

SYNOPSIS

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The Hairy Ape starts with a scene in the firemen's fore-castle of a transatlantic liner an hour after sailing from New York. The room is crowded with drunken men who are mostly stripped to the waist. They are all shouting, laughing, cursing, and singing. In this scene there is a free discussion among them about their present life. Only three of them are mentioned by their names, namely Yank, Paddy, and Long. Paddy and Long are the ones who are unhappy with their present life. Paddy feels that working like them in the bowel of the ship without seeing the sun and inhaling the fresh air, is just the same as being dead. He prefers the past, so everytime he is too tired or too sad, he runs to the past by daydreaming. While Long is class-conscious, he tries to make his friends to see that they were born free and equal, but the rich drugged them down to wage slaves. He blames the capitalist class for their misfortune. Yank on the other hand is quite contented with his present and is successful to convince his other friends. To him the ship is their home, and they have the most important status because they are the essential part of the ship. Without them the steam ship will not move. They are the power behind the machine. This means that they belong to the machine, to the ship, the steel, and therefore to the city and the industrialized world.

In scene two, Mildred Douglas, a daughter of a rich president of a steel factory is introduced. She with her aunt are involved in a conversation that ends with Mildred's slap toward her aunt, because of their disagreement for each other. Mildred does social works. In this scene she intends to visit the stokehole to see the stokers

work. Her aunt criticizes her because she knows that Mildred only looks for the sensational aspect of the job. After several accusation toward Mildred of being a poser, Mildred slaps her aunt.

Scene three is when the four characters who are mentioned by their names meet. Mildred enters the stokehole; unfortunately at that time Yank is very irritated by someone's whistle and he is cursing wildly and pounding on his chest without knowing that Mildred is behind him. She is terribly shocked because she has never known or imagine that such brutality can exist, therefore she faints.

Paddy's comment that she looks at Yank as if he is a hairy ape, makes him angry. He wonder why she reacts so strange. His sense of belonging is shattered by this encounter with Mildred. He feels insulted and become revengeful. Long suggest Yank to go to 'law'; that they have a case against Mildred, but all the other laugh at him. Paddy teases Yank by saying that Yank has fallen in love with her. This part is in scene four.

In scene five, three weeks later, Yank, unshaved and in his dirty clothes walk with Long on Fifth Avenue, New York. Long brings Yank there to make him realize that what is disturbing his mind is not a personal matter. He wants Yank to become a class-conscious as he is. But Yank's mind is only occupied to take revenge on Mildred. At that time the wealthy people let out from a church and go down to the street. Yank tries to communicate with them, but he is ignored. He starts to make a fight by beating a gentleman who then calls the police that makes him land in a prison on Blackwells Island.

During the night of the following day in scene 6, Yank can be seen sitting in the attitude of Rodin's 'The Thinker'. He wakes up thinking that he is in the zoo. Some of other prisoners think that Yank is crazy caused by the beating upon his head. After listening to his story, one of them tells him about the Industrial Workers of the World, an organization for workers and labourers.

A month later, in scene seven, Yank goes to the Industrial Workers of the World local office and register himself as a member. Then to the secretary of the organization he offers his willing to blow up the Douglas' steel plant. The secretary accuses him as an agent of the Secret Service and then has his men thrown Yank out.

In the twilight of the next day, Yank goes to the zoo and tries to communicate with a gorilla in a cage. He discuss about his inner turmoil to the gorilla as if it understand him. He said to the gorilla that Paddy has given him the right 'dope' which is nature, but Yank can not feel that he belongs to nature. Unfortunately Yank is unable to feel one with nature and neither an he feel that he has a future. Only present is real for him, but he feels he does not even belong to it. In Yank's opinion, the ape is luckier than him because it belongs to nature which is the jungle. Now the gorilla is in the city, it is put in a cage, but the gorilla can still feel it belongs to something which is the jungle. While Yank feels he belongs to nobody and to nothing. He becomes so confused and frustrated that at last not finding a a way out.

In his desperation he concludes that he and the gorilla can be friends because of their physical resemblance and qualities. He frees the gorilla to make a

brotherhood with it, but the gorilla kills him in a deathly embrace. Yank dies wondering in despair where he fits in.