

SAM

a short audio drama

by ROGER ELLIOTT

Characters

Sam - a 12 year old chimpanzee

Dr Richard Simpson - late 40s

Dr Pam Simpson - mid 40s

Stuart Morton - a Phd student - late 20s

SCENE 1 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : NIGHT

(FX : A LARGE ECHOING SPACE. CONCRETE AND STEEL.)

(FX : A RUSTLE OF STRAW CLOSE. ANOTHER RUSTLE. THEN TWO SMALL MONKEYS SCREECH AND SQUABBLE IN THE MID DISTANCE. ITS QUITE AN ARGUMENT. THEY DISTURB THE SLEEPING SAM.)

NOTE : ALL SAM'S SPEECHES ARE INTERNAL

1. SAM : (INTERNAL) For God's sake ... not again...bloody capuchins... how the hell is anyone supposed to sleep in this hateful place ...

(F/X : SAM SNARLS LOUDLY. CLOSE. THE CAPUCHINS QUITEN DOWN...)

(FX : SAM TURNS OVER AND TRIES TO GO BACK TO SLEEP)

2. SAM : Now maybe I can sleep.....

SCENE 2 : INT : DR SIMPSON'S OFFICE : MORNING

(FX MIX TO : INTERIOR DR RICHARD SIMPSON'S OFFICE.)

RICHARD AND PAM ARE ARGUING.

1. PAM : I just don't think it's fair... or necessary. I mean, it's not as if this was ever in the original plan.
2. RICHARD : Plans have to change.
3. PAM : They don't **have** to!
4. RICHARD : They do if the whole situation changes. Look, there's been no development for two years. In fact, just the opposite... so, since the situation has changed, our plans must change.
5. PAM : But why? Why this? Just leave him be. We can continue our observations. I am sure he still understands things. Inside. It's just that....
6. RICHARD : Just that what?
7. PAM : Oh, I don't know.
8. RICHARD : Exactly! Look Pam, something has gone drastically wrong. I don't know what, and I certainly don't know why ... and that's exactly what I must find out, and to do that I have to operate.
9. PAM : There must be another way!
10. RICHARD : Such as?
11. PAM : (VERY AGITATED) Oh, I don't know. But your way is so drastic ... so final ... how can you even consider it? Doesn't he mean anything to you any more?

1. RICHARD : (ANGRILY) Of course he does. A great deal. And much, much more than you think.
- (A SHORT PAUSE)
2. RICHARD : (QUIETER) Look, I don't want to operate but its the only logical step to take. This project has been going on for eleven years. We have both invested everything in it. It's been our lives, and we can't just let it fizzle out now.
3. PAM : Why not?
4. RICHARD : Because it would mean the whole thing has been a waste of time. It has cost us both so much personally I can't let it be an experiment without a conclusion.
5. PAM : It strikes me that its the only decent thing to do ... to leave Sam in peace. I mean, he's never done you any harm.
- (FX : THE INTERNAL PHONE RINGS)
6. RICHARD : Pam! Please...
- (FX : THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN. RICHARD PICKS IT UP.)
7. RICHARD : Yes?..... Already?.... Allright, send him up....
- (FX : RICHARD PUTS THE PHONE DOWN)
8. PAM : Send who up?
9. RICHARD : A Phd student from Cambridge...
10. PAM : What for?
- (RICHARD DOESN'T ANSWER. THEN THE PENNY DROPS...)
11. PAM : Good God, he's come to help you. Hasn't he?
- (RICHARD DOESN'T ANSWER)

1. PAM : (MORE INSISTENT) Hasn't he?
2. RICHARD : Yes
3. PAM : (RAISING HER VOICE) And I thought this was a discussion, but it isn't is it? You've already made up your mind.
4. RICHARD : Pam ... shhh....
5. PAM : Don't you dare shhh me. We are supposed to be a partnership, a team, but you just don't care what I think do you? Sam's just a thing to you.
6. RICHARD : (SHARPLY) Pam, listen to me. Listen! I know Sams been part of the family for more than ten years, and that means we are all attached to him - and I am, believe me - but I'm a scientist...
7. PAM : (INTERUPTING) ... and he's your experiment.
8. RICHARD : If you really have to put it that bluntly...yes...
(FX : A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. A PAUSE...)
9. PAM : Go on then. Let in your bloody accomplice.
(FX : RICHARD WALKS TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT)
10. STUART : Dr Simpson?
11. RICHARD : Hello. Come in... you must be Stuart Morton.
12. STUART : Yes.
13. RICHARD : This is my wife Pamela. She helps me with all my work here.
14. STUART : I know. I've read your books.... (TO PAM) Nice to meet you...
(PAM IGNORES THE GREETING)

1. PAM : (TERSELY) Do you know why you're here?
2. STUART Er... Dr Simpson invited me... to help...
3. PAM Help? That's not what I would call it...
4. RICHARD : Pam ... leave him be ... here Stuart .. please sit down.
- (FX : STUART PULLS UP A CHAIR AND SITS)
5. PAM : (ANGRY) Excuse me... I just can't do this...
- (FX : PAM RUSHES FROM THE ROOM...)
6. RICHARD : I'm sorry about that... now then, have you brought a letter from Professor Lawick?
7. STUART : Yes.
- (FX : STUART OPENS HIS BRIEFCASE AND HANDS OVER A LETTER)
8. RICHARD : Thanks
- (FX : RICHARD OPENS THE LETTER AND READS)
9. RICHARD : Good...good.... and how is Professor Lawick?
10. STUART : He's fine ... and asked to be remembered...
11. RICHARD : Excellent.
- (FX : RICHARD PUTS THE LETTER DOWN)
12. RICHARD : Did he explain to you what help I need?
13. STUART : Not in any detail....

1. RICHARD : Well, before I explain, and certainly before you commit yourself to anything, tell me how much you know about our work here.

2. STUART : Well, I know that in the early 80s you started an experiment raising a male chimpanzee baby and your own son identically. I think you could say it took the famous Project Nim experiment in the US one or even two steps further. From the articles and papers I have read I the two infants were kept in almost permanent contact with each other while you studied their development.

3. RICHARD : That's more or less correct.

SCENE 3 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : LATER

(FX : THE DOOR OPENS AND PAM WALKS IN. THE CAPUCHINS SCREECH IN THEIR CAGE, ASKING FOR FOOD. FOOTSTEPS AS PAM WALKS OVER TO SAM'S CAGE. SHE TAPS ON THE BARS.)

1. PAM : Sam ... are you still sleeping? You are always sleeping these days...
2. SAM : ... or just trying to ...
3. PAM : Sam darling... listen to me...
4. SAM : Here we go again.
5. PAM : You must do something.
6. SAM : Do something? Such as?
7. PAM : Something special. Sam, I know you can hear me and I think you can understand me. Now listen carefully... this is very important...

SCENE 4 : INT : DR SIMPSON'S OFFICE : LATER

(FX : AMBIENCE AS BEFORE)

1. STUART The main thing I remember is when you taught Sam to draw ... I don't mean squiggles, however charming ... I mean representational forms. The newspapers had a field day ... and television of course. I remember seeing a film about Sam on Blue Peter.
2. RICHARD : Yes. They were interesting times. We had camera crews here from all over the world. But that's also exactly when things started to go wrong.
3. STUART : You mean his development slowed?
4. RICHARD : Not so much slowed, as stopped. It was all very abrupt. As though we had hit a barrier, and Sam just couldn't go any further..
5. STUART : And there's been no development at all since then?
6. RICHARD : Just the opposite. There's been a drastic retardment. At his peak Sam had a vocabulary of just over two hundred words.
7. STUART : Sign-language?
8. RICHARD : Yes. He signed all the time but he hardly communicates at all now... and if he does its all to do with food. He hasn't drawn anything for about two years. In fact, short of his eating habits and his use of a commode he's just like any ordinary captive chimp.
9. STUART : And he doesn't respond to any encouragement?
10. RICHARD No...
11. STUART Or reward?

1. RICHARD

No.... he seems to take no interest in anything around him. He spends most of his time sleeping. To be honest it's been a very frustrating two years. Somethings gone wrong, and I want ... need ... to find out what.

SCENE 5 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : LATER

1. PAM : Do you understand Sam? Unless you do something positive, like a good drawing or sign a reasonable sentence like you used to, then they're going to kill you.
- (FX : SAM SNARLS)
2. PAM : You do understand! I knew it!
3. SAM : Of course I understand. I know Richard is annoyed I have stopped doing things ... but kill me! I never thought he'd go that far.
4. PAM : Unless you show them you can still do something ... something exciting ... then you're of no interest to them ... no interest, no value. You've just become another monkey.
5. SAM : But that's just what I've always wanted. To be ordinary. And have an ordinary quiet life.
6. PAM : (GETTING UPSET) They want to study your brain to see if it's developed differently, and to do that they've got to ... to kill you...
- So **please** Sam ... do something... show them you still can...
7. SAM : But to kill me... that's so drastic.... its clinically logical I agree... I just didn't think Richard would do that. Not after all this time. He used to rock me on his knees and sing lullabies. He always tucked me up in bed before Jonathan and now he wants to kill me.

SCENE 6 : INT : DR SIMPSON'S OFFICE : LATER

1. RICHARD : ... so you understand why I thought your work on the development of infant neuro-systems would be relevant?
2. STUART : Of course. Look, this is all of great interest to me, so I'll help you in any way I can.
3. RICHARD : Good.
4. STUART : Whats the time scale on all this?
5. RICHARD : Well, that depends on your availability, but as soon as possible really.
6. STUART : I'm free as of now till the end of next month, then I'm off to the States for a bit.
7. RICHARD : Fine. Then how about tomorrow?
8. STUART : (SURPRISED) Tomorrow! That soon?
9. RICHARD : What's the point in delaying any longer? Now the decision is made I'm eager to get on.
10. STUART : (HE THINKS FOR A SECOND) Allright... tomorrow it is.
11. RICHARD : Good. Then we'd better go and have a look at him.

SCENE 7 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : LATER

(FX : THE DOOR OPENS AS RICHARD AND STUART COME IN. AGAIN, THE CAPUCHINS SCREECH ASKING FOR FOOD. FOOTSTEPS CROSS TO SAM'S CAGE)

1. PAM : Ah... I wondered how long it would be before you both came.
2. SAM : Who's he? The new one....
3. PAM : (TO SAM) In case you are interested Sam this young man is from Cambridge, and wants to look inside your head. (TO RICHARD) I don't think I can stay here and listen to you both discussing this... I need some fresh air...

(FX : PAM WALKS OUT. THE DOOR CLOSES.)
4. RICHARD : Before you ask, Pam doesn't exactly see eye to eye with me over this. I am afraid Sam means more to her than an experiment should.
5. STUART : Understandable if she raised him from a baby.
6. SAM : She's certainly the only mother I knew.
7. RICHARD : I know, but as a scientist I have to stay dispassionate, or I cant study him properly. Anyway, here he is...
8. STUART : Is he always locked up?
9. RICHARD : For the last eighteen months or so.
10. STUART : I seem to remember pictures of him running free in your garden.
11. SAM : Those were the days! ... good days...

1. RICHARD : Yes, he used to have the roam of the place but since he began to return to a semi-wild state mentally I couldn't vouch for his behaviour, though I must say he has shown no signs of being vicious.
2. SAM : Vicious!
3. STUART : Has he ever attacked you?
4. RICHARD : No.
5. SAM : Perhaps I should have done. I wanted to often enough.
6. RICHARD : Now then, what I plan for tomorrow...

SCENE 8 : EXT : THE CAR PARK : LATER

(FX : GRAVEL CAR PARK. SOFT WIND. FEET CRUNCH ON GRAVEL. A KEY ZAPS A CAR AND THE LOCKS CLICKS OPEN. A CAR DOOR OPENS)

1. PAM : Mr Morton.
2. STUART : Oh.... Mrs Simpson.
3. PAM : It's Dr Simpson actually.
4. STUART : Oh, sorry ... I didn't know.
5. PAM : Doesn't matter. Different field.
6. STUART : Oh .. well .. what can I do for you?
7. PAM : Are you going to do it?
8. STUART : What?
9. PAM : What! Please don't pretend you don't understand me. Are you going to help Richard? To kill Sam?

(A MOMENTS PAUSE)
10. PAM : Well, are you?
11. STUART : Dr Simpson has asked me to help him with this experiment ... this operation ... and yes I ... I've agreed.
12. PAM : So you are. Look, I don't know what my husband told you but Sam **is** very special. I am convinced he understands when you talk to him, and I'm sure he could still communicate.
13. STUART : But he doesn't, does he?

1. PAM : Not of late, no. But I am sure he could if he wanted, he just seems to choose not to. What you have to remember is we have made him what he is - half animal and half human or whatever you want to call it - and the last thing we ought to do is kill him for a bloody experiment.
2. STUART : But that's exactly the point. He is different. He's been brought up differently, and we need to see what physical changes that has made - if any. Anyway, its not really my decision but it will all be over tomorrow.
3. PAM : Tomorrow!
4. STUART : (EMBARASSED) I thought you knew ... look, there's not really much I can do.
5. PAM : Of course there is. Just don't help him. Tell him you've thought about it and don't think its the right thing to do ... or just tell him you've changed your mind.
6. STUART : I can't do that.
7. PAM : Why not?
8. STUART : Because I happen to agree with him ... that its a valuable and worthwhile bit of research.
9. PAM : I see. You scientists really are a bloodless lot.
10. STUART : I think that's a bit unfair...
11. PAM : Do you? Really? (A BEAT) And you're going to do it tomorrow?
12. STUART : Yes. Look, why don't you go away for the day. Take your son to the seaside or something.
13. PAM : My son?
14. STUART : Er... Jonathan isn't it? The one that was raised with Sam.

1. PAM : (QUIETLY) Jonathan died two and a half years ago Mr Morton.
2. STUART : Oh my God, I'm sorry ... I didn't know...
3. PAM : It was all very well bringing the two of them up together, to see how much Sam assimilated human ways, but we never thought about it the other way round. Jonathan began to think he could climb trees as well as Sam, but he couldn't.... and fell...
4. STUART : I'm sorry...
5. PAM : Sam is my son now Mr Morton, he's all that's left to me and you and Richard are planning to kill him.

(FX : PAM WALKS AWAY. FEET ON GRAVEL)

SCENE 9 : INT : OFFICE CORRIDOR : LATER

(FX : INTERIOR. A CORRIDOR. HARD FLOORS.
PAM WALKS ALONG AND OPENS THE DOOR TO
RICHARD'S OFFICE.)

SCENE 10 : INT : DR SIMPSON'S OFFICE : LATER

1. RICHARD : Oh.. Pam. There you are. He's gone.
2. PAM : I know. (QUIETLY, TRYING TO CONTROL
HERSELF) Mr Morton says you're going to do it
tomorrow. Is that right?
- (RICHARD DOESN'T ANSWER)
3. PAM : (FIRMER) Is that right Richard?
4. RICHARD : Yes.
5. PAM : I see.
- (FX : PAM TURNS TO GO)
6. RICHARD : Where are you going?
7. PAM : (CLOSE TO TEARS) If this is really going to be his
last night on this earth the least I can do is check
Sam's comfortable.

SCENE 11 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : EVENING

(FX : BY SAM'S CAGE BUT QUIETER. WE SENSE MOST OF THE ANIMALS ARE SETTLING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT)

(FX : PAM PUSHES PAPER AND PENS THROUGH THE BARS)

1. SAM : Now what! I was just dropping off...
3. PAM : Its all set for tomorrow Sam. Tomorrow. You're the only one that can stop it now.
4. SAM : I know. I know.
5. PAM : For God's sake draw something ... here ... here's some paper and pens ... show them you haven't forgotten how. That you understand. That you think.
6. SAM : That I think? Thats all I do now.. Sit and think... sleep a bit ... sit and think .. sleep .. and what do I think about? I try to decide if its all worth it...
7. PAM : I have tried to help you Sam, and I've failed. I'm sorry. Its up to you now.
- (A BEAT)
8. PAM : I can't stay. Do something darling. Please.
- (FX : PAM RUSHES FROM THE ROOM. THE NOISE DISTURBS THE CAPUCHINS. A SHORT SQUEEL. THEN SILENCE AGAIN)
9. SAM : Oh hell! What am I going to do now? Draw something? And if I do, what then? It'll be back to the bad old days. All those bloody photographers and damned journalists. All poking and prodding and calling my name and absolutely no privacy....

SCENE 12 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : FLASHBACK

(FX : FLASHBACK. A GAGGLE OF PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS. FLASHBULBS. CAMERAS CLICKING. CALLS OF 'LOOK HERE SAM' AND SIMILAR. SLOWLY IT FADES ... QUIETENS...)

SCENE 13 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : NIGHT

1. SAM : There would be no peace and all I want, all I have ever wanted, is to be left alone ... to live my own life as quietly and peacefully and normally as possible.

It all seemed worth it when Jonathan was alive ... he was my friend.. and I was his ... but then he followed me up that tree. Why didn't I think? I should have realised he couldn't climb that high. Why didn't I think ... I'll regret that day for ever...

So what's it to be? A life of fame and no peace ... or forward into oblivion. What a choice! It's all their bloody fault for teaching me to think .. to reason. Still, perhaps I should do something...

SCENE 14 : EXT : GARDEN : THE NEXT MORNING

(FX : THE GARDEN. SOME BIRDSONG. BEES BUZZ. PAM IS CUTTING ROSES. SECATEURS SNIP. SHE SMELLS THE ROSE)

(FX : RICHARD APPROACHES)

1. RICHARD : Ah, I thought I might find you out here.
2. PAM : These roses are wonderful. Smell.
3. RICHARD : Are you going out this morning?
4. PAM Yes. I don't think I could bear to stay here. I thought I'd go down to the beach for a walk.
5. RICHARD : Good idea...
6. PAM : I'm thinking of getting a dog...
7. RICHARD : I'm sorry Pam. Really I am. I just wish you could understand.
8. PAM : So do I. I've tried, but I can't. I simply can't understand how you could do this to Sam. After everything we have been through together. As a family. Or do you still blame him for Jonathan's death?
9. RICHARD : No ... not really.
10. PAM : Well, you shouldn't. If anyone was to blame for that it was me. I was here. I was supposed to be looking after them. .. and instead I was in the kitchen, cooking lasagne. I'm sorry.
11. RICHARD : I have never blamed you Pam.
12. PAM : Well, you certainly shouldn't blame Sam. Now, I'm just going to say goodbye.

SCENE 15 : INT : LABORATORY CAGE ROOM : LATER

(FX : PAM APPROACHES SAM'S CAGE.)

1. PAM : (DISAPPOINTED) Oh Sam... you haven't done anything ... you haven't touched the paper ... you didn't even try! Why not ... why not?

2. SAM : Because I couldn't face the consequences.

3. PAM : I'm sorry Sam ... I cant help you anymore... I've let you down...

(FX : THE DOOR OPENS QUIETLY. PAM DOESN'T HEAR IT BUT THE CAPUCHINS DO. A SCREECH. RICHARD APPROACHES.)

4. RICHARD : Its time for you to go Pam

5. PAM : (TEARFUL) Goodbye Sam...God Bless...

6. SAM : Goodby Pam .. don't be sad for me. You made sure I had a choice ... and thank you for that. And I chose ... now maybe I will get some peace...

SCENE 16 : EXT : BEACH : LATER

(FX : BEACH. WAVES ON PEBBLES. SEAGULLS.
PAM'S FEET WALKING ALONG. SHE STOPS.
SHE IS CRYING)

1. PAM : Oh...Sam...

SCENE 17 : INT : LABORATORY : LATER

(FX : FEET ON THE HARD FLOOR. MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS RATTLE IN A METAL TRAY

1. RICHARD : Ready?

2. STUART : Yes.

3. RICHARD : Right then... lets get started...

4. STUART : How long should the drugs take to work?

5. RICHARD : Just seconds...

6. SAM : (GETTING GRADUALLY QUIETER) Well, its happened... too late for any regrets now ... I could have chosen otherwise, I could have chosen to show you all what I could do if I wanted too... and I think I would have surprised you ... but life as a unique 'thing', as a celibrated experiment .. half man and half beast ... that life was intolerable ... unbearable... I'd rather sleep ... and now I can, for ever....

(BEAT)

7. RICHARD : He's gone ... pass me the scalpel....

(F/X : INSTRUMENTS ON A METAL TRAY)

(FADE TO SILENCE)

THE END