The Chimp
Eric Thompson suddenly woke up from his haunches. At the edge of the precipice, he did not care a whit for the depth to which he would be flung to the river flowing way down. Dr Thompson was a famous scientist, a physicist and a great name in computer science. He had been working on development of unique software to convert spoken language to written word, ultimately to direct transmission to display on the screen.

Thompson was very sad. He had the respect of his compatriots until now. On seminars when he rose to speak, all the men of science rose to give him a welcoming ovation. They lauded him so. But now everything had changed, like an earthquake levelling a city. People ridiculed him. Mischievous boys mimicked his walk whenever he walked on the street. They passed uncharitable remarks.

He was on a breakthrough to a great discovery – a discovery that the whole world would be thankful for – the peace molecule. When he mentioned this in his latest seminar, fellow scientists laughed at him. They walked out on him. Only Paula, his assistant, remained in the room, misty eyed.

Why had this happened to him! He was not responsible for this; a change forced on him, beyond his wildest expectation, like lightning striking you. He sat there with wild thoughts of jumping down the precipice and ending this ridiculous existence, but the river of no return daunted him. Then he cried, cried for this unwanted life in which he had been inadvertently thrown.

"Eric dear, come quickly for your breakfast. It is getting cold."

"Yes, coming. But wait till I do the last connection."

Thompson suddenly woke up from his thoughts. Yes, he was hungry. He had not eaten last evening due to an upsurge of his heart problem. The doctor had told him he required rest – not exertion and worry about research. His wife, Alice was also worried. The doctor had told her privately that Thompson’s problem was serious and not to be ignored. But what she could do! Thompson never listened to her pleadings – listen to the doctor’s advice, take rest – she would worry that his research would do immeasurable damage to his heart. But all was in vain.

Another one and a half years of unmitigated and consummate research led to fulfillment of Thompson’s dreams. He had discovered a way of recording his whole life – memories and all – on a compact disc. The research done, successes and failures - right from beginning to the present day – all his thought processes culminated in research. Research never ends but the body does. Thompson’s body may end when he would die, but the thought processes leading to the next research would have continuity. His body may end but his elegant mind would live on in another body to continue the research for centuries. Dr. Thompson had achieved immortality.

He knew his mortal body was not going to last much longer. He would die any time now. His heart disease was progressing rapidly. His mind was already transferred to a CD and was ready to enter some other deserving person’s brain. Who would be this deserving person who would carry on as Dr Thompson, subjugating his own personality! The receiving person’s personality could be erased and the new one would be substituted; but he had to agree. Even if that person did not mind Thompson’s personality superimposing on his, he had to see that there would not be any clash. Eric Thompson did not want to create another Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

That day Eric Thompson was alone in the laboratory. He dreamed about his unparalleled research, about the next step to immortality, which had been done with so much sophistication and thought. Who would agree to mind transfer? When he mentioned this to Herbert in a round about way he looked shocked.

But when Roger did not come she sneaked into the laboratory.

Roger was completely engrossed with the computer. When Alice saw from behind what Roger was busy with, her eyes popped out....

"What!" he had burst out, “My body possessed by some weirdo? It sounds like a ghost story.”

In spite of Herbert’s reaction, Thompson knew there were many people who craved for high science without any ability of their own. Then he thought about the equipment he had created, the headgear. He had had laboured hard to create it. He had simply to put the headgear on somebody’s head and make the necessary connections.

But as he was sitting on the couch a sudden sharp pain rose in his chest. The pains continued one after the other in waves, very sharp like daggers going through his heart. His whole body then twitched and rolled on the floor. His death was near. What could he do now! The end of his body and the end of his once-in-a-century research.

"Oon...oon," cried Roger running towards his master anxiously. Thompson’s pet, a chimp called Roger, came with his undulating gait. Roger was about three and a half feet tall, with long arms and a hairy body. He was wearing shorts and a jersey. “Roger, sit on the chair and put on the hat near it,” said Thompson, ignoring the pain. He thumped the headgear on the monkey and clicked the switch on. The effort was excruciating. He slumped on the floor and breathed his last.

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Alice always wondered why the mischievous Roger spent so much time in the laboratory these days. She saw him tinkering with the instruments and playing with the typewriter – sometimes with the computer. Paula also had a good laugh about Roger’s new eccentricity.

“Why, Roger has donned Eric’s mantle now,” said Alice.

“Beats me...”

“Roger, Roger,” shouted Alice. "What are you doing? Come for your lunch. It is
on the table laid out for you with the fork and knife. Ha, ha... a monkey acting as a scientist."

but when Roger did not come she sneaked into the laboratory. Roger was completely engrossed with the computer. When Alice saw from behind what Roger was busy with, her eyes popped out. He was typing, "Some thoughts on the peace molecule, by Eric Thompson."

"My God," she said. She felt faint and suddenly sat down. "Are you really Eric Thompson? Has he possessed you!"

"Oon...oon," gibbered Roger and pointed towards another big computer screen that he had invented – it printed his thoughts directly through his brain – it read:

"Dr Thompson had invented personality transfer onto a compact disc. He wanted some other human being to agree to accept his personality to superimpose on their mind. Unfortunately he was cut short by his death. I, Roger, was at hand and most reluctantly he had to transfer his whole mind on to me. This is the greatest scientific breakthrough to have continuity of research that would go on for centuries through one person to another."

Once, Dr Thompson (now inside Roger) decided in one of his impulsive moods to attend a seminar on brain research. Paula had felt that it was not wise that Thompson attend this seminar before all these big scientists, and cause them shock and dismay. How would they feel being lectured and tutored by a monkey, although he was not really a monkey! She tried to argue with him, but to no avail. When Thompson got up to deliver his speech, shock and incomprehensibility weighed down on the congregation. Some titters could also be heard from Baxter, his nemesis from childhood and his cohorts, which soon spread everywhere in the audience. In spite of this intemperance, he started his speech through direct transfer to the big screen with each word spoken aloud with a synthetic voice. He said:

"We have in this present situation of the world great hatred all over. Different communities hate and try to decimate other communities, to the overall detriment to the world community. This beautiful world should hold on and progress through the coming ages to unbelieving heights. I am therefore postulating a molecule, I call it the 'peace molecule'. The 'peace molecule', if spread through the atmosphere all over, will subdue the belligerent nature of the human mind and bring peace to the world. These molecules when spread into the atmosphere in the form of a cloud, if inhaled go the brain and pacify the mind, creating goodwill for fellow humans. The molecule is ready with me but requires to be made in huge quantities for which the cooperation of all governments is required."

"Look, who is tutoring us about a fake research," said Baxter. "A chimp called Roger! Everything here is fake. Somebody is printing the words on the screen. Somebody else is talking in the microphone. Actually this chimp cannot utter a single word! Why should we waste our time? Let us go."

There was a loud guffaw all round. People started getting up and walked out on Thompson.

Paula on the verge of tears and said, "Let us go, Dr Thompson, it is no use sitting here and brooding over the behavior of these hyped, pompous, so-called scientists. They will come round slowly once they read your published papers. But you will have to wait."

By now the seminar hall was practically empty except for two hard-faced men who were watching the proceedings with exceptional interest. They followed Thompson's car to find where he was staying. Paula, who was driving, saw a blue Buick following them. Preoccupied in her own thoughts, she completely ignored it.

"So this is where he stays," said Carlos to Dash. "We will come back for him. He will be number one in our menagerie."

Carlos and Dash trained dogs, seals and other animals to do tricks. This chimp was already trained. He would do these tricks at their bidding but if he reneged they had their methods. They knew this scientist chimp would be a bonanza and would bring them undreamed of fortune.

The two kept a vigil on the bungalow for many days.

"The chimp is alone in the house," said Dash one day. "This is our chance. But the chimp is heavy, has more strength than both of us put together."
Roger asked for the equipment and the CD. Suddenly, he snatched the CD and ran towards the open window. Roger jumped towards the flagpost, ten feet below with the agility of a monkey. 

"Don’t worry. I have the remedy for that stupid monkey doctor," answered Carlos. Their car drew silently near the bungalow disgorging its two occupants. "Hey chimp, come here. I have a question for you."

As Roger approached the window, Carlos drew his gun and shot him pointblank.

"What?" Dash was aghast. "You killed the chimp. Are you bloody mad! How is it going to help us?"

"He is not dead. Just sleeping. It was a tranquilizer pallet."

"Thanks goodness."

"He had that glimo in his hand and the computer with the big screen. We take that also."

When Roger awoke from the torpor, he found himself hemmed in inside a cage for wild animals.

"Hey chimp, you are awake now. Tell me your name," asked Carlos without expecting a reply.

Roger motioned for a paper and pen.
"Roger." He wrote.

"What the hell!" Carlos exclaimed in great surprise. "He can write. Can you write a book?" he laughed.

"Look here, you will appear for a show. People will ask you questions and you will answer through your big screen. You will listen to me or no food and water for you. Is that clear?"

The next evening was pleasant with aurorn sky and cloudy whorled atmosphere.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I present before you Dr Dodder – the chimp. This clever chimp will answer your questions; each question will cost you a fiver."

"Hey chimp, why don’t you dodger a little," mocked a small body and everybody laughed.

"Hey Roger, how do I look at you?" asked a woman.

"Just fine, but you sat on wet paint with WET written on it," answered Thompson. Every body laughed at the woman.

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Meanwhile, Dr Baxter, who was jealous and a vowed enemy of Dr Thompson, had by now stolen all the compact discs from Thompson’s home. But he was perplexed as he did not know how to use the CD with "mind transfer" written on it. Running on the audio produced electronic sounds, which remained unfathomable.

"Hi Steve, how is it going?" Bob asked his friend. "Could you decipher it?"

"No luck, I wonder what the heck he did to get his mind transferred to that monkey."

"I heard there is a smart monkey answering all questions at the Nova. Do you think he is your friend Thompson," asked Bob. "If so let us go there."

It was morning when both of them arrived at the Nova. The place seemed to be deserted so they could go around looking at the animals until they spotted Roger in his cage,holling about idly.

"Hi Dr Thompson," said Baxter, to test his own luck: Roger jumped up, giving himself away.

"Dr Thompson, your CD on the mind transfer is with me. Don’t ask me how. I am sure you want it back but seeing the condition you are in there is a fat chance you can use it on somebody, unless of course, you would want to free yourself from this cage and also from this awkward body."

Roger motioned for a paper and pen. He wrote, "Please Baxter, help me. You can see what condition I am in. Please do something."

"Well, it is not going to be easy. I can get you out of here but then you will have to show me the nuts and bolts of this mind transfer. You will come to my home and show me what to do. Is that clear?"

When Roger, or rather Dr Thompson, agreed to his conditions, Baxter went to the police and had him released. Roger was delivered to Baxter, who claimed to own the chimp.

"Welcome to your new home Dr Thompson," teased Baxter. He was taken to the third floor laboratory, where he was to be incarcerated.

"This is your lab, Dr Thompson. You may do whatever you want. But first tell me about mind transfer and how to use it."

Roger asked for the equipment and the CD to show them how to use it. Suddenly, he snatched the CD and ran towards the open window. Roger jumped towards the flagpost, ten feet below with the agility of a monkey – then towards a pipe, five feet away, which ran towards the street thirty feet down.

"Catch him, catch the chimp", Baxter bawled.

Roger ran and ran with a racing heart and a ragged breath, falling sometimes and twisting through the cribbing and cupping pedestrians, pushing and tripping over them. He ran, he did not know how long, till he reached the Satan’s guich with the frothing river far below.

Then he thought about the grim beastly behaviour he had gone through in the last few days – a life without dignity or honour. Earlier as a chimp he had been happy, thought the Roger part of the combined mind. The Thompson part had undergone mental agony. This juxtaposition had made both parts unhappy. What use was this mind transfer after all!

Dr Thompson suddenly made up his mind. He had to go home and remedy this fault. Walking towards the nearby road he hailed a taxi. The cabman was intrigued to see a chimpanzee asking for a ride.

"Where to?" he asked mockingly.

Roger held up a piece of paper showing the address – "19 Stratham street."

"Have you got the money?"

Another paper went up, "Will pay at home."

"What the devil," chuckled the cabby as he put on the gas.

Alice was overjoyed to see Roger at the door. "Oh Roger," she said, "I was worried… where have you been? I put in a complaint with the police that you were lost but from where did you get this joker’s dress?"

Roger signalled her to pay for the taxi and ran to the lab.

"Alice," he loaded into the computer. "I was wrong to impose my mind on poor Roger and made him unhappy. I am removing myself from him into this disc. Please destroy it and throw it into the fire. I was wrong. Please pardon me. Goodbye."

Soon after, Roger the chimp was jumping up and down. Happily running out of the house he climbed up the tree, jumped down, climbed again. He ran into the kitchen and asked for a banana.

Freedom was so sweet!