

### Milton Character Analysis

**Character:** Milton, age 25 (Middle aged for a chimp, as chimps in captivity have an average lifespan of around 45-50 years).

### **Bibliographic Information:**

**Author:** David Ives (b. 1950) is “a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in play-writing, has published and produced numerous plays, many of which are one-act comedies. His plays are collected in *All in the Timing* (1994), *Mere Mortals* (1998), *Time Flies and Other Short Plays* (2001), and *Polish Joke and Other Plays* (2004). His play *Don Juan in Chicago* (1995) won the Outer Critics Circle Playwriting Award.”

([file:///Downloads/Words,%20Words,%20Words%20by%20David%20Ives%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Downloads/Words,%20Words,%20Words%20by%20David%20Ives%20(1).pdf), an excerpt from Chapter 39 (Pgs. 1,446-1,453) of academic theatre book, Staging)

**Info (brief history of the play and time period):** This short, one-act play is part of a collection of six one-act plays called “All in the Timing”. These six plays are largely unrelated in subject matter and do not share the same characters, but what they do have in common is a comedic nature and reflections on humorous and ironic things that happen in modern-day society.

“The basis for this play is the “infinite monkey theorem”, the idea that, given enough time and enough monkeys, at least one monkey placed in front of a typewriter will eventually produce William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Credit for this idea is generally given to French mathematician Emile Borel, whose 1913 essay explains the theorem. Since then, numerous writers (including Richard Russo and Douglas Adams have alluded to this idea in literature, using it as a metaphor to explore the probability of random, spontaneous acts of artistic genius.”

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In addition, in order to understand the context of the people referenced by the character names, it is important to have the knowledge that John Milton, Jonathan Swift, and Franz Kafka are real poets/writers from history. It is beneficial to know their major contributions, especially John Milton’s famous piece “Paradise Lost”. Background knowledge of William Shakespeare, and particularly of the most famous lines and events of his tragedy, *Hamlet*, also aids in understanding the comedy of the moment wherein Swift begins his tirade about revenge and Kafka begins to successfully write *Hamlet*’s opening scene.

**Synopsis:** The one act play begins with Milton, Swift, and Kafka discussing their progress (or rather lack thereof) and frustrations with the Hamlet writing project that an experimental scientist, Dr. Rosenbaum, has presented the three monkeys with. As the play progresses, the monkeys put forth questions of whether this task is even possible as well as a larger philosophical discussion on the merits of exploiting the humans (which is deeply ironic when one thinks about how the monkeys are being exploited themselves for human science research) versus all-out rebellion and revenge against humans on the part of Swift. The play concludes with the continuation of Milton and Kafka writing while Swift plots his revenge. The final humorous moment comes as a result of Kafka's success at beginning to write *Hamlet's* opening scene.

### **Given Circumstances of Character:**

Milton and his fellow monkeys have been trapped in this cage together for some time, to the point where they are all very familiar and friendly with one another. There have been many days that have already gone by with seemingly no further progress on Dr. Rosenbaum's *Hamlet*-writing task, which frustrates each member of the monkey team in various ways. Milton is still dealing with the aftermath of being taken away from his African homeland, as he discusses in the "Paradise Lost" portion of the scene.

### **Relationship to Other Characters**

Swift- My closest friend in the cage. He and I disagree and banter most as a result of our close friendship. We do not see eye to eye on the best solution for escaping the cage, as I believe we need to "suck it up" and finish the writing task while Swift advocates pursuing revenge.

Kafka- My other friend in the cage. We are not as directly friendly with one another due to Kafka being so seemingly mysterious. I work to understand Kafka according to my principles and that does not allow for the situation for me to speak as personally and frankly with Kafka as I do with Swift.

Dr. Rosenbaum- Though he never appears onstage, he is a principal obstacle in my situation and the instigator of the problems that Milton is experiencing.

### **Character's Through-Action**

Literal: Milton is trying to escape this cage and be returned to my African homeland. I see completing Dr. Rosenbaum's task as the only way to accomplish this.

Hannah Rutt

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Fundamentals of Acting

CB Goodman

Ultimate Goal/Through-Action: I want to focus and gather together my thoughts and my team to accomplish Dr. Rosenbaum's task. The only life I want to lead is one outside of the cage.

Principal Obstacle: The struggle to accomplish the task of writing Hamlet set out by Dr.

Rosenbaum and having to work with my chimp peers to make this happen.

I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not.

-Hannah Rutt