

Of apes and men

It was my last chance to achieve the dream of my life: knowing what animals think and being able to interact with them. I was a scientist and my whole life was devoted to science. In other words, when I was in my laboratory I had the feeling of being at my place. Once at home, my only wish always was to go back to my lab as soon as possible. I worked in an underground laboratory in California. The government financed my project. You would have asked me: why? I didn't know... and I didn't ask myself the question. In my private life, I was alone but I didn't look for any company. I was a hard worker. I spent days trying to run my machine, pulling my hair trying to understand what was wrong with it. I knew that I had very little time. As I told you, the authorities agreed to finance my project but at only one condition: making it running by the end of the month. This is what they told me yesterday when they came to the lab. Last night I didn't sleep at all and, in the morning, a brilliant idea came to my mind. I got up and dressed hastily, put on my glasses and headed once more to my lab at full speed. It was my last chance ... These five words were spinning in my head.

I was extremely anxious when I sat down in front of Jojo. Jojo was a monkey, my best friend. He was sharing my life in this lab for more than a year. We spent hours sitting in front of each other just like today. We wore the two helmets I had created, in order to allow me to establish a connexion between our two brains. It had been a failure so far... At first there was an utter silence and then, suddenly, I didn't know which one of us was the most surprised, I heard:

-“Why?”

-I was upset, my heart was beating loudly in my chest but, nevertheless, I replied:

-“Why what?”

-Why do you do that?

-Do what?

-This experiment, this project?

-Because that's my passion and I want to make science progress.

-You are so silly ... you have never asked yourself what the government wanted to do with your invention?

- No... to be able to communicate with animals and to learn more about their life, I guess?

- Stop being blind John!!! They aim to take control on people's minds. They don't care about animals. I know you are different John. You are my friend. Please, help me. Help us. We must escape!!! Making science progress is the last of their preoccupation, I would like to convince you that from now we are both threatened! They will take your machine and kill you before you make the announcement of your discovery to the scientific community.

-I don't understand anything from what you're saying, that's purely nonsense! You are an animal, you can't be cleverer than I am. That's unbelievable!!! My god, how do you know about this?

- Men have never bothered to learn animal's language but during the entire year I spent in this lab I've been allowed to learn human's one. Yes, just I, Jojo the monkey, know your language, and doing so, yesterday, I heard the two men who visited you speaking of this and ...

- Stop please", I interrupted him. "I don't know why I am listening to you. I will be back tomorrow.

- You don't know how it feels to be alone and in captivity when you want to be free", said Jojo before we stopped this first experiment.

I have already worked enough for this day and I needed a good night of sleep. When I left the room, I bumped into my boss, and he said on an aggressive tone:

-“Are the helmets ready?”

-Cautiously I answered: “No, but the last tests were encouraging.

-I don't like this word *encouraging*, remember it is your last chance. Is it clear for you? The government needs your machine!

- I know

-Good, see you tomorrow”

And he left. I was lost. My thoughts were focused on what Jojo said. Maybe it was right maybe not. So I went back to my home and I hoped that it would become clearer, after a good nap.

This night I had a dream. In this dream my invention was used by the army, not for science but for war. It was a death machine and I was its designer. The cries of thousands of victims echoed in my ears. The nightmare stopped in the morning, and I was determined to clarify the situation, I would go to the lab and talk to my boss, in order to try to make the things out.

When I arrived in front of my boss's office, I saw him with two soldiers, a general and an officer. They were speaking and suddenly scare grew in me. That time it was clear, my decision was made: I was determined to act. I went back to my office I first made a copy for myself on my pocket disk and then I destroyed the notes, the data base of my project. I picked up my two

helmets, put them into my backpack and rushed into the pet shop. Hopefully nobody was there. I opened Jojo's cage and we left together. The corridors were deserted. I ran to the door. Before leaving, I started the fire alarm. I took advantage of the confusion that reigned to put Jojo in the trunk of my car that was parked just in front of the building. Nobody paid attention to us. Anyway, we had to hurry up since they would soon realize the subterfuge and the alert would quickly be given.

I decided to go to Amazonia. I drove for a while to leave the town and then reached the nearby coast. My aim was to take a boat to go to Brazil. Two hours later we arrived at a port. I started looking for a boat. I found one where the captain did not ask too many questions. I had some money with me... that helped! We hid in the bunkers of the boat with other smuggled goods I guessed. The trip was rather long and we took time with Jojo to talk thanks to the two helmets. I learned many things about him and his family in Amazonia from which he was robbed by bloody poachers who killed his mother! Once in Brazil, I wondered how to reach Amazonia. Fortune was with us because a travel company proposed a boat visit of the Amazonia's wood and they had a ticket that wasn't sold. They made no difficulties with the monkey. We travelled along the Panama Canal, we landed at Macapá and there we took another boat to navigate on the Amazon River.

Time passed, people were very kind. Everybody loved Jojo on the boat and they were very sad when we left. To protect our escape, I claimed that my wife, Suzy, didn't like my monkey, that I lost my job and finally that I had no chance at all in my life. So, I had decided to leave civilisation and that my aim from now was to spend a hermit life in Amazonia woods with my unique friend Jojo. I didn't know if they believed me or if they thought I was a fool, but it didn't matter: Jojo and I were free. I said good bye to the people on the boat and we started to walk in the woods to look for Jojo's monkey family that for sure would adopt me. I was not afraid, just curious. I followed Jojo. The two helmets were in my backpack ready to make me learn more about animal's way of life that which is undoubtedly more interesting than humans' one. Anyway, that's what I hoped, and following Jojo was my unique chance to know about real life!