

Last

A Tragicomedy in Six Scenes

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Characters:

HUMAN, any human

ARISTOTLE, a baboon

VOICE, over the intercom

SETTING: Earth in the final days of humanity.

Casting Notes:

HUMAN can and should be played by a person of any gender, race, or identity—likewise with the VOICE.

Although ARISTOTLE is written as male, there is nothing preventing a woman from portraying the role, though he should still be played as a male. While this part should also be cast openly, portrayals by an actor of color should be respectful and otherwise inoffensive.

Character notes:

Care should be taken not to play ARISTOTLE as a “realistic” baboon—his voice, posture, and physicality should be unique to the character and more evocative than representative of his baboon-ness.

The VOICE, though unseen, should be performed live off-stage to best facilitate the creative energies of the actors, and to prevent the performance from growing stagnant.

Notes on “Them”:

When the HUMAN or ARISTOTLE refer to “they” or “them” within the play, they are referring both to the spectators of the Academy, and the unknown species of which they are a part. It is up to the director to decide whether these remarks are made to the audience itself, or if the audience is simply a separate group of spectators watching the play unfold.

Furthermore, the HUMAN is referred to with the “it” pronoun through most of the play, though there is a shift in the final scene, where I start describing them with “they/them” pronouns. The ensemble can interpret this shift freely.

SCENE I

(The stage is dark. A VOICE is heard.)

VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen: direct your attention to the exhibit in front of you.

(The lights come up on the stage revealing a HUMAN sitting, wearing a black suit, imitating Rodin's *The Thinker*. Elsewhere is a longer box: suggestive of a bed. On the floor are a rug and an end-table. The HUMAN does not move from its position.)

VOICE

This is the very last human in existence. In the wild, humans are totally extinct, though at their height they could be found in every climate of planet Earth. Considered to be the dominant species of their time, a single specimen remains today due to the efforts of our ultimately unsuccessful breeding program here at the Academy. As you can see, our human spends a great deal of time each day performing an activity known as "thinking," which studies suggest separates it from its primate relatives.

(HUMAN looks up briefly, regarding the audience, and then goes back into its pose.)

VOICE

In addition to thinking, which the human does more or less on its own, we at the Academy have noticed the human engaging in other behaviors tied to its enrichment, such as napping, staring at the ceiling, and masturbating. For its comfort, the Academy has done its best to provide for the human's recreational needs.

(The lights dim on HUMAN as it looks back out at the audience, making sure no one's watching. Lights come up on ARISTOTLE in a separate but adjacent part of the stage/theatre. ARISTOTLE's habitat should contain levels, with opportunities to play, climb, run and jump. As of now, ARISTOTLE sits perched on some raised surface, fidgeting and scratching. He is unaware that the audience can see him.)

VOICE

This is a baboon. It is called Aristotle, after a very famous human who ended up being of no real importance in the long run. Extensive studies conducted by the Academy show that he is far less interesting than the human.

(Lights fade. Spotlight as HUMAN stands slowly, stretches, and paces around the enclosure aimlessly.)

VOICE

The covering on the human is not, as some have suggested, part of the human itself—rather it is a garment made of foreign fibers woven together by primitive human machinery. It is thought that all humans wore such garments, as they served the combined purposes of insulation, attracting mates, and warding off predators by making the human appear larger than it really is.

(As VOICE concludes its monologue, HUMAN returns to the crate and resumes its pose.)

VOICE

On behalf of the Academy, I can assure the public that we have done our best to provide the human with every comfort imaginable, matching its native environment to near-perfection, and providing a wide assortment of crackers and pudding cups which make up the human's natural diet. Although our search to find a companion for the human out in nature is ongoing, the Academy must, unfortunately concede that the potential discovery of another human is highly unlikely, and while the Academy continues its ongoing research on Humanity, we feel there is little left to learn from this simple, shy, ultimately doomed individual. So gaze on this marvel of nature: the last human on Earth. If you turn to your left, you will see our newest addition to the Zoological wing: the Hall of Giant Rodents....

(The VOICE trails off. HUMAN holds its pose as ARISTOTLE clambers towards it. He knocks on the barrier, but gets no response. He presses his face to the "glass," but still gets nothing. He then sits on the floor, his back to HUMAN.)

ARISTOTLE

I still don't get what's so interesting about you, Human. It's baffling, truly. Here I am—an active member of Kingdom Animalia—running around, jumping, climbing...putting on a real show.

(HUMAN remains in its pose.)

HUMAN

Mm.

ARISTOTLE

For a while it was dance and acrobatics, rhythmic performance—now I’ve stooped to wagging my genitals at passers-by, hitting myself in the head with sticks repeatedly, falling on my ass, then getting up only to fall on my ass again...anything to turn a few heads, really.

HUMAN

Hmm.

(ARISTOTLE stands up and begins pacing his enclosure.)

ARISTOTLE

(Contemptuous.) Oh, “hmm!” You may hmm all you please, but that still doesn’t change the fact that while I go for broke every single day this place is open to visitors, you pull in the crowds! All that work—for nothing! And what am I? Lost...unwanted...

HUMAN

Perhaps you’re working too hard. Try thinking—it works well enough for me.

(ARISTOTLE turns sharply to HUMAN, stops.)

ARISTOTLE

No thanks: it’s far too derivative. Baboons are not imitators. My act is crude, sure, but at least I’m original, dammit!

(ARISTOTLE starts pacing again.)

ARISTOTLE

Perhaps I haven’t gone quite far enough...

(An idea. ARISTOTLE jumps up on a box.)

ARISTOTLE

Suppose I have sex with a piece of fruit!

HUMAN

I don't understand: why fruit?

ARISTOTLE

It's simple: I take a fruit, any old fruit will do, and instead of eating it—as they would expect me to—I begin wildly and shamelessly penetrating it in front of everyone. It can't miss!

HUMAN

You're sure?

ARISTOTLE

At the very least, the scientists will be given some pause about my behavior. I assure you nothing in their data would suggest that I'd fuck my food.

(ARISTOTLE jumps back down.)

HUMAN

You'd do all this to get a few more of them to look at you?

ARISTOTLE

What would you know? You haven't felt the cold shoulder of the audience the way I have. Maybe someday you'll know what it's like to be jealous of the limelight.

HUMAN

I can't imagine. I just want a moment away from all those eyes. But when more people come to look, I get extra pudding.

ARISTOTLE

Pudding. So it all comes down to pudding does it? No appreciation for the art of performance?

HUMAN

Well, I sometimes see what you're doing out of the corner of my eye. It makes me laugh.

ARISTOTLE

Really?

HUMAN

Yeah. Like yesterday, when you put that orange peel on your head and spun around. That was pretty fun.

ARISTOTLE

What did you think when I started urinating mid-spin?

HUMAN

I thought it was a nice touch.

ARISTOTLE

Oh! I can't tell you how I thought it up. It just...came to me! Have to play from the gut, you know?

(HUMAN smiles, then turns back to "think" some more.)

ARISTOTLE

Hey, come on now. Don't wander off: we just got to an interesting topic.

HUMAN

You were talking about yourself.

ARISTOTLE

Precisely!

HUMAN

Okay. (Pause.) I appreciate the...energy you bring. I feel I get a bit boring on this side.

ARISTOTLE

Would you mind telling *them* that? (ARISTOTLE points outward.) They can't seem to get enough of you. You'd think they're watching the sun explode.

HUMAN

There have to be more things I can do...to cut down on the monotony, you know?

ARISTOTLE

Indeed. Variety is the spice of life.

HUMAN

Did you hear that somewhere?

ARISTOTLE

No. I came up with it just now.

HUMAN

Ah. (Pause.) What is “spice?”

ARISTOTLE

I think it’s a kind of horse—a very rare one. There should be a few left, if I’m not mistaken.

HUMAN

I see. I should have thought of that.

ARISTOTLE

Maybe someday you will.

HUMAN

I don’t know. Maybe I need to—branch out. Add some “spice” as you said.

ARISTOTLE

That would be interesting to watch, but I don’t see how you’ll fit one in there.

(HUMAN examines its cramped quarters.)

HUMAN

Good point.

ARISTOTLE

You are right, though. You’ve had it too good for too long. And if the audience only wants to watch you think all day...well, they’ve got another thing coming.

HUMAN

Something tells me there's more to humans than thinking—but I don't really know. It's just easier to think, I guess.

ARISTOTLE

I still don't understand how you manage to sit still for so long, though.

HUMAN

It's terrible for my posture, too. My back is always killing me.

ARISTOTLE

I bet. What's next for us, then?

HUMAN

What do you mean?

ARISTOTLE

You've presented me with a problem, Human. Being the more gifted performer of the two of us, I'd say I have a professional obligation to help you with your predicament.

HUMAN

You'd do that for me? Aren't you worried I'll distract them from *your* performance?

ARISTOTLE

Perhaps, but you'll be doing the stuff I came up with—which is just as good. Besides, I've always been so curious about you humans. There are so many unanswered questions. I for one still have no idea what on Earth a “Macarena” could be.

HUMAN

(A contemplative pause.) Aristotle, I accept your offer. I want to learn more about...well, me.

ARISTOTLE

Perfect! There's no time to lose—quick, Human—think! Think!

(HUMAN resumes the *Thinker* pose. ARISTOTLE paces back and forth muttering silently to himself, occasionally checking on HUMAN's progress. The lights dim.)

VOICE

As I'm sure you are all aware, humans and baboons did not coexist in nature. We at the Academy have found it fit to place them in such proximity due to the Human's relative incompatibility with our Orca, Python and Land Mine exhibits. Additionally, we have recently discovered that human and baboon societies were similarly structured: tightly-knit communities led by an Alpha-male, or President. The President's function as a leader was cemented by his sole right to mate with ovulating females. The advent of the female Presidency is therefore seen, by the Academy, as one of the contributing factors of dwindling human populations. And though we have not noticed any behavioral changes after placing humans and baboons in adjacent enclosures, we will continue to monitor the situation in case naturally-bred aggression should arise.

(Lights Fade)

SCENE II

(Lights up. HUMAN and ARISTOTLE are sitting on the floor across from one another, separated by the “glass.” They speak, but we do not hear them.)

VOICE

What you are witnessing is a stunning and, as yet, unprecedented example of inter-species interaction. Never in our studies have two creatures taken such keen interest in one another without aggressive intent. Though many at the Academy feel that this is either a passing curiosity on the part of the human, or signs of Aristotle’s increased libido, our researchers are monitoring these creatures to better understand the nature of this unexpected relationship.

(The lights rise to full.)

ARISTOTLE

...And you haven’t thought of anything?

HUMAN

Nothing.

ARISTOTLE

How long has it been? Five hours? Six?

HUMAN

After a while, it’s hard to keep track.

ARISTOTLE

And you were thinking—the whole time, you were actually thinking?

HUMAN

Yes. (HUMAN assumes *Thinker* pose. Relaxes.) Just like I always do.

ARISTOTLE

Funny. I would have imagined after all this thinking, you would have thought up some idea about humanity. You’re sure you’re thinking the right way?

HUMAN

Hey, who's the expert on thinking here?

ARISTOTLE

(A deep sigh of concession.) You are.

HUMAN

You know, thinking isn't as easy as it looks. It's actually quite difficult for someone who isn't used to the stresses.

(HUMAN sits and resumes the thinking pose. ARISTOTLE paces, growing impatient. Silence. ARISTOTLE finally interjects.)

ARISTOTLE

Well?

HUMAN

Give it a minute! I need some time to get warmed up.

ARISTOTLE

You've been "warmed up" for six hours! At this rate, we'll both be dead by the time you get another idea. I've been given very little to work with.

HUMAN

Hey, I came up with a couple of good things.

ARISTOTLE

First off—you should leave pudding cups out of the act, you eat like a pig.

HUMAN

"Like a pig?" What does that mean, "like a pig?"

ARISTOTLE

Well, it's...I hear it means that you...uh...something to do with your feet, I believe.

HUMAN

Ha! You just made that up! I bet pigs aren't even real.

ARISTOTLE

They are too! They're a...a kind of...I don't know—I just heard it somewhere.

HUMAN

Sure. Sure. I bet you'll say I nap like a "pig" now, too.

ARISTOTLE

No, but you move even less than when you think. Plus, you snore.

HUMAN

I don't snore.

ARISTOTLE

Oh, yes you do. You've been keeping me up at night for so long...well, it's no wonder my performances are suffering.

HUMAN

It can't be that bad.

ARISTOTLE

Face it, human: you're positively draining.

HUMAN

Well, I don't see you coming up with anything, Aristotle. If you're so smart, *you* try thinking of something.

(ARISTOTLE ponders, considering the challenge.)

ARISTOTLE

You know what, human, I just might.

(ARISTOTLE runs to a nearby box of his own. He climbs atop it and approximates the *Thinker* pose.)

HUMAN

The hand goes under your chin.

ARISTOTLE

I know that! Give me a goddamn second, will you?

(ARISTOTLE hits the pose and looks at HUMAN.)

ARISTOTLE

Tell me when to start.

HUMAN

Ok...go!

(ARISTOTLE strains, contorting his face and tensing his muscles. He begins fidgeting and scratching, but trying very hard to maintain his poise.)

HUMAN

It doesn't work if you keep fidgeting like that.

ARISTOTLE

I'M TRYING!

(ARISTOTLE shakes under the stress. When it seems he might explode he freezes, perfect, then tips off the box.)

HUMAN

See? What did I say?

ARISTOTLE

No fair! Baboons aren't adapted for thought! You're just having a joke at my expense!

HUMAN

It was a little funny.

ARISTOTLE

Shut up! (Pause.) I knew it was hopeless to try thinking. If there were answers to be gained from *that*, you would have thought of them years ago.

HUMAN

I suppose you're right, Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE

No! Don't say that, we're still arguing!

HUMAN

We are? Why?

ARISTOTLE

Because we—you—come on, human, we were on a roll! Just as I start having a stimulating conversation...(sigh)...you're so boring when you're not contrary, human.

HUMAN

You really think that?

ARISTOTLE

(Ignoring HUMAN.) What I wouldn't give to have another baboon to talk with!

HUMAN

I'm sorry, Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE

Don't be sorry! Disagree with me!

(HUMAN ponders, heaving a sigh. This should be a natural pose, separate from the *Thinker*.)

HUMAN

I don't know if I can. I try not to have too many opinions, I usually just think.

ARISTOTLE

Again with the thinking!

HUMAN

Well, it was worth a shot, wasn't it?

ARISTOTLE

Peh!

(ARISTOTLE turns away from HUMAN, sitting on the floor, arms crossed.)

HUMAN

So how do you do it, then?

ARISTOTLE

Do what?

HUMAN

Well...you come up with all these wonderful, creative performances. Something brand new every day, each one better than the last. I just sit around and think all the time because I don't know what else to do. What's your secret?

ARISTOTLE

Secret? I don't know if there's any secret, human. I usually make it up on the spot.

HUMAN

Just like that? (Snaps fingers.)

ARISTOTLE

Precisely! Just like that! (Snaps fingers.)

HUMAN

I don't know; it looks pretty challenging.

ARISTOTLE

On the contrary: it's the most natural thing I do all day.

HUMAN

Sounds like so much *work*.

ARISTOTLE

Think of it more like...play.

HUMAN

Play...should I try it?

ARISTOTLE

Yes, yes! By all means.

(HUMAN shakes itself loose, but catches sight of the audience and is paralyzed. It returns to ARISTOTLE.)

HUMAN

I can't...I can't...

ARISTOTLE

What do you mean, "you can't?" What happened?

HUMAN

I—I stood up and I went to start and—

ARISTOTLE

And...?

HUMAN

And...nothing. I didn't know what to do.

ARISTOTLE

Well, you should have done something anyways!

HUMAN

I did do something, I gave up!

ARISTOTLE

Now's not the time to get pedantic, human. Do you want my help or not?

HUMAN

I do, I do— but...what *do* I do?

ARISTOTLE

Don't hesitate, just...*act*. What first popped in your head when you stood up?

HUMAN

Like, the *first* first thing?

ARISTOTLE

No, the other first thing. *Yes, the first-first thing!*

HUMAN

Ok. I stood up—

ARISTOTLE

Yes.

HUMAN

And I looked out—

ARISTOTLE

Yes...

HUMAN

And...(Pause.) "Oh no. This was a mistake. Stop. Stop right now."

ARISTOTLE

Ugh! For an ex-predator, you sure are cowardly.

HUMAN

I know. I feel so ashamed.

ARISTOTLE

As well you should. Grow a backbone, human.

HUMAN

Maybe...well...

ARISTOTLE

Well, what? I'm listening.

HUMAN

Perhaps...a demonstration.

ARISTOTLE

(Flattered.) From *moi*?

HUMAN

If you please.

ARISTOTLE

Well! I've never been given a *request* before! What would you have me do?

HUMAN

Oh, anything, really. Give me your best.

ARISTOTLE

My best huh?

(ARISTOTLE climbs to a prominent location, taking a showman's pose.)

ARISTOTLE

Feast your eyes, human!

(ARISTOTLE launches into a reckless fit of performance—entirely improvised. He mixes the beautiful and profane, the calculated and crude—at once, animal and acrobat. It is here where the actor should sink most deeply into imitation. He should run the gamut of emotions, his clowning antics inspiring the full and graceful spirit of nature. Attempts to add formal blocking should be resisted, but particularly inspired bits should be held onto and grown. Time should not be an issue, though ARISTOTLE should be exhausted by the end. HUMAN watches, transfixed and stands in applause by the end, which ARISTOTLE reciprocates with a deep and graceful bow.)

HUMAN

That...that was...

ARISTOTLE

Diverting? Exhilarating? Transmogrifying?

HUMAN

That...was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

ARISTOTLE

Oh, you don't mean that.

HUMAN

I do. I really, truly do.

ARISTOTLE

Well, thank you, human. I...(He staggers.) whoa. I need to catch my breath for just a second. (He pants.) Then you can keep praising me.

(ARISTOTLE inhales deeply, and exhales with relish.)

ARISTOTLE

Continue.

(ARISTOTLE closes his eyes to bask in further praise.)

HUMAN

Right. So...how did you do that?

ARISTOTLE

I take it that means your adulation is over?

HUMAN

Of course not, but I thought you'd be able to tell me how you did that.

ARISTOTLE

A true artist never reveals his secrets!

HUMAN

Not even for a friend?

ARISTOTLE

Who said you were my friend?

HUMAN

What are your other options?

(ARISTOTLE looks "next-door" and shudders.)

ARISTOTLE

Fair point. (standing, clearing his throat, a pause.) Most of it is inspiration—the rest, I guess...is memory.

HUMAN

Memory?

ARISTOTLE

Yes, memory. Are you stupid or something?

HUMAN

I must be—I don't have a grasp of memory.

ARISTOTLE

Sure you do. You must! You remember me well enough, don't you?

HUMAN

I forget.

(ARISTOTLE turns and sighs, ready to nap on a platform.)

HUMAN

Can you tell me one? One of your memories?

(ARISTOTLE freezes, then turns to HUMAN.)

ARISTOTLE

And my memory will do what exactly?

HUMAN

It might help me.

ARISTOTLE

All right. Well...you were born here, weren't you?

HUMAN

I've been told that.

ARISTOTLE

See. That's the difference. All you have to remember are gray walls and glass cases—the shifting faces beyond the window. As for me, I was *put* here.

HUMAN

That's right! I was thinking one day when they opened up your room and put you inside.

ARISTOTLE

Ah, yes. It was a dark time.

HUMAN

I was happy for the company—even that of a baboon.

ARISTOTLE

Anyways—before then, I lived wild and free with a whole troop of baboons.

HUMAN

Baboons come in troops?

ARISTOTLE

Usually they do. I am one of a small minority that doesn't—the only one, for all I know.

(Pause. ARISTOTLE grows sullen.)

HUMAN

So, your troop?

ARISTOTLE

(Pricking up.) Yes! Living with my troop—on the dusty savannah, the sun shining over the great African continent—you don't understand, human, but the troop is everything to a baboon. We don't have silly names like "Aristotle," we don't need them. Every baboon is brother or sister, mother or father. We spend the day running and playing, finding food or napping. We groom one another and, on occasion, mate. It is truly a baboon's paradise: that spirit, that idea that the world is at your back, and that you can run forever without hitting glass. That's my memory. I suppose it's what I always go back to when I do my dance and sing my songs.

(ARISTOTLE's smile fades, he clutches himself.

ARISTOTLE slumps on the floor, forlorn. HUMAN goes to the glass.)

HUMAN

What is grass like?

ARISTOTLE

It feels like it belongs between your toes. Without grass, my feet feel empty.

HUMAN

Was there a sky?

ARISTOTLE

Oh, the sky! You know the sky could turn just about any color there was?

HUMAN

Did it really?

ARISTOTLE

Of course it did. When the sun fell in the evening, it—it looked like the whole Earth was exploding in slow motion! Can you imagine, human?

HUMAN

No. I can't imagine.

ARISTOTLE

That is a shame, human.

HUMAN

Thank you—for remembering. I think...I think I'll have to try it now.

ARISTOTLE

Well, if you do: don't rush it. Just let the memories come to you.

HUMAN

I will.

(HUMAN goes to the bed-box, and ARISTOTLE climbs atop his tallest perch. Both curl up and fall asleep. The lights dim.)

VOICE

Fossil records indicate that, in prehistoric times, humans would often go to war with other creatures over the fluctuating supplies of crackers and pudding cups which once dotted the landscape. Most of these conflicts took place between humans and the now-extinct race of creatures known as “chickens,” which our scientists believe to have been made of an inner skeleton of wings and thighs encased inside a bucket-like exoskeleton. It is still a matter of heated scientific debate as to whether or not they were covered in a thin layer of breadding for insulation. Such belligerence between humans and other primates is uncertain—partly due to lack of evidence, and partly because of a prevailing theory that humans and baboons formed an alliance against the imperialist chicken regime. Of course, no long-standing bond is thought to have ever been formed between a human and baboon before, as it is unlikely that baboons would socialize with any species that wasn’t naked. Ladies and gentlemen, the Academy is closing for the evening, though the gift shop will remain open for an additional fifteen minutes in case you would like to purchase a last-minute souvenir. Well wishes and safe travels from your friends at the Academy.

(Lights Fade)

SCENE III

(Spotlight on HUMAN as the *Thinker*, sitting on its crate, facing the audience. Music may be playing.)

VOICE

Experts are still unsure as to the exact nature of the bodily function known as “thought” in humans. It was believed that humans thought to excrete pheromones into the air to communicate over long distances; however, scans of the exhibit’s atmosphere have yet to reveal any such airborne chemicals. A new theory suggests that thinking was a means of camouflage against the background of humans’ natural habitats of art galleries and sculpture gardens. Less credible theories include thought as a means of attracting mates (which we know to be the function of the suit), or as the process by which humans desperately and fruitlessly tried to understand themselves and their surroundings. Either way, it is still quite breathtaking to watch the human engage in the lost art of thinking right here at the Academy. Flash photography is prohibited.

(Lights rise on the entire stage. Spotlight on ARISTOTLE.)

ARISTOTLE

You know, for all its majesty and wonder, I find the human to be...depressing. It’s funny, as a baboon, I rarely have to deal with the concept of finality. There have always been baboons, and there always will be baboons: it’s one of the axioms of the universe, as far as I can tell. It never mattered if the numbers in my troop would start to dwindle—if one of them died or wandered off—because there was always another troop just over the hill. Even if I go, the species survives. When you think of the alternatives, it’s actually a rather comforting thought.

(ARISTOTLE wanders towards the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

I mean, sure most baboons are argumentative pricks, and my idiot brother still probably thinks the Earth is flat when it’s obviously a big tube, but they were—are...family. No matter how much we may hate each other, I’m sure they miss me. (Pause.) But there’s this idea that keeps coming back to me, over and over: that no one really gives a shit. Not even some great baboon God, who created all baboons in his image, cares about me. That I’m doomed to waste away here in this fucking glass box. Even so, I jump and yell and curse my fate just to remember that I still can. This makes me feel a little better about life—or just the fact that I’m still alive at all.

(ARISTOTLE pauses and examines the human.)

ARISTOTLE

Yet this human: this poor, fragile little human makes me so depressed that I'm actually afraid of it. Every moment it sits there thinking, I come up with hundreds of things it ought to be doing instead: screaming, jumping up and down, thrashing around, running headlong into the glass.... instead, it just sits there: eating its crackers and occasional pudding cup. (ARISTOTLE curls up.) I was never sad before I was brought here. But I don't think that human was ever sad in its life...or happy for that matter. It just *is*. And it doesn't even ask why.

(Lights change. HUMAN remains in pose. ARISTOTLE scratches at itches he can't satisfy. Lights dim.)

VOICE

Normally at this point in the day, the human would divert its attention from thinking, either to eat or masturbate, but...well, it's still thinking. (Pause.) Ladies and Gentlemen, our scientists are currently on the floor to observe an unprecedented length of thought. The last time a human in captivity thought this long, it soon died of old age, exhaustion or boredom—we're still not sure. Rest assured medical personnel are on hand to resuscitate the human if necessary.

(Lights up. ARISTOTLE stands, looks at HUMAN.)

ARISTOTLE

Why do I want to help the human, anyway? As a creature, it's pretty useless—I can't even imagine how it would feed itself in the wild, much less avoid getting eaten. Do I pity it? Perhaps. There *is* a certain doom-ridden beauty to the thing...I'd hate to see it leave this Earth so soon. Maybe I feel I owe it. I've certainly ogled the wretched thing long enough. Plus, I'm sure having a real-live human next-door has brought one or two curious sets of eyes to see me waste away in here—a few more spectators for my suffering. Maybe I'm...curious. I want to know what it thinks while it sits there in silence. Does it have deep thoughts? Thoughts that would shatter my brain if I dared try to think them myself? Or maybe...just maybe...

(ARISTOTLE stands and walks proudly over to a crate of his own. He sits down, adjusts himself and slowly, carefully, tries to mimic HUMAN's pose. With some effort, he manages to match it exactly.)

ARISTOTLE

All right, Aristotle: think.

(Lights out on stage, spotlights on HUMAN and ARISTOTLE.)

VOICE

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Academy would like to remind you that baboons, though related genetically to humans are, and always have been incapable of thought. The behavior that Aristotle is exhibiting is likely an advanced mimetic tendency which baboons use to learn certain survival tactics, such as using tools to break open termite mounds or cunnilingus. It is believed that such advanced social behaviors are important to baboon lifestyle, though the Academy does not care enough to find out.

(ARISTOTLE in spotlight.)

ARISTOTLE

Huh. (Pause.) Does feeling my fist dig into my chin really facilitate a deeper understanding of the universe? Is an internal process—unique to the human physiology—like...shitting...but with ideas? (Pause. ARISTOTLE shifts.) Ugh. I know humans have different bones, but dammit if this isn't uncomfortable. (ARISTOTLE looks up briefly.) Then again, I've only been at this for a minute or two. That human's been over there for...God, several hours now. Almost a whole day. Perhaps it is a cumulative practice, thoughts getting deeper the longer you think...perhaps if I...

(ARISTOTLE tenses, "thinking" more intensely than he's thought before.)

ARISTOTLE

Fuck this.

(ARISTOTLE gives up. He lies down on the floor. A prolonged silence. No one moves.)

(HUMAN wiggles its nose.)

VOICE

Watch carefully, we may be witnessing a new reaction to such prolonged thinking. No one should disturb, molest, or otherwise perturb the human unless it is clearly an emergency.

(HUMAN keeps wiggling its nose and scrunching its face. The contortions grow greater in size and scope. Finally, HUMAN sneezes.)

VOICE

Incredible! Unprecedented accounts of human behavior. Periods of thought longer than thirteen hours lead to the natural phenomenon called “sneezing,” which is believed by our experts to be a primitive communication by humans via the sense of taste. Ladies and Gentlemen, remind yourselves that today you were present for one of the greatest leaps in zoological discovery in many years. More information on humans can be found in the pamphlets on page nine.

(Lights out on ARISTOTLE. HUMAN, now in a natural seated position, gazes at the floor.)

VOICE

Human.

(HUMAN looks up with a start. Searching for the VOICE.)

HUMAN

Yes?

VOICE

You thought very well today.

HUMAN

Thank you.

VOICE

We retrieved valuable data from observing you today, and more visitors came to see you than at any point in the past five months.

HUMAN

That’s nice.

VOICE

Yes, it is. Thank you, human.

HUMAN

You’re welcome.

VOICE

Here. Have a pudding cup.

(A pudding cup arrives onstage. There is no spoon. HUMAN opens it, and notices the lid—perhaps for the first time. HUMAN carefully removes it, fashions it into a crude spoon and starts eating the pudding.)

VOICE

Huh. That's new.

(Lights Fade)

SCENE IV

(HUMAN and ARISTOTLE are both sleeping, the lights are dim, but a spot shines softly on both.)

VOICE

Status update 37 Theta Q: Both specimens remain dormant. Vital signs are constant and stable—Species 45 and 104 show no immediate signs of ill health. Specialists currently assigned to monitor: seven. Probability of anomalous behavior in current captivity: zero.

(A moment of profound silence. HUMAN snores loudly.)

VOICE

Human nightly mating cry commenced. Nightly surveillance satisfied. End of update.

(Silence. HUMAN snores. Silence. HUMAN snores again, louder. ARISTOTLE wakes with a start and falls from his perch with a yelp.)

ARISTOTLE

Ah! Uh! What—

(HUMAN snores. ARISTOTLE groans at the discovery and blearily scampers to the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

(softly) Human! Psst! Human!

(He is answered by a powerful snore. ARISTOTLE flies backwards. He dusts himself off and marches back.)

ARISTOTLE

(Screaming) HUMAN!

(HUMAN opens its eyes and slowly sits up, peacefully.)

HUMAN

Oh, hello. You're up awfully early, Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE

Of course I am! *You* woke me up!

HUMAN

Sorry. The snoring?

ARISTOTLE

Yes!

HUMAN

You would prefer to be asleep?

ARISTOTLE

Yes I would, actually.

HUMAN

Then why did you wake me up?

ARISTOTLE

I DON'T KNOW!

HUMAN

Should we go back to sleep then?

ARISTOTLE

PROBABLY!

HUMAN

Ok.

(They return to bed. ARISTOTLE is still wound up.)

HUMAN

Goodnight, Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE

GOOD NIGHT!

(HUMAN lies down and closes its eyes. ARISTOTLE tosses and turns, then settles in a lump. A long silence. HUMAN opens its eyes. It looks around, then sits up.)

HUMAN

Aristotle? (Pause.) Aristotle?

(ARISTOTLE lurches awake, stares at HUMAN.)

ARISTOTLE

WHAT.

HUMAN

Aristotle, I can't sleep.

ARISTOTLE

Fascinating. Neither can I.

(ARISTOTLE glares for a moment, then rolls back over.)

HUMAN

Don't you want to know why?

ARISTOTLE

No, human. I don't want to know. I don't want to know every minute detail of your pitiful existence, especially when I'm trying to get the beauty rest I so richly deserve! Good night!

(ARISTOTLE is about to roll over, HUMAN interrupts.)

HUMAN

My head is full. It's too loud and I can't sleep.

ARISTOTLE

Well, *you're* too loud, and *I* can't sleep.

HUMAN

At the very least, you can sympathize.

ARISTOTLE

“At the very least, you can sympathize.” I’ve about had it with you, human!

HUMAN

I’ve never had this much trouble before, can’t you help me?

ARISTOTLE

Is that all I am—the human’s go-to, helping-hand primate?

HUMAN

That would be awfully nice of you.

ARISTOTLE

Well, I’m not nice—certainly not in the middle of the night.

HUMAN

Please?

ARISTOTLE

No! Stop asking me for help every time you forget how to do something. Those eggheads won’t shut up about all of humanity’s achievements. Your kind built the pyramids—flying machines—edible underwear! I’m pretty damn sure you can figure out how to fall asleep.

HUMAN

But...I didn’t do any of those things. I’m not sure if I could even if I tried.

ARISTOTLE

(Sigh.) Fine. I’ll help. You’re lucky you’re so pitiful. (Pause.) So—what’s keeping you up? You were passed out cold a few minutes ago.

HUMAN

I don’t know—I tried to go to sleep, but my mind just kept going...asking questions.

ARISTOTLE

Were you fidgeting at all? Uncomfortable?

HUMAN

Not on the outside...

ARISTOTLE

A restless spirit, perhaps?

HUMAN

Yes, yes! Does that happen to you?

ARISTOTLE

Not anymore, I'm afraid. My spirit was crushed long ago. When you can only escape in your dreams, you learn how to fall asleep quickly.

HUMAN

You dream?

ARISTOTLE

At every opportunity—there are times where I don't even wait until I'm asleep.

HUMAN

So...just dream? Is that all I need to do?

ARISTOTLE

It should give you some incentive at least.

HUMAN

Okay. Dreaming. Here we go.

(HUMAN lays back down on its block and shuts its eyes tight. ARISTOTLE sits, observing.)

HUMAN

How will I know when I'm dreaming?

ARISTOTLE

You'll see new things. Fantastic things. Things that couldn't exist in real life—places you've never been before.

(HUMAN opens one eye.)

HUMAN

How will I know what they're like if I've never seen them?

ARISTOTLE

It's simple, you...all you have to...just—imagine!

HUMAN

I can't imagine.

ARISTOTLE

Oh.

(Silence.)

HUMAN

What do you dream about?

ARISTOTLE

I never remember—but it's usually pleasant, and there's always grass.

HUMAN

I'm glad. You deserve grass in your dreams.

(ARISTOTLE smiles, silently thanking.)

ARISTOTLE

So—I guess dreaming is off the table for now. Do you still feel restless?

HUMAN

A bit.

ARISTOTLE

Energetic?

HUMAN

A tad.

ARISTOTLE

Then it's clear—you're not nearly tired enough.

(ARISTOTLE stands up and begins stretching.)

HUMAN

I thought you said you wanted to sleep.

ARISTOTLE

I do. But you've made it rather clear that as long as you're awake, I am too. (Pause.) I had a friend—back on the savannah—who would jump at every noise in the night. Every time a twig broke or a jackal barked in the distance, he would run around screaming his head off.

HUMAN

So I need to be afraid of everything?

ARISTOTLE

Probably—but that's not the point. When he was finished carrying on like a lunatic, he'd collapse in a pile and pass right out. His own panic exhausted him.

HUMAN

You want me to panic?

ARISTOTLE

Yes. (Pause.) No. That's not what I meant. We don't need to replicate the cause, merely the action, don't you see?

HUMAN

I don't.

ARISTOTLE

Good, because I no longer feel like explaining. Get up, you silly thing, and run!

(HUMAN gets up tentatively.)

HUMAN

You want me to run around?

ARISTOTLE

Yes, run. All that sitting around and thinking goes right to your thighs, anyways.

HUMAN

Well what if someone sees me?

ARISTOTLE

Who? The Academy is closed, even the scientists have gone home—assuming they have homes. It's just you and me in here: go nuts.

HUMAN

Oh. Okay.

(HUMAN starts pacing around the room, hands in pockets.)

ARISTOTLE

Faster.

HUMAN

Sorry.

(HUMAN advances to a brisk walk)

ARISTOTLE

Really open it up, human.

HUMAN

Okay.

(HUMAN enters a slow jog, circling its enclosure.)

ARISTOTLE

Is that seriously as fast as you go?

HUMAN

It's as fast as I've gone—so far.

ARISTOTLE

Give it some more, why don't you?

(HUMAN stops dead in its tracks.)

HUMAN

If it's so easy, why don't you do it?

ARISTOTLE

I'm already half-asleep. Once you bed down, I'll be out in three seconds flat. Now, keep going.

(HUMAN sits on the floor, frustrated. An idea, and a cheeky smile breaks out.)

HUMAN

You're right. I guess you couldn't really tire me out anyways.

(ARISTOTLE walks to the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

What did you say to me, human?

HUMAN

Oh, nothing. Just that you're probably too old and tired to get me to work up a sweat.

ARISTOTLE

Old! Tired! I'll have you know that if those bastards let me out, I could run clear back to Africa without stopping.

HUMAN

Prove it. Show me what you've got.

ARISTOTLE

You better watch that mouth, human. Now get over here.

(HUMAN meets ARISTOTLE at the glass. They stand as reflections.)

ARISTOTLE

Now, you follow me exactly. Capeesh?

HUMAN

Capeesh.

(Both inhale deeply, then ARISTOTLE begins doing jumping jacks—HUMAN mirroring precisely. ARISTOTLE builds speed and HUMAN keeps up. They both stop, neither one tired yet. They run in place for a second then stop. They jump as high as they can, landing together. From here HUMAN perfectly reflects ARISTOTLE's movements like the "mirror scene" in *Duck Soup*. The movements may be spontaneous or rehearsed, but should reflect the full mobility, range, and skill of both actors and end with their exhaustion. When it's over, they should be sitting back to back—still separated by glass—laughing between breaths.)

HUMAN

Wow. I may not be sleepier, but that sure was fun.

ARISTOTLE

Speak for yourself—I'm surprised you could keep up as well as you did.

HUMAN

Now I see why they always say we're related.

(They share a laugh.)

ARISTOTLE

So you still can't sleep?

HUMAN

One second. I need to rest a bit first.

(ARISTOTLE understands. He doesn't understand. HUMAN lies down and shuts its eyes, then rolls to face away from ARISTOTLE. After a moment, its eyes open.)

HUMAN

Aristotle?

ARISTOTLE

Human?

HUMAN

What I was wondering earlier—I wanted to ask you something.

ARISTOTLE

Let me hear it.

HUMAN

If you were like me—the last baboon, let's say.

ARISTOTLE

Unlikely.

HUMAN

Still—if you knew that there were no other baboons left on Earth...what would you do?

(ARISTOTLE considers deeply, the playfulness is gone, replaced with dread.)

ARISTOTLE

Jeez. I don't know, human. Knowing there are other baboons out there is really what keeps me going in here—despite the fact that I will never see another baboon as long as I live. I guess I wouldn't be able to handle it. I'm not sure how you do, honestly.

HUMAN

So what would you do?

ARISTOTLE

If I had to guess, I'd probably go insane.

HUMAN

Go in where?

ARISTOTLE

Not like that. I wouldn't actually go anywhere, I mean I'd lose my mind—do things no sane baboon would consider doing in their whole lives.

HUMAN

On purpose?

ARISTOTLE

I wouldn't know. I've never been insane before.

HUMAN

Do you think I should try it, then?

ARISTOTLE

Are you going to need me to explain the process...again?

HUMAN

(A guilty pause.) Perhaps.

ARISTOTLE

All right...uh...well, I guess just think about what oth—...oh.

HUMAN

What?

ARISTOTLE

Well...I was going to say “think about what other humans do,” but...

HUMAN

Oh. Right.

(HUMAN curls up. ARISTOTLE stands and paces, scratching his head.)

ARISTOTLE

I’m sorry, human—I—

HUMAN

It’s okay. I’m fine, Aristotle. You forgot, that’s all.

(HUMAN puts its head down, despondent.)

ARISTOTLE

Look, human. I know this sounds corny and all but...even if you are the only human—the last human—you’re not alone. Not as long as I’m here.

(HUMAN and ARISTOTLE walk up to the glass. They want to hug, but are content to put a hand up in reflection. A beat, then they put their hands down.)

HUMAN

I suppose I’d better get to bed, then. Thanks again...for everything.

ARISTOTLE

What are friends for?

(Each takes a few steps in the direction of their bed.)

ARISTOTLE

‘Night, human.

(HUMAN breathes deeply.)

HUMAN

Good night.

(ARISTOTLE clambers over to his perch, and resumes the position we last left him in. HUMAN lies back down on the bed. It falls back to sleep.)

(As HUMAN sleeps, a mannequin—also in a suit—is brought onstage—it should seem to arrive on its own, or be placed there by some outside force. It shares the spotlight with HUMAN.)

VOICE

Good morning, human.

(Blackout)

SCENE V

(The mannequin is sitting in the spot HUMAN normally occupies—if possible, in “the *Thinker*” pose. HUMAN and ARISTOTLE are both huddled in the corners of their enclosures, separated only by glass. They tremble, staring at the mannequin.)

ARISTOTLE

What...is...that?

HUMAN

I don't know, but it must have shown up overnight.

ARISTOTLE

How would you know that?

HUMAN

It wasn't here before I went to sleep, and it was right there when I woke up.

ARISTOTLE

So?

HUMAN

Well...when else could it have shown up?

ARISTOTLE

Shh! Not so loud...we don't know if it hears us or not.

HUMAN

It doesn't appear to be listening. Maybe we're safe.

(A long pause. Both listen intently, watching the mannequin, waiting for it to jump.)

ARISTOTLE

Would you bet your life on that?

HUMAN

It doesn't seem that dangerous.

ARISTOTLE

Well, not from this distance—but you never know.

HUMAN

I should try to contact it...

ARISTOTLE

Fine. But if you die, that's it for your species.

HUMAN

Would extinction really be that horrible?

(Silence. ARISTOTLE chooses his words carefully.)

ARISTOTLE

Be careful. That's all I'm saying.

(HUMAN takes tentative steps towards the mannequin.)

HUMAN

Hello?

(Silence.)

HUMAN

Hello? What are you?

(Another silence.)

ARISTOTLE

Maybe it's an idiot...

HUMAN

Don't be so mean. It might just be shy.

ARISTOTLE

How would you know?

HUMAN

I understand shy things. Once, I saw a cockroach run across the floor and hide in the corner. It was afraid of me, but I didn't want it to be. I walked over to it, and saw it was shivering, so I talked to it. I tried to make it feel welcome, and...I believe I helped it.

ARISTOTLE

You talked to a cockroach?

HUMAN

It seemed so lonely. I figured it could use a friend.

ARISTOTLE

I probably would have eaten it.

HUMAN

Aristotle!

ARISTOTLE

Come on. They don't taste *that* bad.

HUMAN

I can't imagine!

ARISTOTLE

Either try talking to your new "friend" over there or try eating it, but don't just stand there.

HUMAN

I'll try talking to it. I feel...I feel like I might learn something. (HUMAN walks to the mannequin and sits next to it.) I hope you don't mind, but I thought I'd come over and sit by you for a bit. (Pause.) I bet you're scared—I am too, sometimes. All of them, looking at you watching you do everything...it's hard to deal with.

ARISTOTLE

Looks like it's ignoring you.

HUMAN

Hush. It's just nervous. I bet it's frightened of you.

ARISTOTLE

Of *me*? Are you serious?

HUMAN

You can appear a bit frightening at times.

ARISTOTLE

AT TIMES!?

HUMAN

The yelling isn't helping, Aristotle!

(ARISTOTLE tries to retort, but says nothing. He walks over to the far side of his enclosure and sits down, back turned towards HUMAN.)

HUMAN

Sorry about that, stranger. He's usually pretty friendly for a baboon. I don't know what's come over him. (Pause.) By the way, I'm a human—in case you're wondering. Lots of people haven't seen anything like me before because...well, I'm the only one left. (Pause.) I know, it's hard to believe, but it's true. There are no humans left in the entire universe, I'm told. I don't know why they needed to tell me that, but they did, so...

(A pause. HUMAN notices the Mannequin's suit.)

HUMAN

Hey...you're wearing one of these, too? How did you get one? I found mine, and they told me to put it on because "it's what humans did," so I just started wearing it. I mean, I take it off sometimes, but then they just give me another one...or maybe it's the same one, but cleaner...(Pause). I'm glad to see you enjoy it, too. I always tell Aristotle that he should try wearing one: they're warm and comfortable, and it just feels so...nice. (Pause.) I guess he just doesn't understand.

(Lights dim on HUMAN and the mannequin as they continue "talking." We see ARISTOTLE, still facing away from HUMAN, indignant.)

ARISTOTLE

Humph. That's what I say, humph. Here I am thinking that the human and I found some common ground—some sort of connection, and I get...dumped. Ditched for this...*thing*. Why? Because it's *new*? Because it's *different*? Ha! *I* was new and different...once. But now I guess boring old Aristotle just doesn't cut it anymore. That's fine. I don't mind being ignored.

(A prolonged silence.)

ARISTOTLE

SOMEONE PAY ATTENTION TO ME!

(The lights come back up. HUMAN turns to ARISTOTLE)

HUMAN

Sorry. Did you say something, Aristotle?

ARISTOTLE

No. (Pause.) Yes.

HUMAN

What?

ARISTOTLE

Come over here, and I'll tell you.

(HUMAN looks at the mannequin.)

HUMAN

Excuse me, I'll be right back. (HUMAN walks over to the glass.) You were saying?

ARISTOTLE

I...I just wanted to check in. See how your little quest was going.

HUMAN

Not well at all. To be honest, I've grown rather tired of it by now.

ARISTOTLE

You're just frustrated! Now's no time to quit, you've made so much progress!

HUMAN

The only reason I did it earlier was because I couldn't come up with anything else to do. Now there's this...new...thing...and I'm trying to be its friend.

ARISTOTLE

I thought *I* was your friend.

HUMAN

Can't I try to be friends with everyone?

ARISTOTLE

No. That's dumb and pointless.

HUMAN

Ok, fine. (Pause.) I was...I was trying to remember.

ARISTOTLE

Yes. Good. Memory. See what you can remember.

HUMAN

I tried that already, and it didn't work.

ARISTOTLE

Try again.

HUMAN

I did that, too. Face it, I'm no good at remembering.

ARISTOTLE

Perhaps you need some practice.

HUMAN

We know only humans can think...do you think only baboons can remember?

ARISTOTLE

I've never heard that. They do a pretty good job of telling us what we can and can't do—I don't think they'd overlook something as important as remembering.

HUMAN

Perhaps. I don't know.

(ARISTOTLE ponders for a second.)

ARISTOTLE

Tell you what: a little test. Don't turn around—now tell me what's behind you.

(HUMAN struggles to remember.)

HUMAN

Let's see...there's...a rug.

ARISTOTLE

And?

HUMAN

Ooh. My bed, a block.

ARISTOTLE

Good, good. What else.

HUMAN

There's a...thing...it just arrived, I was talking to it...

ARISTOTLE

You remembered all of that. Congratulations.

(HUMAN is distracted and turns around.)

HUMAN

Oh dear, I left the thing over there all alone for so long.

ARISTOTLE

Good. Who needs it?

HUMAN

What is wrong with you? It's rude to leave guests by themselves. I should go back.

ARISTOTLE

(Pause.) Fine. Go back over there. Talk with the thing. I don't care.

(HUMAN walks over in a huff.)

ARISTOTLE

(To himself.) I was just trying to help.

(Lights dim on ARISTOTLE. HUMAN walks back to the mannequin and sits nearby.)

HUMAN

(To mannequin.) Sorry about that, friend—*Aristotle* gets needy sometimes. He doesn't understand that we can't all look at him all the time. I swear, sometimes I...oh, sorry. I shouldn't talk about people behind their backs. I've been rude enough already. (Pause.) Can I get you something?

(HUMAN gets up and starts pacing around.)

HUMAN

Unfortunately, all I have are crackers and a pudding cup—they're what humans eat mostly. Aristotle said I could eat a cockroach, but that just seemed disgusting to me. You don't eat cockroaches, do you? If you do, and you find one in here, don't eat it: it's my friend.

(HUMAN settles down.)

Sorry, did you say you wanted anything? Water? (Pause.) Nothing, then? That's fine. I understand if you're not hungry.

(HUMAN settles next to the mannequin.)

HUMAN

You know, we're remarkably similar. Two legs, two arms, torso, head—no tail; not to mention the suits. We're both very good at sitting still...

(HUMAN is about to sit down, then stops.)

HUMAN

Here. Come sit on the floor. (Pause.) Need help?

(Pause. HUMAN moves the mannequin down to the floor in a seated position, then sits across from it.)

HUMAN

You're almost...familiar...I wonder—

(As HUMAN is talking, lights come back up on ARISTOTLE, softly humming in between sobs. HUMAN notices and turns around.)

HUMAN

Oh dear. What's going on?

(HUMAN gets up walks halfway to the glass, then stops and looks back at the mannequin. ARISTOTLE whimpers and refocuses HUMAN, who rushes over.)

HUMAN

Are you all right, Aristotle?

ARISTOTLE

(Feigning composure.) Yes of course, you idiot. Whatever made you think I'm not all right?

(ARISTOTLE holds a straight face, then resumes bawling.)

ARISTOTLE

I'm sorry, human. I don't want you to see me like this.

HUMAN

It's fine. I hate to see you so upset. What can I do?

ARISTOTLE

Nothing! I've had it, that's all. I spend every waking moment of my day trying to convince myself that someone—*something* out there gives a damn that I'm stuck in here by myself.

(ARISTOTLE turns towards HUMAN. He gets down.)

ARISTOTLE

Then just as soon as I find someone in this crazy, fucked-up universe who actually cares about me...(sniff)...they toss me aside as soon as something new and clothed comes along.

(ARISTOTLE starts taking slow deliberate steps towards HUMAN, then he slumps to the floor.)

ARISTOTLE

I guess there's no place on this Earth for poor, out-of-shape, boring, naked Aristotle anymore.

(ARISTOTLE resumes crying. HUMAN goes to comfort.)

HUMAN

I'm sorry. I didn't know you felt that way.

ARISTOTLE

Well...now you do.

(ARISTOTLE snuffles for a bit longer. Silence.)

HUMAN

What was that you were doing earlier?

ARISTOTLE

You mean crying?

HUMAN

No, while you were crying. You were doing things...with your voice.

ARISTOTLE

Oh, I just...it seems silly now.

HUMAN

Tell me, it's ok.

ARISTOTLE

I remembered...I remembered a song.

HUMAN

Song?

ARISTOTLE

One of the older females—a friend of my mother—she taught the whole troop a song. We could sing it all sorts of ways: happy, sad, angry—didn't matter. We'd all sing it together. Together.

HUMAN

Could you sing it for me?

ARISTOTLE

Why would you want to hear it, it's just some dumb baboon song.

HUMAN

I get the feeling...it wants to be sung.

(ARISTOTLE gathers himself, then slowly starts humming a simple melody of “oohs” and “aahs.” It builds to a simian shrieking and bellowing. HUMAN is politely horrified.)

HUMAN

That sounded...nice.

ARISTOTLE

Yeah. (Pause.) You didn't like it?

HUMAN

No, no. I never heard a song like *that* before, that's all.

ARISTOTLE

Nor will you again. Such things are private for baboons. We take care not to share such secrets.

HUMAN

Then why did you sing it now?

ARISTOTLE

(Shrugs.) I guess I just don't care anymore.

HUMAN

Aristotle?

ARISTOTLE

Human?

HUMAN

I was thinking...about the—the thing over there.

ARISTOTLE

What about it?

HUMAN

I couldn't help but notice...similarities.

ARISTOTLE

What kind of "similarities."

HUMAN

You know...with the suit, and the arms and...well, it just looks so much like—like me.

(ARISTOTLE looks up at HUMAN, suddenly hostile.)

HUMAN

I got to wondering, well, what if it's...

ARISTOTLE

It's not a human. (Silence. HUMAN stares at ARISTOTLE.) If that's what you're wondering: sorry, but it's not.

HUMAN

No. No, I think it is. In fact, now I'm quite sure it is.

ARISTOTLE

It looks nothing like a human.

HUMAN

Says you! Look at its suit!

ARISTOTLE

Oh, so anything that wears a suit is human now? Maybe that's what I need—I'll put on a suit and be your new *human* friend, wouldn't you like that?

HUMAN

You're a baboon, you wouldn't fit in a suit anyways.

ARISTOTLE

Oh yeah? Well, being naked is much more comfortable than being wrapped up in something else's fur! I wouldn't dare abase myself by permitting someone to swaddle me in such a thing!

HUMAN

Well, at least *it* listens to what I have to say—unlike *some primates*!

ARISTOTLE

That's because it doesn't say anything. It doesn't make a sound!

HUMAN

It's being polite!

ARISTOTLE

It's not alive!

HUMAN

Oh yeah? Says who?

ARISTOTLE

Me! That's who! Any creature with half a brain could tell you! I don't care what those sniveling scientists keep telling you Human, but you're not that smart! You spend every minute of your life "thinking" and your head is still emptier than my fucking cell! In fact, you may be one of the dumbest animals I've ever met in my entire life! Now I get why everyone wants to peek at you—they've never even conceived that anything on Earth could be as fucking stupid as you are. If even half of all the humans who ever existed were even half as stupid as you, then it's absolutely no wonder to me why you're all fucking extinct!

(HUMAN fights off tears.)

HUMAN

You know what? *Fuck you, Aristotle!* I'm going back over there—to the *human*...forever!

(HUMAN storms back over to the mannequin.)

ARISTOTLE

Human! HUMAN! Wait! I'm...sorry.

(ARISTOTLE trudges over to an alcove and throws his head into his hands. HUMAN grabs hold of the mannequin.)

HUMAN

Don't listen to him—I hope you weren't listening to him. Aristotle's just... a liar. A jealous liar. He's—he...he doesn't matter. We don't need him. Let him sit and talk to himself and do his stupid dances all alone, and cry—and cry. I don't need him...as long as you're here. (Pause.) Look at us—the last two humans on Earth: together at last. (Pause.) Did they find you out in the wild? Are there more of them out there? (Pause.) No, probably not. I bet you came from the same place I did. Maybe a different Academy with different scientists, but that doesn't matter. (Pause.) What do you remember? Do you have trouble remembering, too? (Pause.) What am I doing? Human friend, there's no time to sit around talking about this stuff. Don't you see? We can save us—we can make more humans! We have to, it's our job! They never told me how to, but...but I feel like I already know, down deep...genitals! We need different genitals, otherwise it won't work. Let me see yours!

(HUMAN undoes the suit pants on the mannequin and peeks inside. It zips it up quickly in surprise.)

HUMAN

Well that's...different. Let's uh...let's do it, I guess.

(HUMAN lays the mannequin on the ground and stands over it. Taking a deep breath, it lowers itself slowly onto the mannequin, embracing it deeply. HUMAN moves tentatively, in fear and awe. With the mannequin in its arms HUMAN almost initiates coitus when the voice cuts in.)

VOICE

Status update 101 Omicron V; experiment 40F: placement of humaniform decoy in enclosure.

(HUMAN stops, looks up, trying to find the VOICE.)

VOICE

Physical effects: Vitals elevated, elevated heart rate and hormonal response. Signs of increased blood flow to erogenous zones. Observation: Despite knowledge of species' near extinction, the Human positively identifies substitute as a potential sexual partner—indicates strong desire for procreation still present in final specimen. Implications of this behavior are unclear—will monitor for further changes. (Pause. A chuckle.) That was *too* easy.

(The VOICE cuts out with a sharp jolt of static. HUMAN leaps off the mannequin in horror and runs to the glass. It backs into the corner and slumps down.)

HUMAN

Aristotle?

ARISTOTLE

(Still out of sight.) What?

HUMAN

Help.

(ARISTOTLE sees HUMAN and rushes over.)

ARISTOTLE

Human? What is it? What happened?

HUMAN

(On the verge of tears.) You were...you were right. It's...that's a...

(HUMAN starts weeping softly. It curls up and cries into its arms. ARISTOTLE puts his hand against the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

I'm...I'm sorry, human. I tried to tell you.

HUMAN

I thought...it looked like a...

ARISTOTLE

It isn't, human. It never was. (HUMAN starts sobbing again.) Don't cry, human. I get what—

HUMAN

You don't get it! You don't get it at all! (Pause.) You want to know what I remember? I remember...alone. I remember desperately wanting something to make me feel better—someone to tell me that nothing's wrong with the world. Someone to remind me that I'm alive. I remember opening my eyes and watching someone cry as I was taken far away. I scream at the cold and the hard until my voice dies, and I grow up silent. I remember nothing. Only nothing. (Pause. HUMAN calms down.) Why bother remembering when every day is the same? The view never changes, the pudding never tastes different. Just...why bother?

ARISTOTLE

We don't choose what we remember. The pain, the sadness—we hold on to them whether we want to or not. But in a place like this—anything different is good. I know I'll never see the savannah, or my family ever again. It's hard remembering them, but I do it anyways because for a second—life is better.

HUMAN

Is that why you sing?

ARISTOTLE

Partly.

(A long, ponderous silence.)

ARISTOTLE

That face you remember...

HUMAN

Yes?

ARISTOTLE

Mother?

HUMAN

I think so. I hope so.

ARISTOTLE

Is there anything else? A smell? A feeling? Something good?

(HUMAN closes its eyes.)

HUMAN

Warm. A...a soft. And a sound...a...

(Very softly, HUMAN starts humming. The song grows in volume and complexity until we hear words.)

HUMAN

“Video killed the radio star! Video killed the radio star!”

(HUMAN stands up, beaming, tears in its eyes as it sings louder and louder. ARISTOTLE joins in.)

BOTH

“Video killed the radio star! Video killed the radio star! Video killed the radio star!”

(They collapse, laughing, breathing deeply.)

ARISTOTLE

Ahh. (Pause.) What does it mean?

HUMAN

I don’t know. Still, it feels...right. It feels better.

ARISTOTLE

So it’s a good memory?

(HUMAN looks away—bittersweet. Finally, HUMAN understands.)

HUMAN

Yes.

SCENE VI

(Lights up on the entire stage. ARISTOTLE is seen playing and running around, as if it were a usual day. The only sign of HUMAN is a person-sized lump under the rug. The mannequin is tossed aside in a heap.)

VOICE

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Academy apologizes for the...unusual behavior the human is currently exhibiting. We have run several scans and determined that the human is in perfect health. Please take time to view the other exhibits while our scientists attempt to discover the cause of the human's unusual...orientation.

(ARISTOTLE trots over to the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

Human, give up. They can see you under there.

HUMAN

Ssh! I'm not here.

ARISTOTLE

Ok.

(ARISTOTLE walks away, then heads back to the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

See, if I can see you, I'm pretty sure that means...

HUMAN

It doesn't matter if they know where I am, they just can't look at me!

ARISTOTLE

All right, all right. I still don't know why you're doing this, though.

HUMAN

Can't tell you. It's a secret.

ARISTOTLE

Fine.

(ARISTOTLE turns to perform for the passing crowd.)

VOICE

Attention Academy guests: as per your numerous complaints and suggestions, the Academy is closing early so that our Human exhibit can receive proper care. As usual, the gift shop will be open for an additional fifteen minutes in case any of you wish to pick up a souvenir before you leave. As always, the Academy hopes you have a wonderful day.

(ARISTOTLE presses his face against the window.)

ARISTOTLE

Hey, human. Did you want them all to leave? Because they're all leaving.

HUMAN

SSH!

ARISTOTLE

Ok! Fine! I just thought that...well, now that you've started remembering human stuff again...well...you mentioned wanting to do that new material.

HUMAN

Quiet! I'm not here!

ARISTOTLE

(Under breath.) Prima donnas...

(ARISTOTLE returns to his activities, albeit with less verve than before. He shoots an occasional glance at the lump under the rug.)

VOICE

--Yes, I can see it's not moving...well what do you want me to do about it?...I already Tried giving it pudding--the Human didn't touch it...That's preposterous, it's always masturbated in full view of everyone, there's no reason it would suddenly want privacy...talk to it? All right. (Pause.) Ahem. Human.

HUMAN

NO!

VOICE

Human, get out from under there.

HUMAN

NO!

VOICE

We need to make sure you're safe under there. Come out, please?

HUMAN

GO AWAY!

VOICE

I'm going to count to three. One. (Silence.) Two. (Silence.) Three.

(On three, the rug is pulled off by an unseen force. HUMAN is lying stiff as a board on the floor, eyes wide, rage on its face.)

VOICE

Now, can you stand up, please?

HUMAN

No.

(Silence.)

VOICE

Very well, human.

(Another silence. HUMAN remains on the floor, defiant. ARISTOTLE comes over to the glass.)

ARISTOTLE

Hey, um. (Pause.) You know, I like the whole "stick it to the man" attitude you've got going on, but I don't like the looks of where this whole shtick is headed.

HUMAN

I don't care.

ARISTOTLE

It's just...I don't think anyone's told them "no" before...I'm not sure they like it.

HUMAN

I don't care.

ARISTOTLE

Look, I don't know what the hell you're trying to pull, but—

HUMAN

I'm done, Aristotle. I'm done doing what they want me to do.

ARISTOTLE

So you're just going to lie there...doing nothing?

HUMAN

Yup.

ARISTOTLE

All right. It's your funeral.

(ARISTOTLE takes a few steps, then looks at HUMAN. He heaves a sigh and starts playing with his toes.)

VOICE

Human. Up.

HUMAN

NO!

VOICE

Up, human!

HUMAN

NO!

VOICE

UP!

(The lights flicker. HUMAN is raised off the ground by an unknown force. ARISTOTLE falls off whatever he is sitting on and cowers behind a crate.)

VOICE

Now: what's the matter, human?

(HUMAN is silent.)

VOICE

Human, if you don't tell us what's wrong, we can't make you comfortable. You like that, right?

(HUMAN remains silent.)

VOICE

We have plenty of pudding cups if you would like one.

HUMAN

I don't want pudding.

VOICE

Do you need your suit washed? Is it naked time again?

HUMAN

No! I don't need my suit washed! I don't need a pudding cup! You keep giving me the same things over and over, and I don't want any of it!

VOICE

Fine. *Fine*. What do you want, human?

HUMAN

(Pause.) Tell me. Tell me everything.

(Silence.)

VOICE

Tell you what?

HUMAN

Tell me everything about humans. I want to know more.

VOICE

If you want to know more, you should try thinking...

HUMAN

NO! Thinking doesn't work. I think all day and all night, and you know what I think about? I think about the shadows that cross in front of my window. I think about how the prints all those sticky fingers leave on the glass disappear when I wake up the next day. I think about how I can never get that last bit of pudding out of the cup no matter how hard I try. I think about the same things every day, and none of it tells me anything about *me*!

VOICE

Well, you're just not thinking right. Try again.

HUMAN

I have "thought" every single day of my life as long as I can remember. I think so hard and so much that I should know more than you by this point. But I don't know anything...so tell me. I give up. Tell me about the humans.

VOICE

I...The Academy does not permit that.

HUMAN

You don't *permit* that? Why? This Academy is for learning, isn't it? I want to learn!

ARISTOTLE

I don't think you're going to get any more out of them. Maybe it's best that you stop.

(HUMAN looks over to ARISTOTLE.)

HUMAN

What happened to you? What happened to "Act like a real human," huh?

ARISTOTLE

I didn't think you'd take it this far!

HUMAN

Who said that was bad?

ARISTOTLE

I don't know. It just seems like...maybe there are some things that we shouldn't know. Humanity disappeared—it's gone. Sure there were some good things—but I bet there was some pretty awful stuff as well. Who knows what cruel and terrible things humans did to drive themselves extinct? You sure you wouldn't rather just...forget all that?

HUMAN

No. Not anymore.

ARISTOTLE

Maybe that's what separates us.

HUMAN

Maybe.

ARISTOTLE

Do you have a plan?

HUMAN

No. Not really. But I know what I want.

ARISTOTLE

Well...it's an improvement.

HUMAN

You've been a wonderful friend, Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE

You too, human.

(Silence. HUMAN and ARISTOTLE want to embrace.)

VOICE

Human, we're running out of options here. Please—if there's anything we can do to make you more comfortable just let us—

HUMAN

Comfortable? I don't want to be comfortable—I've never wanted to be "comfortable."

VOICE

Then what on Earth do you want?

(HUMAN throws a glance at ARISTOTLE and takes a deep breath.)

HUMAN

I want to be a human.

(HUMAN beams. Silence.)

VOICE

Uh...you *are* human, human.

HUMAN

No. No, no. There were humans before me. Billions—Trillions of them, if all you said is true. I want to be like them. I want to be *out*. I want...I want to do more than just *doing*. I want to *be*!

(Silence.)

VOICE

No. Sorry.

(HUMAN is crushed.)

HUMAN

No?

VOICE

Sorry. Good night.

(HUMAN looks around. ARISTOTLE averts his eyes and hides in his alcove.)

HUMAN

No. You said no. So that's it? (Pause.) That's it.

(HUMAN chuckles and shifts awkwardly. A smile reaches around their face. Peace exists for a moment. HUMAN unleashes a wild, pained yell—the last painful scream of an extinct species: the totality of human suffering in one cry. They stomp around in a growing frenzy, pulling at their hair, tearing off their suit jacket, then their necktie, throwing these articles around their enclosure. They violently kick the crate and viciously overturn the “bed.” All the time, HUMAN wails and cries. If tears can be found, they should fall.)

VOICE

Human! Stop it! Put your suit back on, and put those things back where they belong.

HUMAN

NO! NO, NO, NO, NO, NO! I’m done! You don’t control me—leave me alone!

VOICE

Please, be reasonable and I’m sure—

(HUMAN releases another blood-curdling scream, as they pick up the rug and attempt to throw it across the stage. This should be done with some difficulty, perhaps repeated until the desired effect is finally achieved, or until HUMAN grows tired.)

VOICE

Have you finished?

HUMAN

Stop.

VOICE

If you’ve decided to settle down, the Academy would like to run some scans—

HUMAN

Stop!

VOICE

There's no reason for you to be acting so erratically, so if you'll just calm down we'd like—

(ARISTOTLE suddenly stands up.)

ARISTOTLE

The human said stop, dammit! Can't you see it...(s)he is suffering?

VOICE

Oh, this is rich. The baboon is squawking at us now.

ARISTOTLE

Squawking? Well, I never—you've never spoken to me once while I was here. Not *once*! All I hear is "human" this, and "human" that. And now you talk about "comfort?" Have you ever, *ever* thought about what would make me comfortable? There are billions of baboons in this world, and you couldn't find *one* other one to share this bitch of a cage with me? All I want is sunlight—grass in my toes, the world at my back!

HUMAN

Aristotle, what are you doing?

ARISTOTLE

Exactly what you're doing—I'm asserting my dominance. I'm done wishing—hoping for bullshit and waiting for dreams. If you've had enough of this shithole, human, then so have I. (To "THE VOICE.") You hear me you formless hooligan! You shit-eating ball of pus, you ingrate! Coward! Slime! Unworthy rascal! Gutless idiot! Leech! Worm! Answer me, you spineless turd! Worthless, insipid, castrated, snot-nosed, lobotomized, motherfuckers—the lot of you! You think you have a right to keep me in here you feckless curs—you rotten, shiftless, upstart bastards! I wish plagues of blood and bile upon each and every one of you termites, and your "Academy" can rot in the pits of baboon hell for eternity and a day! I will gouge out your eyes and shit in your dreams—for I, Aristotle, will finally get—

(The lights flash, a jolt of pain sears through ARISTOTLE as he convulses and crumples to the floor. HUMAN averts their eyes. ARISTOTLE heaves one last breath.)

HUMAN

ARISTOTLE!

(HUMAN falls to the ground in tears. They look up.)

VOICE

The situation has been made safe for you, human. There is nothing to be afraid of.

HUMAN

Why did you do that?

VOICE

The baboon's erratic and violent behavior was deemed...unsafe.

HUMAN

Unsafe for who?

VOICE

You.

HUMAN

But...

VOICE

The Academy for Anthropocene Study and Preservation has certain...protocols in place. Protocols that no one—not me, and certainly not you—can break. You wouldn't understand them even if you knew what they were. All I will say is that it is our duty to keep you safe from harm as long as you're alive. Aristotle's actions ran counter to this directive, so he was...retired.

HUMAN

Aristotle wasn't hurting me, he was helping me!

VOICE

The Academy does not deem you capable of accurately assessing your welfare, human. What we did was for your benefit: we hope you understand.

HUMAN

But he was my friend. My only friend.

VOICE

Humans and baboons can't be friends.

HUMAN

Says who?

VOICE

The Academy for Anthropocene Study and Preservation.

(HUMAN grows sullen, then stands bolt upright and stares at the “glass” between enclosures.)

VOICE

Human. Don’t.

HUMAN

No. I want to be with my friend.

(HUMAN tilts their head down and runs headlong towards the “glass.” They pass through as if nothing were there.)

VOICE

I’m sorry. There are protocols in place to prevent your...suicide.

(HUMAN hangs their head, then looks to the limp body of ARISTOTLE on the ground. They pick it up and hold it close. A moment of stillness passes. HUMAN stands up and walks back to their enclosure.)

VOICE

Human, you’ve demonstrated that you pose a risk to your own safety. There are many, *many* protocols in place to solve that problem—unless you decide that they won’t be necessary. The Academy would greatly appreciate if they weren’t. So...what will it be, Human?

(HUMAN looks up in disgust, then looks at ARISTOTLE’s body. They sit down on their block and assume the “*Thinker*” pose. They fidget, uncomfortable. HUMAN slowly, defiantly adopts a more natural, comfortable position. Lights dim around HUMAN, who remains in the spotlight. A rebellious, tearful smile breaks out, and we hear “Video Killed the Radio Star” being hummed softly as the spotlight fades.)

END OF PLAY