving, just perfectly still-

The RED PANDA starts pacing again, unconsciously.

RED PANDA

God, it's just so freeing! I don't know why I haven't tried this earlier. It's like I'm always pushing, pushing, pushing, and it's so easy to just accept that this is what we have, and that is good enough! Oh my god, thank you! I had no idea that there was so much to be gained from just standing perfectly...

Wait. I'm moving again, aren't I? I am. Oh god. What is wrong with me? Why didn't you say something? No, I'm sorry, you're not responsible for my journey. Oh, god, I am the world's biggest asshole.

KOMODO DRAGON

Don't worry about it.

RED PANDA

That's what I'm trying to do. That is the whole point. That's what you do, you don't worry about it, and I am trying as hard as I can but it isn't so easy for me, okay? I think there's something wrong with me.

KOMODO DRAGON

Come here. Stand over here with me. I'll help you.

RED PANDA

Oh, thank you thank you thank you.

The RED PANDA goes and stands still
next to the KOMODO DRAGON, trembling.

RED PANDA

Yes, yes, I know. That's something that I say when I'm
trying to empty my brain but I can't stop thinking. Just to
validate and move on. Yes, yes, I know.

The KOMODO DRAGON suddenly reaches out
and tries to bite the RED PANDA.

RED PANDA

What the hell?

The RED PANDA resumes scampering around
the cage.

RED PANDA

What was that?

KOMODO DRAGON

Sorry.

RED PANDA

Did you just try to eat me?

KOMODO DRAGON

Yeah. Sorry.

RED PANDA

You're a predator? I didn't know that. I'm in here with a
predator? I find that very questionable. I mean, no wonder
I feel a little worked up.

KOMODO DRAGON

Yeah.

RED PANDA

How long has this been going on? I mean, you've been
wanting to eat me this whole time? I can't believe this.
How come you've never tried to catch me before?

KOMODO DRAGON

I did.

RED PANDA

When?

KOMODO DRAGON

About twenty minutes ago.

RED PANDA

Oh. I don't think I have a great perception of time.

KOMODO DRAGON

Yeah, you really don't.

RED PANDA

Oh, god, I feel like that's really what's wrong with me. How am I supposed to make progress if I can't even remember what happened twenty minutes ago, two minutes ago, who knows? I am trying so hard, you know I'm trying, but sometimes I feel like I just don't have your natural talent for self-acceptance. Sometimes I think I should just give up.

KOMODO DRAGON

Don't worry, kid. Patience.

RED PANDA

Yeah, I guess so. You're a really good friend. It's so sweet of you to listen to me going on and on when you're already on this whole other level. I feel like if I could just learn to relax, that would be the first step. But the first step to what? I don't even know. I don't even know.

KOMODO DRAGON

I don't know either.

RED PANDA

Wow, yeah. That's so true. Not knowing itself is the real first step. God, I can't even get the first step right. Ugh. How could I. My main problem is that I'm incredibly self centered. But you know, why wouldn't I be? I'm a product of my environment. Not to pass the buck. I know it's my responsibility to find acceptance in my heart, but sometimes I just feel so mad at myself, it should be so easy! Just relax! Take a breath! Be grateful! Stop and smell the roses! But I just... what is wrong with me?

KOMODO DRAGON

You want some advice from me, kid?

RED PANDA

Oh my god, that would be amazing.

KOMODO DRAGON

Stand still.

RED PANDA

Stand still? Like, with my body or my mind?

KOMODO DRAGON

Both.

The RED PANDA stops pacing and stands still, eyes closed, trembling with the effort. The KOMODO DRAGON starts creeping toward her, ever so slowly.

RED PANDA

Wow. Whoa. Okay. This is very difficult for me. I think that means it's important in some way. Who knows, this could be the key for me, the thing that changes everything, you know?

Are you still there? Are you listening?

Yes, yes, I know. Yes, yes, I know.

The lights dim on the Red Panda and Komodo Dragon cage.

Lights up on the Humans cage.

Scene Four: Humans.

The cage is a mess, full of household items and pieces of trash. Cynthia is holding things up to show Gerald and sorting them into two piles. She holds up a stick.

GERALD

Natural.

She puts the stick in the "yes" pile.
She holds up a plastic ear of corn and
makes a face. They speak together.

CYNTHIA and GERALD

Unnatural.

CYNTHIA

I don't think so, mister corn!

She tosses the corn in the "no" pile
and holds up a man's shoe.

GERALD

Natural?

CYNTHIA

Well, no.

GERALD

But it will protect my foot.

CYNTHIA

Well, all right.

She puts it in the yes pile.

She holds up a plastic dinosaur.

GERALD

No.

CYNTHIA

Well... actually...

GERALD

Cynthia.

I thought we agreed.

CYNTHIA

Yes, of course, living with intention, but I...

GERALD

You what?

CYNTHIA

I love it.

GERALD

I don't see how that's relevant.

CYNTHIA

I want to keep it.

I'm going to keep it.

GERALD

Well, let's make sure we're not headed down
to a slippery slope situation here-

CYNTHIA

I'm not headed- I'm not doing that.

GERALD

Cynthia. It's really not-

She carefully places the dinosaur on
the "yes" pile.

GERALD

Okay. Fine.
What's next.

CYNTHIA

I'm tired.
I'm taking a break.

She sits down.

GERALD

We won't get breaks in the wild, Cynthia.
There are no breaks from being fully alive.

CYNTHIA

I know that.

GERALD

We'll have to spend ten hours at a time just chewing up
tough animal hides with our teeth. Our hand-skin will get
hard and ugly. Our hair will look funny. It's not always
going to be pretty princess town.

CYNTHIA

I know that, I just-
For now. I'm taking a break for now.

With a loud noise, the kibble pours
into the metal bowls. CYNTHIA and
GERALD stiffen.

GERALD

Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

Oh I know.
You don't have to tell me.

GERALD

I just want to make sure-

CYNTHIA

You may notice-

GERALD

I just want to make sure-

CYNTHIA

You may notice, Gerald, that I am not going anywhere near
that bowl, because I, in fact, am already living my
promised land lifestyle!

GERALD

Well good. That's good.
I was just / checking-

CYNTHIA

No one needs to check on me.
(mumbled)
Check on yourself.

A pause.

GERALD

Well good. Should we continue?
I'll be the holder upper for a while.

CYNTHIA

Fine.
Sounds great!

GERALD gets up and holds up a spatula.

CYNTHIA

What is that?

GERALD

It's a butt patter.

CYNTHIA

Well, we won't be needing that.

GERALD

I don't know. It could come in handy.
It's a kind of tool, really.
An implement.

CYNTHIA

Gerald.

GERALD

Yes?

He puts the spatula on the "Yes" pile.

CYNTHIA

It might take us a while before we're ready to go.

GERALD

I'm sure it will. I think we can get totally acclimatized
via this simulation, so by the time we get to the actual
wild-

CYNTHIA

But it might take us quite a while before we actually go.
So I was wondering what we're going to eat, just while
we're-

GERALD

No no no.
You can't think about it that way. I've been developing a
little thought experiment-

CYNTHIA

You keep on saying "thought experiment".

GERALD

Pardon me?

CYNTHIA

You've said "thought experiment" three times in the last hour.

GERALD

Well, I just-

CYNTHIA

I don't care what the thought experiment is unless it explains what we're going to eat.

Does it explain what we're going to eat?

GERALD

Well-

CYNTHIA

Gerald. What are we going to eat?

GERALD

Cynthia. What are you saying?

You want to...

He gestures to the kibble.

A pause.

CYNTHIA

No. Of course not. I was just wondering if you had some kind of alternative plan.

GERALD

You're a grown adult, perhaps you can think of an alternative plan. I'm not the captain.

CYNTHIA

No one thinks you're the captain.

A brief pause.

CYNTHIA

You know what, why don't I be the holder upper. I don't really want to sit still. I need to keep my blood pumping.

GERALD

Sounds like a plan.

He sits down and she holds up a length of rope.

GERALD

Definitely no.

CYNTHIA

I agree.

GERALD

Any fool can weave a natural rope out of wild grasses.

She throws the rope on the "no" pile and starts looking for something else to hold up.

GERALD scoots over toward the bowls of kibble and slowly reaches out his hand.

CYNTHIA suddenly turns around holding a purple wig.

CYNTHIA

I'm not sure about this one.

She sees what he is doing.

CYNTHIA

Gerald!

GERALD

What?

CYNTHIA

You were- you're still doing it! Look at your hand!

GERALD

I don't know what you're talking about.

CYNTHIA

How could you?

GERALD

Cynthia, you're being unreasonable.

CYNTHIA

You're- I can see you!

GERALD grabs a handful of kibble and shoves it in his mouth. He speaks with his mouth full.

GERALD
I'm afraid you're being delusional. It happens to people with weaker constitutions. You're probably just hungry, you know how you get.

CYNTHIA
Yes, I am hungry, you... you...

She marches over to him, squats down, and grabs a handful of kibble for herself. She chews defiantly.

GERALD
Well, I must say I'm disappointed in you.

CYNTHIA
I'm only doing what you're doing!

Both of them are speaking with their mouths full and shoving kibble into their mouths as fast as they can.

GERALD
I don't know what you think you're seeing, but I'm not doing anything!

CYNTHIA
Oh you're not, are you?

GERALD
No, I'm not!

CYNTHIA
You're just sitting there, huh?

GERALD
We've only been wild for forty five minutes and you're losing your mind!

CYNTHIA
You are such a hypocrite! Give me that dish!

GERALD

I don't have it!

He does have it.

CYNTHIA

Give it to me! You've had enough!

GERALD

It's right there on the floor!

CYNTHIA

I said give it!

She grabs for the bowl and he jerks it away. Kibble spills all over the floor. She starts grabbing it and frantically shoving it into her mouth. He attacks her. They wrestle, rolling around on the floor and making grunting noises.

Pretty soon they become exhausted and lie on the ground side by side, breathing heavily.

CYNTHIA

Gerald?

GERALD

Yes?

CYNTHIA

I think we might be becoming wilder already.

GERALD

I think so too, Cyn Cyn. I think so too.

They reach for each other shakily and hold hands.

Lights down on the Humans cage.

Lights up in the Lions cage.

Scene Six: The Lions.

Two lions, TATIANA and DEE, lounge on identical plastic beach chairs, wearing identical heart shaped sunglasses.

There is a door in their cage that is standing open. They are staring at it.

TATIANA

I wouldn't give them the satisfaction.

DEE

Seriously. Who do they think we are?

TATIANA

We walk out that door and what happens? What do you think is gonna happen?

DEE

Probably something really bad.

TATIANA

I have seen a situation like this before, let me tell you.

DEE

What was it?

TATIANA

I'm not going to tell you. It would give you nightmares. Point is, the door's open.

DEE

Right. But like, we're not interested. Right?

TATIANA

Why would we be interested? What could there possibly be out there that we would be interested in?

DEE

Well, maybe if there was, like, it would have to be-

TATIANA

Nothing.

DEE

Right.

TATIANA

Did I ever tell you about Adrian?

DEE

The one with the cross-eye?

TATIANA

Adrian was way into me, like crazy obsessed. I mean, I was really into him too, at the time. We would just lie around together all day and just stare into each others eyes, like for way too long, like six hours at a time. You know the feeling.

DEE

Right, yeah, totally.

TATIANA

When?

DEE

What?

TATIANA

When have you known that feeling?

DEE

I don't know. You said, "you know the feeling", I was just, like, being polite.

TATIANA

Okay, I don't know if it's polite to lie, but whatever. So Adrian is so stupid in love with me, but then this new girl comes into the cage and now he's all about her. And I was really miserable, you know, there was no place I could go. And one day- actually it was Valentines Day. Funny. And I was walking around, right over there, and I slipped and fell on this patch of ice. And Adrian came running right over, leaving *Misty* all alone, and I realized that he still really cared about me, you know? Even though he was with her, it doesn't mean that he had forgotten all the good times we had together.

DEE

Aww.

TATIANA

Right? It was so sweet. And I was like, can you help me up?
I think I hurt my paw. And he comes a little closer and
bends over-
And I just clock him. Bam. Sucker punch, right in the eye.

DEE

What?

TATIANA

Yeah, it was brutal. He can't open that eye anymore.

DEE

Jesus.

TATIANA

At least I think he can't, I don't know. Maybe it healed.
But anyways, they transferred him and that little crybaby
somewhere else. And that's when I got you.

DEE

Oh.

TATIANA

You were just a little fluffy kitten. So cute. They were
trying to make me act more maternal.

TATIANA and DEE laugh together.

DEE

Gross.

TATIANA

I know, right? Anyways, you see the moral of the story,
obviously.

DEE

Um...

TATIANA

Don't go through the door.

DEE

Wait.

TATIANA

There could be someone waiting outside to claw your eye out.

DEE

But you're in here.

TATIANA

I'm not the only one, honey.

TATIANA sighs, leans back and closes her eyes.

After a moment, DEE gets up and starts to walk slowly toward the door.

DEE

There's not anyone out there.

TATIANA

It was a metaphor.

DEE

Yeah, I know.

She reaches the door and looks outside.

DEE

I wouldn't want to miss an opportunity, though.

TATIANA

What?

DEE

I mean, you know, what if, like, what if this door is only open for like ten minutes, ever, in our whole lives. And then later, in a few weeks, we're like, I wonder what would have happened if we had gone out that door. But it's too late.

TATIANA

Yeah, well.

DEE

I just personally don't want to live a lifetime of regret.

TATIANA

You want to go? Go. Doesn't matter to me.

DEE

I don't want to go by myself.

TATIANA

No, you should go. Find out for yourself what the real world is like. Maybe you'll be back, probably not, I don't know.

DEE

Stop it. I'm not going to go without you.

TATIANA

Then you're not going to go.

DEE

Okay, fine. I don't even care that much.

TATIANA

I'm glad to hear it.

DEE sits back down in her beach chair and crosses her arms. TATIANA ignores her and continues to sunbathe.

DEE

Don't you think there must be a reason, though?

TATIANA

No.

DEE

No but, seriously. This isn't just, like a mistake. There must be some reason. And I was wondering, what if they left it open... so we could go find the, you know, the males?

TATIANA

What males?

DEE

The males. About...

She smells the air.

500 feet in that direction?

TATIANA

Who cares.

DEE

That's not fair.

TATIANA

What's not fair? You think that after Adrian, after Cesar, after Kirby and the shit he pulled with that stupid fir tree, you think it's "not fair" that I don't give a rats ass about any males that may or may not be over there?

DEE

No. I'm sorry.

TATIANA

None of those scum-buckets are good enough for you anyways. Just forget it. If they're interested, they can come to us.

Pause.

DEE

But...

TATIANA

What?

DEE

But what if they never come?

TATIANA

Then you'll be very lucky!

DEE

So if I never leave this cage until I die, you think I would be lucky?

TATIANA

Absolutely.

DEE

I honestly can't believe you would say that.

TATIANA

What's wrong with the cage? Are you unhappy here?

DEE

There's nothing in here except for you!

TATIANA

What's wrong with that?

DEE

Well, maybe sometimes I get tired of you telling the same boring stories over and over again-

TATIANA

Excuse me?

DEE

It's true! What do you care if I go? You don't even notice that I'm here! You just want someone to sit there and nod while you go on about Adrian and Kirby and Fifi and Marinos-

TATIANA

I don't care if you go! In fact, I think you should!

DEE

I think I will!

TATIANA

Fine!

DEE

Good!

TATIANA

Great!

DEE storms off. She stands in front of the door, takes a deep breath, and takes one step outside the cage.

She looks back. TATIANA takes off her glasses and wipes her eyes.

She hesitates. TATIANA sniffles.
DEE goes back into the cage.

DEE

No, don't cry.

TATIANA
(Crying)

I just hadn't realized that you felt that way. I thought you liked my stories.

DEE
No, I do, I do. I'm sorry.

TATIANA
I just wanted to protect you so you don't get hurt.

DEE
I know. It's just hard for me sometimes to know what's right, since you have so much more experience than me.

TATIANA
You're so pretty.

DEE
You're prettier.

TATIANA
Thank you.

DEE
You know what? I don't even want to leave.

TATIANA
You don't?

DEE
No way. How could it possibly be better out there than it is in here?

TATIANA
Thanks. You're so sweet.

DEE
I won't leave you here alone.

TATIANA
I know you won't.

They settle back into their usual chairs.

TATIANA
God, I'm all worked up now.

DEE
Why don't you just take a nap.

TATIANA leans back in her chair and
closes her eyes. DEE stares fixedly at
the open door.

TATIANA
Maybe I will. All that excitement.

DEE
Don't worry. I'm right here.

TATIANA
I know you are.

Silence. DEE stares at the door. She
looks at TATIANA, then at the door,
then back at TATIANA.

TATIANA
It's funny, I've always been such a light sleeper. The
smallest movement can wake me up, every time.

DEE
Yeah. I know.

TATIANA lies in the chair, unmoving.
DEE stares the open door. Lights down.

Lights up on the Chimps cage.

Scene Seven: Chimps.

JENNY is asleep in the tree, snoring
lightly.

With a cymbal crash, PANCAKES is
illuminated in a spotlight. He carries
a single rose.

PANCAKES
This is a message for a lovely lady named Jenny.

JENNY

Oh god.

She covers her head and pretends to be asleep.

PANCAKES

I've been holding it in a long time, but I think it's time to show you how I really feel.

JENNY

Please don't.

PANCAKES begins to sing, maybe accompanied by the BAND. He sings a passionate love song.

JENNY is horrified and continues facing away from PANCAKES. He approaches her while singing and tries to hand her the rose. She won't take it. He tries to hand it to her again, and again, and again.

The song ends. PANCAKES is holding the rose out, waiting for her to take it.

JENNY

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?

PANCAKES

What?

JENNY

Why are you doing this to me? Are you trying to torture me?

PANCAKES

No! Of course not!

JENNY

I don't believe you!

PANCAKES

I just wanted to share my feelings for you-

JENNY

I know all about your stupid feelings! You've made it very clear!

PANCAKES

I'm not ashamed!

JENNY

Help! Help! Someone get me out of here!

PANCAKES

If loving you is a crime, then I'm guilty!

JENNY

Help! LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!

A short pause.

PANCAKES tries to hand her the rose again.

JENNY

(immediately)

Fuck off!

JENNY goes to the other side of the cage. PANCAKES stands and stares at the rose. After a moment, he begins to pick off its petals and let them drop to the ground.

JENNY

I will never forgive you. Do you understand that?

PANCAKES doesn't answer.

JENNY

Did you kill him so we could get back together?

PANCAKES

No!

JENNY

Are you sure?

PANCAKES

Yes!

JENNY

We are not getting back together.

PANCAKES
I get it.

JENNY
Ever.

PANCAKES
Fine.

JENNY
Do you actually remember what it was like? You and me?

PANCAKES
It was paradise.

JENNY
Really?

PANCAKES
Absolutely.

JENNY
You used to sit in that tree all day long. Doing nothing.
Just staring.

PANCAKES
What?

JENNY
You wouldn't eat. Sometimes you wouldn't talk for days. You
were picking at your fur, you had these big bald spots-

PANCAKES
I had a lot on my mind.

JENNY
You were miserable when we were together. Miserable.

PANCAKES
No, I was miserable when we broke up.

JENNY
Yeah, that too.

PANCAKES
Okay, I'm sorry, I'm an emotional guy. Do you want me to be
all stoic and unfeeling, like some kind of-

JENNY

I don't care! I don't care what you are!

PANCAKES

I don't believe that.

JENNY

You have to.

PANCAKES

I don't believe that there isn't some part of you that still has feelings for me. Somewhere, deep down-

JENNY

Our relationship was the worst three weeks of my life.

PANCAKES stops as if he has been slapped. He climbs to the highest branch of the tree and faces away from JENNY.

JENNY

Pancakes.
It's not like...
I didn't make you happy.

PANCAKES

Yes you did.

JENNY

You didn't act like it.

PANCAKES

I'm sorry.

JENNY

You weren't happy. I promise.
I can't fix this for you. Not even if we got back together.
We might be happy for three days, tops. It wouldn't be real. Everything would still be...

She indicates the cage.

The same.
Do you really want to be that kind of happy?

PANCAKES

Yes.

But that's okay.
I understand.

JENNY climbs up the tree and sits next to PANCAKES. After a moment, she puts her arm around him.

Lights down in the Primates cage.

Lights up on the Humans cage.

Scene Eight: Humans.

Gerald is back on the picnic blanket pretending to eat plastic food. Cynthia is pacing the cage.

GERALD

Why don't you come and chew on the food with me.

CYNTHIA

I don't want to chew the food anymore.

GERALD

If you would just sit across from me-

CYNTHIA

I don't want to sit across from you!
I don't understand how you can just sit there.

GERALD

What do you want me to do?

CYNTHIA

I don't know.

They both stare sadly into the distance.

GERALD

Who knew the bars would be so strong?

CYNTHIA
Yes. They look so...

GERALD
Slender.

CYNTHIA
Yes.

GERALD
I shouldn't have ever said anything.
We were so happy.

CYNTHIA
I wasn't.

GERALD
Well, you certainly looked happy.

CYNTHIA
You don't know me.

A pause.

CYNTHIA
Sorry.

GERALD
That's all right.
I guess some people just aren't meant to be wild.

CYNTHIA
At least we tried.

GERALD
We certainly did.

Cynthia forces herself not to cry.

GERALD
You know, I wonder if it isn't some kind of sign.

CYNTHIA
What do you mean?

GERALD
You know. A sign.

There's a kind of moral to be had.
Now that we've gone through this tribulation,
We can see for the first time that our lives are very
precious after all.
Look around you at our humble "abood".
This pretend food, these piles of items-
That is our pretend food.
Those are our piles of items.
And you are my Cynthia.
Do you see?

CYNTHIA

No.

GERALD

It must be a sign.

CYNTHIA

What must be a sign?

GERALD

It's all part of the plan.

CYNTHIA

No, no.
We tried to get out and we couldn't get out.
You think that's a part of the plan?

GERALD

That's what I'm suggesting, yes.

CYNTHIA

That is not an improvement.

GERALD

You don't know that until you've tried it.
It's all part of the plan.

CYNTHIA

I don't know that I can just-

GERALD

Just try it.
Say, these are my piles of items.

CYNTHIA

These are my piles of items. Gerald, this feels-

GERALD

Trust me. Please.
This is my length of rope.

CYNTHIA

This is my length of rope.

GERALD

This is my rain-hat.

CYNTHIA

This is my rain-hat.

GERALD

You are my Gerald.

CYNTHIA

You... are my...

She turns suddenly and hits something,
hard.
Maybe she slams her fist on the ground.
Gerald jumps.

After a pause:

CYNTHIA

You are my Gerald.

GERALD

Good.

He holds up an item.

GERALD

Now say, this is my spyglass.

CYNTHIA

This is my spyglass.

GERALD

This is my poker stick.

CYNTHIA

This is my poker stick.
This is my triangle cloth.
This is my tuesday boot.

This is my alone time dog.
This is my can of beans.
This is my home.
There's a plan and this is a part of it.

GERALD comes up and embraces CYNTHIA
from behind.

GERALD
It's all part of the plan.

They stand that way for some time.

Their smiles both fade to expressions
of numb horror.

Lights down in the Humans cage.

Lights up in the band cage.

Scene Nine: The Band.

The band plays a sad song. Ideally a
singer comes up and sings in another
language about having a broken heart.

When the song is over, the singer tells
the audience that it is time for
intermission.

ACT TWO

During intermission, the audience leaves the room. On their way back in, they must play a carnival game that involves picking a card.

The backs of the cards show a photograph of a lioness, a monkey, a red panda, a komodo dragon, a human, or a musician. They read, "You are a _____. Find your seat in your cage".

Inside the cages, all the animals are gone, and rows of chairs have been set up.

Out on the main floor, the band has set up in a new, un-caged location. There are two small platforms with one microphone each on opposite ends of the floor.

The character formerly known as PANCAKES enters, dressed in modern, casual clothes. He speaks into the microphone.

FORMER PANCAKES

I'd like to share some feedback from an audience member.

He reads off written notes.

"So this is just my personal opinion?
I really like the play so far, but I feel like you're missing an opportunity. You've got all these great actors and great music and at first I was like, "Wow, this is great", but then I was like, "You're just complaining". You know? I mean, if I want to see how shitty everything is I can just go outside. And it's too bad because I think you've got this great potential to not just say how stuff sucks, but to show us how to fix it. To show us a better world, you know?
So anyway, just a thought.
I would like the play better if it could show us, you know. What's outside the cages."

Thank you. Point taken.

Music begins.

All the other actors enter. They have lost their ears and tails and wear human clothes. For the rest of this act, all performers will remain onstage.

They move as a group. It is a kind of slow-motion dance performed by a large mass of people moving as one.

There is something odd and un-graceful about it, as if it is a game and no one is completely sure of the rules.

The music will continue throughout this act, although it dies down at times to become atmospheric rather than a continuous melody.

FORMER GERALD extricates himself from the group and steps up to one of the microphone platforms. The FORMER JENNY steps up to the other.

FORMER JENNY

So: Paradise.

FORMER GERALD

Paradise.

FORMER JENNY

No jobs, for starters.

FORMER GERALD

Definitely no jobs in Paradise.

FORMER JENNY

But there is- I mean, there has to be work to do.

FORMER GERALD

Work, but no jobs.

FORMER JENNY
Right. Good. Except...

FORMER GERALD
What?

FORMER JENNY
Do you have to do the work?

FORMER GERALD
Well, someone has to.

FORMER JENNY
Okay. Well...

FORMER GERALD
What?

FORMER JENNY
If I wanted to just... practice figure skating all day,
seven days a week, could that be my work?

FORMER GERALD
Um.

FORMER JENNY
If I really really wanted to.

FORMER GERALD
Well, I don't know. I don't know about seven days a week.
Because-

FORMER JENNY
Yeah, no, I understand.

FORMER GERALD
I mean what if everyone wanted to-

FORMER JENNY
No, I'm sorry. Dumb question.

FORMER GERALD
You could figure skate part of the time.

FORMER JENNY
(*"Fuck you"*)
I already figure skate part of the time.

Pause.

FORMER GERALD

...okay.

FORMER JENNY

But, whatever, let's come back to that.

FORMER GERALD

Okay. Well.

Let's have it be sunny all the time. And everyone is dancing.

FORMER JENNY

Hmh.

FORMER GERALD

What?

FORMER JENNY

Well. It's just, I don't really like dancing.

FORMER GERALD

You don't have to dance.

FORMER JENNY

I just always feel uncomfortable, and it seems like everyone else is all free and it makes me feel like I'm really uptight.

FORMER GERALD

No one has to dance.

FORMER JENNY

Okay. Optional dancing.

FORMER GERALD

Fine with me. So what else-

FORMER JENNY

I have a concern.

FORMER GERALD

Okay.

FORMER JENNY

I'm wondering- I mean, it sounds a lot like summer camp.

FORMER JENNY (Cont.)

You know, with like, singing and wholesomeness and bonfires, and then a whole bunch of meetings and talking about how things can be more fair? And you have to stand in line for food three times a day? And if you want to stay in the cabin all day and read they yell at you?

FORMER GERALD

I don't think it has to be-

FORMER JENNY

I hated summer camp.

FORMER GERALD

Clearly.

Pause.

FORMER JENNY

Maybe we should come back to this later.

FORMER GERALD

Sounds great!

They step down from the microphones and re-join the group.

FORMER CYNTHIA steps up to one of the microphones.

FORMER CYNTHIA

I had planned all this stuff to say but I'm not going to say any of it. I realized that I was still just talking about what it isn't.
And we all know how to talk about what it isn't.
I want to talk about what it is, but when I try I just end up getting really embarrassed because I sound like... it just sounds so...

FORMER RED PANDA steps up to the other microphone.

FORMER RED PANDA

Oh, I wanted to tell you, I heard this radio show that I think you would be interested in.

FORMER CYNTHIA

Oh, cool, what was it?

FORMER RED PANDA

It was all about this guy, this economist? Well more of a philosopher? This guy Gramski.

FORMER CYNTHIA

Oh, Gramshee.

FORMER RED PANDA

I thought it was Gramski.

FORMER CYNTHIA

Yeah. Grampsyki? Gramshee?

FORMER RED PANDA

He was all about how, like, it's not just politics influencing economics, I mean, it's not just economics influencing culture, it also goes the other way around.

FORMER CYNTHIA

Huh.

FORMER RED PANDA

So then you can- I don't know. It was really cool. I can forward you the link. He had a hunchback.

FORMER CYNTHIA

I think I've heard of him. Is it like the Situationist guy?

FORMER RED PANDA

Maybe.

FORMER CYNTHIA

That guy that was like... the spectacle-

FORMER RED PANDA

Right. Is the spectacle good or bad?

FORMER CYNTHIA

...bad.

FORMER RED PANDA

Right.

FORMER CYNTHIA

I think. I don't know. I read a book about it.

FORMER RED PANDA

Was it about movies? Like he was either for or against movies?

FORMER CYNTHIA

Yeah, he was definitely either for or against movies.

FORMER RED PANDA

That's cool.

FORMER CYNTHIA

I know he had two girlfriends both named Michelle.

FORMER RED PANDA

Whoa. Weird.

FORMER DEE and FORMER PANCAKES

replace the others at the microphones.

FORMER PANCAKES

I feel like in Zuccotti we re-discovered this really impactful protest form that had been forgotten/ by the general-

FORMER DEE

UUUUUUUUUUUGH.

FORMER PANCAKES

Um... what?

FORMER DEE

I'm sorry, but every time you start talking like that my mind just goes UUUUUUUUUUGH. It's not your fault, I'm sorry. I actually think it's really interesting. It's just this weird thing that happens to me.

FORMER PANCAKES

Okay. Well what should I-

FORMER DEE

No, it's totally not your fault. I'm interested, keep going. Seriously.

FORMER PANCAKES

Okay. Well, it was like enacting these gestures of human living in public, when usually everything has to come prepackaged from corporate/ marketing committees-

FORMER DEE

UUUUUUUUUUUUUGH.

Pause.

FORMER DEE

Sorry.

FORMER PANCAKES

I don't know how else to talk about this.

FORMER TATIANA comes up to the
microphone and the other two step down.

FORMER TATIANA

A woman walks into the party and she knows everyone there. No, she knows half the people there, and the other half are attractive strangers. Yeah.

And she walks over to the bar, and sees her friend, and they get to chatting. The friend says that there is a new guy in town that the woman should really meet, because... because he is also interested in watercolors, and rebuilding classic cars, and talking about feelings. And she says sure.

And she doesn't feel nervous or threatened that this watercolor guy will not like her, because why wouldn't he? And then the friend says, isn't it funny that you and I used to have a casually romantic relationship?

And the woman says, it is funny.

But just funny ha ha, not funny uncomfortable, and I think it is so great that we are such good friends. The friend, whose gender is unclear to the casual observer, points out how pleasant it is to live in a world based on honesty and trust. Wouldn't it totally suck, he and/or she says, If we decided to throw off the bourgeois values of our culture by having casual sex with people that we met at parties much like this one?

Only we never really figured out how deep the damage was inside our own brains?

And the party would be secretly filled with people trying to avoid eye contact, or avoiding their girlfriends-

FORMER RED PANDA steps up to the other microphone and clears her throat.

FORMER TATIANA ignores her and speaks with mounting anger.

FORMER TATIANA (Cont.)

or simmering with a deep and lasting shame even though they know that they didn't do anything wrong, but they can't shake feeling of being used even though the whole thing was their idea? And there would be people not at the party, too, people who don't want to go to the party because they are avoiding someone who hurt them very deeply and they are scared to put it into words because they don't want anyone to think of them as weak.

FORMER RED PANDA

Um- sorry. Excuse me.

FORMER TATIANA

What is it?

FORMER RED PANDA

It's just- you're doing it again.

FORMER TATIANA

What?

FORMER RED PANDA

You're talking about what it's not.

FORMER TATIANA

Oh. Sorry.

FORMER RED PANDA

That's okay. It's hard.

FORMER RED PANDA and FORMER TATIANA step down and re-join the dancers.

The SINGER steps up to the microphone and sings a song with the band. It is a song of hard-earned joy. Maybe it is one of those old soul songs that sound like they are about God but are actually about a woman.

During the song, the chorus does a choreographed dance about arriving in Paradise at last.

They blow hundreds of bubbles. They lift people up and let them fly around the room. They stand still with their eyes closed and their arms outstretched, shit-eating grins on their faces. They weep with sincere joy at seeing each other.

When the song ends, FORMER RED PANDA comes up to one of the microphones and FORMER KOMODO DRAGON comes to the other.

The GROUP lies on their backs on the ground, exhausted.

FORMER RED PANDA

So that's good, that's good.
When it's like that, we're all really happy
and feeling good about everything. I'm not trying to be
down on that in any way.

FORMER KOMODO DRAGON

To do list, January 25, 2014.
(replace with actual date).

Grocery shopping.
Fix door.
Replace light bulb in kitchen.
Look for jobs.
Print out resume.
Get book from library on Marxism.

FORMER RED PANDA

But the question is, what about those other times?
What about when the weather gets bad
and you're just crushed, and you think you actually can't
go outside?
What about those times when you have to stay in your room
for days because you don't want anyone to see you in case
you aren't real?

FORMER KOMODO DRAGON

Borrow vacuum cleaner.
Do push ups.

Research cheap therapy.
Talk to Mark about new band.
Write first 10 pages of novel.
Refill prescription.
Start eating vegetables.

FORMER RED PANDA

Because we should be able to accept
that those shitty times are a part of it too.
Like when you live in a shitty town in the middle of no
where, and you have a shitty job in a shitty fucking
cafeteria and there's never enough time to change out of
your work clothes?
So you always find yourself at one thirty in the morning
still wearing an apron and a name tag and screaming at your
boyfriend for implying that you're not happy?

FORMER KOMODO DRAGON

You need to relax.

FORMER RED PANDA

I'm trying.

FORMER KOMODO DRAGON

Everything is fine. You're so dramatic all the time.

FORMER RED PANDA

I didn't mean-
Yeah, I know. I know I am.
Forget it.

FORMER KOMODO DRAGON

If you don't like it, why don't you leave?

FORMER RED PANDA

Why don't you leave?

FORMER KOMODO DRAGON

Why don't you leave?

FORMER RED PANDA

Why don't you leave?

FORMER DEE steps up to the
microphone.

FORMER DEE

Guys.

FORMER RED PANDA

Sorry.

FORMER RED PANDA and FORMER KOMODO
DRAGON step down. They join the group,
which makes its way offstage, leaving
DEE alone.

FORMER DEE

Okay, look at it this way. Take, for example, an elephant.

A life sized ELEPHANT puppet enters and
walks slowly around the room. It
occasionally stops and reaches out to
audience members with its trunk.

FORMER DEE

This particular elephant was born right here in the zoo.
She spends her days flapping her ears and throwing dirt
around and going swimming and it is just fine, there is
nothing wrong with any of this, it is perfectly fine 100
per cent of the time.

Any circus trainer can tell you that if you want to train
an elephant, you've got to start young. You've got to start
with a baby and chain it up by the leg. The little elephant
will pull and pull as hard as she can and figure out that
no matter how hard she pulls, the chain won't break.
Eventually she'll stop trying. And the thing is, the trick
of it is, that when the elephant grows up, you can tie her
up with that very same chain. And even though the adult
elephant is big enough to break away easily, she won't do
it. She won't even try.

This elephant is plenty big enough to knock over all these
bars, to knock down the walls and walk right out to the
street. But she won't. And before we go criticizing her,
maybe we should remember that there are plenty of very good
reasons why she won't. It's fine in here, it's perfectly
perfectly fine. There's no reason to knock down the walls.
She doesn't even know there is an outside. She doesn't know
what that means.

Everyone leaves with the ELEPHANT.

The SINGER tells the audience that there will be another short intermission.

ACT THREE

The audience returns to find the chairs set up in a large circle, with the animals and musicians already seated. GERALD and CYNTHIA greet everyone and invite them to find a chair.

The animals are all seated far away from each other and are trading suspicious glances.

GERALD and CYNTHIA still look disheveled from their earlier wildness. TATIANA and DEE have dressed up slightly for the meeting and keep fixing each other's hair. The RED PANDA scampers around the periphery of the circle instead of sitting.

CYNTHIA

Hi. Hello.

GERALD

Thanks for coming.

CYNTHIA

Hi there.

GERALD

Good to see you. Hi.

CYNTHIA

Hi. All right. Is that everyone?

Everyone looks around the circle. No one answers her.

CYNTHIA

Okay, great. Great. I am so pleased to see so many of you here today. Unless there are any objections, I am going to

facilitate this meeting. I have been working on my facilitation skills, and not to toot my own horn, but-

GERALD

She's an excellent facilitator.

CYNTHIA

Oh, Gerald, I don't know about that. But let's get started. Can I get a verbal agreement to abide by all the same rules from the last meeting?

ALL

Aye.

CYNTHIA

Does everyone remember what the rules are?

Silence.

CYNTHIA

Is that a yes? Great! Great. So Gerald has come up with this really interesting idea, and that's why we called everyone together today. I just want to start with asking Gerald to explain his proposal. Okay, so, take it away, Gerald!

GERALD

Great. Hi. Yes. So, my idea- well, I had this realization. Just to give you a little background, Cynthia and I- well, we've been talking lately about moving on. Breaking... sort of extricating...

CYNTHIA

Gerald.

GERALD

Right. Get to the point. I do tend to get long winded, ha ha!

He pauses for a laugh. No one laughs.

GERALD

But at any rate, we realized that we may not be the only ones who would be interested in exploring our options regarding not being here. Regarding, in fact, being elsewhere. So we thought we could discuss this idea collectively, and if it worked out, we could all benefit

from the numbers in terms of safety, and also in terms of plausibility. So.

A pause.

CYNTHIA

Great! So, are there any questions?

TATIANA

What?

CYNTHIA

Okay, can we raise our hands, and I'll take stack? Thank you.

TATIANA raises her hand.

CYNTHIA

Tatiana, then Jenny.

TATIANA

I don't understand what you're talking about.

A pause.

TATIANA

That's all.

CYNTHIA nods at JENNY.

JENNY

When you say plausibility, do you mean that you can't get out with just the two of you?

GERALD

Yes, well, that is... that is a factor. We believe that with a greater number of participants, and in particular with the participation of yourself and any other chimps, it would be more plausible-

JENNY

So we need to all decide to go? It can't be just some of us?

CYNTHIA

Let's remember to raise our hands.

GERALD

I believe that the more participants we have, the more likely it is that this attempt will be successful.

CYNTHIA

Dee, then Pancakes.

DEE

I just wanted to know more information? Like what exactly is the plan, and then, you know, once we're out there, what is that, what does that actually look like.

GERALD

Right. Well- can I respond?

CYNTHIA

Yes you may.

GERALD

Okay. So, the answer is that I don't know. I don't actually have a plan, per se-

TATIANA

You don't even have a plan? I thought this meeting was about-

CYNTHIA

Not interrupting is in the rules.
Go on, Gerald.

TATIANA raises her hand and keeps it up.

GERALD

Right. Well, I thought I would just see if there was interest, and then, if there was, I would go ahead and try to formulate a plan.

CYNTHIA

Tatiana, Red Panda, Jenny.

TATIANA

I am not going to agree to something before I even know what it is. That does not seem reasonable to me. So I don't know how you expect us to agree to something before there is even a plan in place to carry it out. That's all, I'm done.

CYNTHIA

Red Panda.

RED PANDA

I was wondering- and I think it's a wonderful idea, by the way, I'm really enthusiastic about it-

GERALD

Thank you.

RED PANDA

I was just wondering if we could maybe try to work together-

JENNY

I'm sorry, could you sit down if you want to speak? I can't understand what she's-

RED PANDA

I'm sorry, I can't.

DEE

She can't sit down.

CYNTHIA

We discussed this last time, we know about the Red Panda's personal needs and we agreed as a group to accommodate them. Go ahead.

RED PANDA

Yes, um... I'm sorry. I'm sorry I can't sit. I know it's distracting.

CYNTHIA

It's fine. Go ahead.

RED PANDA

Um. I'm sorry. I forgot what I had to say.

CYNTHIA

Okay, we can come back to you. Pancakes?

PANCAKES

Yeah, I just wanted to say-

RED PANDA

Oh! I remembered.

PANCAKES

Be my guest.

RED PANDA

What I wanted to say was, couldn't we work together to make a plan, because I would feel better about something that we came up with collectively and I would be excited to be a part of that process, just personally I think it would be really interesting.

CYNTHIA

Pancakes.

PANCAKES

Why don't we just leave through that door? If we want to leave?

GERALD

What?

PANCAKES points to the actual door of the theater.

PANCAKES

Right there. There's a door.

RED PANDA

Oh my god!

GERALD

Are we sure it isn't locked?

PANCAKES

No, I don't know. I could go try it.

DEE

Wait.

She remembers and raises her hand.

CYNTHIA

Thank you. Dee.

DEE

I don't think we should be just going and like touching things and like opening doors or whatever. Like how do we know what's out there?

TATIANA

True.

CYNTHIA

Hands up if you want to speak! I know that was one of the rules that we agreed on! Thank you. Gerald, Red Panda, Jenny.

GERALD

Yes, thank you. I also feel that it's a pretty big leap to assume that that is a door.

PANCAKES

To assume what is a door?

GERALD

That... thing there.

PANCAKES

That door?

CYNTHIA

Red Panda is next.

RED PANDA

Yeah um I'm just really excited about the door and I want to say that I want to give some appreciation to Pancakes for noticing it there. And um, I would be happy to go look at it, unless, I mean, if anyone wants to, I don't want to be like hogging it but I would be willing if no one else wants to do it.

CYNTHIA

Jenny, Tatiana.

JENNY

Okay. I just feel like the only reasonable thing that we can do is go over and investigate the door, like actually go over there and look at it, and if it's not a door then we don't need to waste a bunch of time talking about it.

TATIANA

Right, I agree, and I propose that we all go together, so if there's something out there it will only get the ones in front.

GERALD

Whoa!

CYNTHIA

Okay, yes, I'm going to call on myself because I feel like all of a sudden I'm hearing everyone talking as if there is something out there and I don't believe that we actually decided that/ there was anything-

TATIANA

Yeah, let's just assume that everything is totally safe and-

CYNTHIA

Excuse me, we have an agreement to not interrupt-

GERALD

Everyone, let's just watch our tone-

The KOMODO DRAGON suddenly reaches out and snaps at JENNY, who is sitting next to him.

JENNY

Ow! What the fuck!

Everyone looks at JENNY. She points at the KOMODO DRAGON.

JENNY

Did you just try to bite me?

KOMODO DRAGON

What?

JENNY

You just sort of almost bit me.

KOMODO DRAGON

What are you talking about?

RED PANDA

Can we not just throw accusations around like this? I find this very upsetting-

JENNY

He just bit me!

RED PANDA

I didn't see it. Did anyone else see it?

CYNTHIA

Everyone! Please! Can I have silence!

TATIANA

When did we agree that you could be in charge?

PANCAKES

He bit her! Do we have to talk about who's facilitating-

CYNTHIA

Well, I'm sorry, but I am trying my best and everyone is just talking and talking all out of turn-

GERALD

No, Cynthia, you're doing a wonderful job.

CYNTHIA

I am trying.

GERALD

Just wonderful.

CYNTHIA

Thank you. I will take stack.

Everyone but the KOMODO DRAGON raises their hands.

CYNTHIA

Okay. Um. Red Panda, Jenny, Pancakes, Tatiana, Dee, Gerald.

PANCAKES

Are we going to talk about this with him here?

CYNTHIA

At the moment, yes. I don't see any reason why we should assume-

PANCAKES

(To Komodo Dragon)

Did you bite her?

CYNTHIA

It is the Red Panda's turn-

PANCAKES

Did you bite her?

KOMODO DRAGON

Maybe.

PANCAKES

Jesus!

RED PANDA

Okay, I really am feeling shocked and surprised, because we came here in good faith toward all of you, really ready to hear what you had to say, and you're all just going to start accusing him without even listening to what he has to say?

PANCAKES

He said he bit her!

RED PANDA

He said maybe!

CYNTHIA

Jenny was next in stack-

TATIANA

I propose that we get him out of here before he bites someone else! Please! I can't even sit here and talk about this-

CYNTHIA

I feel like no one is respecting my authority!

JENNY

Honestly, I don't care if he stays, but I am not sitting anywhere near him, and I don't want him to be allowed to serve on any subcommittees.

TATIANA

I second.

CYNTHIA

Okay, we can vote on that after we've gotten through the stack, which I now don't remember, who was next?

GERALD

I have been very patiently waiting.

CYNTHIA

Yes. Gerald.

GERALD

I propose we hear from the Komodo Dragon. Can he help us to understand his actions?

JENNY

Seriously?

RED PANDA

I second.

JENNY

Whatever. Please, go ahead.

Everyone looks at the KOMODO DRAGON.

GERALD

Go ahead, it's all right.

KOMODO DRAGON

Well. The way I see it is this. Five minutes ago we were talking about a door, and I think we were really getting somewhere with that. Now, we're sitting around and talking in circles, trying to figure out if someone did or did not get bitten. And my question is, why did we come here today? Did we come to argue about our little petty concerns? Or did we want to talk about getting the hell out of here?

CYNTHIA, GERALD, and the RED PANDA
applaud.

CYNTHIA

That is so on point, and as the facilitator I do want to steer us back to that conversation about the door, which felt important to me. So who has something to say about the door?

PANCAKES

Seriously?

JENNY

Don't worry about it, I don't even care.

TATIANA

(To KOMODO DRAGON)

Creep.

The KOMODO DRAGON smiles.

CYNTHIA

Gerald?

GERALD

As I recall, we had come up with one option, which was to go over there and see if the door was locked. I wanted to bring up another option, which is that we don't do that.

TATIANA

What are you talking about?

CYNTHIA

Hands! Pancakes, Dee.

PANCAKES

Okay, it makes no sense to not even go try the door. I think there are several of us who have already volunteered to do it, so, can we just... do that now?

DEE

I know it's easy for you to be all, no big deal, let's just look at the door, but if we could be a little bit careful that would be great, because it's not just you in here? You're talking about our safety too?

TATIANA

Yeah, I-

CYNTHIA

(Aggressively interrupting)

Go ahead, Tatiana.

TATIANA

I agree with Dee. If you open that door, and something comes in and I die, that makes it my business. I don't want to die, I don't think that's so crazy.

CYNTHIA

Responses? Jenny, Red Panda, Gerald.

JENNY

Maybe a group of us that want to go open the door can go open the door, and the rest of the group can hide until it's over?

PANCAKES

I second.

CYNTHIA

Okay, can I see a straw poll for that idea? From Completely agree to block?

JENNY, PANCAKES, RED PANDA, KOMODO
DRAGON and GERALD give a thumbs up.
TATIANA and DEE give a thumbs down.

CYNTHIA

We have two blocks so I'm not going to take a vote on that.
Red Panda.

RED PANDA

I'm sorry, I don't...
I don't totally know what's going on.
What exactly is outside the door?

CYNTHIA

I'm calling on myself, we don't know that there is anything
outside the door. Gerald.

GERALD

Okay. Listen, you guys.
I feel like we've not going to reach consensus on trying
the alleged door at this meeting.

JENNY

Can we just-

GERALD

I am speaking.
I feel like we are not going to reach consensus on trying
the alleged door right now, but maybe we can do that in the
near future. I want to make a proposal about something we
can do immediately, as a direct result of this meeting.

CYNTHIA

Great.

GERALD

Let's not editorialize, Cynthia.
I propose that in lieu of checking to see if the alleged
door is a door, and if so, if it is locked, and if not,
what is behind it, we make a commitment to continue this
conversation over the next few days and have a moment of
silence to honor this commitment.

PANCAKES

A moment of silence?

GERALD

It's a very common practice.

RED PANDA

I second having a moment of silence!

CYNTHIA

All right. I would like to take a vote at this time. Any objections?

JENNY

Why would we do that?

CYNTHIA

I am just taking a vote right now. You are welcome to vote however you like.

JENNY

Okay...

CYNTHIA

Do we as a group hold no strong objections to observing a moment of silence to honor our commitment to continuing this conversation in the future?

JENNY

I don't... I don't understand the moment of silence.

CYNTHIA

But do you object to it?

JENNY

Not particularly, but...

CYNTHIA

Then you could vote aye to having no objections to it.

RED PANDA

It's just really peaceful.

PANCAKES

But what does it-

CYNTHIA

I am the facilitator! And I am not taking questions at this time.

She takes a deep breath to calm herself.

CYNTHIA

Do we as a group hold no strong objections to observing a moment of silence to honor that commitment?

ALL

Aye.

CYNTHIA

All opposed? Motion passes.

GERALD raises his hand, then points to his wristwatch.

GERALD

I volunteer to time the moment of silence.

PANCAKES

How long is it going to be?

GERALD

I don't know. Ten minutes?

TATIANA

Whoa!

RED PANDA

I was thinking maybe two minutes.

DEE

One minute.

JENNY

If we're going to do it at all, we might as well do ten. One minute isn't even-

CYNTHIA

I am hearing support for one minute, two minutes, and ten minutes. Are there any other proposals?

RED PANDA

We could compromise and say five minutes.

TATIANA

Four minutes.

CYNTHIA

Okay, raise your hand to support one minute.

No one raises their hand.

Two minutes.

DEE raises her hand.

Four minutes.

TATIANA, KOMODO DRAGON, and RED PANDA
raise their hands. TATIANA nudges DEE,
who raises her hand again.

DEE

I cancel my other vote.

CYNTHIA

Five minutes.

CYNTHIA raises her own hand.

Ten minutes.

GERALD raises his hand.

CYNTHIA

All right, raise your hand if you can live with four
minutes.

Everyone raises their hands.

CYNTHIA

Any passionately strong objections to four minutes. No?
Motion passes. Gerald will time it for us.

GERALD

Is everyone ready? I'm just going to set this...

PANCAKES

Wait, I still don't understand...
Never mind. Go ahead.

GERALD

Okay. Ready?

DEE

What are we supposed to do?

GERALD

Just look at the door and honor our commitment. No talking.
And if we could all stand still, that would be great.
Annnd... now.

The RED PANDA stops pacing and forces
herself to stand still.
Everyone looks at the door in silence
for four minutes.

At three minutes and thirty seconds,
the KOMODO DRAGON starts leaning slowly
toward the RED PANDA.

At three minutes and fifty seconds, he
opens his mouth.

At four minutes exactly, GERALD's alarm
goes off, the KOMODO DRAGON bites the
RED PANDA, and the lights go out.

END OF PLAY.