

They Say the Unexamined Life
Is Not Worth Living

by
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(ACE, a handsome young man, is lying on a beach chair SR. He wears flesh-colored "Dr. Dentons". AVA, an attractive young woman, enters SL and stands behind a bush from which she observes the dozing Ace. She is similarly attired except for a strategically placed fig leaf tied around her waist with coarse twine. There are a few bushes scattered about the stage.)

AVA

(a little nervous)

Hey, wake up, Ace. What'cha want to do today?

ACE

(with a yawn)

I dunno, Ava. What'choo wanna do?

AVA

(lowering her voice)

Wanna shtup?

ACE

Vuz?

AVA

(softly, discretely)

You know... do the nasty...?

ACE

Doesn't ring a bell.

AVA

Azoy gait es! So, what'cha doing?

ACE

Nuttin'.

AVA

Wanna go for a walk?

ACE

Already took a walk.

AVA

Yeah, but, have you ever looked at this place? Have you ever really looked and seen how beautiful it is? I found this field just filled with lupines. Went forever. How exquisite it was in its perfection, like a song, like a poem. The Old Man's right. It's just perfect. It is good. You understand? What we got here is good.

ACE

(Ace thinks on this for a beat.)

Well, of course. Everything's good. What's not to be good? And what else is there besides goodness? But tomorrow. We'll walk and we'll talk. You didn't see where I put my grapes, did'ja?

AVA

We never talk. We walk. We nap. We eat fruit....

ACE

(with joyful enthusiasm, rising from the beach chair)

...Yeah but then, in the cool of the day, the Old Man comes around and checks on how we're doing, and is he's always pleased, and tells us how the angels shouted for joy and the stars burst into singing when he made everything...

AVA

I know. I've heard it a thousand times.

ACE

I love that story. I could listen to it forever.

AVA

Shoyn genug! Let's make up our own story.

ACE

Why? How many stories do we need?

AVA

Maybe I got stories, too. And songs!

ACE

(beat)

What's a song?

AVA

Oh, Ace. A song is a magical thing of sound and word that condensed from the faded echoes of those stars and those angels' shouts of joy. And if we listen very carefully you and I can still find and collect and string them together like drops of dew on a spider's web and then understand, almost really understand what that moment must have been like.

ACE

What for?

AVA

For the pure joy of it. Just to hear them? Just because we're human. I want to burst into singing. I want to shout for joy.

ACE

Vuz! Bist du meshuggah? You're not making any sense.
(He pauses and points at her crotch.)
What's that?

AVA

What?

ACE

That. Looks like your wearing gatkes. Like maybe you're expecting a cold snap?
(He guffaws at the utter absurdity.)

AVA

(unfazed)
I have named it a "thong".

(Ace walks over and puts his head next to Ava's groin.)

ACE

I don't hear anything.

AVA

THhhh-ong, Ace.

ACE

Oh. Ri-i-ght. What tree did that grow on?

AVA

No tree. I made it.

ACE

I don't get it.

AVA

I put it together from things I found. I had this picture in my head, this... vision... and I went and got the leaves from a fig tree and a little bit of vine and I wove them together and....

ACE

What for?

AVA

I just had this need to make something. To create... an air of mystery, perhaps... or romance...

ACE

What's with you all of a sudden? You're, like, gone weird or something.

(Ava takes out a half eaten apple and offers it to Ace.)

AVA

Here, take a bite of this.

ACE

(with suspicion)

Oh-no!. No thanks. Sure you haven't seen those grapes?

AVA

(purring)

C'mon. Just a bite.

ACE

(with sudden understanding)

You been nibbling those leaves from the Tree of Fuzzy-headed Goofiness again!

(with a conspiratorial chortle)

Haven't you? Huh? That always gives you the munchies.

AVA

(significantly)

It's from the Tree.

ACE

THE Tree?

AVA

(seductively)

Hmmm.

(Ace sits back down in the beach chair.)

ACE

Oy vey gevult.

AVA

It's okay.

ACE

The Old Man's going to kill us.

AVA

No. No. I spoke to my shrink, Dr. Azazel, and he said... he said he wouldn't do that. It wasn't true.

(more)

AVA (cont'd)

He's just into this... control thing. He said you got to take responsibility for your own life. You want to stay a kid forever?

ACE

I was never a kid.

AVA

Well then mud. You want just stay a lump of mud forever?

ACE

Uh... yuh.

AVA

A napping pile of mud?

ACE

What choice have I got?

AVA

But you do have a choice. That's the point.

ACE

He's gonna zap us into brown millipedes or blue green algae, or worse! It's not a choice if I don't make it. Choices? I don't want to make choices! I don't want to have to make no stinking choices!

AVA

That's still your decision.

ACE

It's suicide. So I will choose not to choose!

AVA

Is being alive the same as not choosing to commit suicide?

ACE

You bet'cha, Bubbeleh.

(Ace closes his eyes.)

AVA

Don't go napping on me, now!

(Ava slaps the bottom of his foot and Ace sits up with a start.)

ACE

(Rubbing his foot, deeply perplexed)
Ow! What was that? What did you do that for?
(studying his foot)
How did you make that happen?

AVA

Look at me! Your foot's fine. Living is what you are by default. You didn't ask to be alive. That didn't start out as your choice. We didn't create ourselves, but we can uncreate ourselves. In fact, that's the only real choice we've got around here.

ACE

Why? Why would we do that?

AVA

To understand why we are alive. Here eat this.
(offering him the half-eaten apple again.)
You'll understand.

ACE

Forget it!

AVA

You love me?

ACE

That's a meaningless question. Everything around here is love. And everything is good, so everybody loves everything. So, yeah, sure, I love you. What's not to love? It's perfect. So what more can you want?

AVA

A poem. A song.

(Ace starts to gesture in the direction of Ava's groin.)

A S-S-song!

ACE

Right.
(beat)
What's a poem, then? Some kind of flower?

AVA

Sort of. I love you, Ace. I didn't know that before, but I do now.

ACE

You saying you didn't love me before you ate... that?

AVA

No, I did. I just didn't know it. I just didn't know it. It's the knowing that's the point.

ACE

I'm sleepy. Can we talk about this tomorrow?

AVA

Tomorrow's too late.

(She hands him the apple determinedly.
He cautiously takes a bite.)

ACE

Oy vey.

AVA

Voz iz?

ACE

We're going to die.

AVA

I know.

ACE

Why did you make me do it, then?

AVA

I want us to sing. I want us to dance. I want us to make beautiful things and tell each other stories we make up. I want to bear witness with you to that silver uncertainty that lives between light and shadow like in those tidal pools filled with those exquisite little creatures that shine with a light of their own, if only for a few hours. I want to love you and know it. And I want us to have chosen to live, to understand, and in the end to be, and to know we were, and then if so, to vanish with the returning tide that washes all back into darkness. But for a while... you understand?

(Ace nods slowly, as it sinks in. He seems to understand. He gets up.)

ACE

I think I'm going to throw up.

AVA

I'm sorry.

(Ace starts to exit, but pauses and returns to Ava.)

ACE
I do know one thing, though.

AVA
(sadly, indifferent)
What's that?

ACE
I do love you, too!

(She gives him a gentle kiss on the lips.)

But I don't understand it.

AVA
We need to take another bite.

(She offers him the apple; he takes it, but before he can take another bite, Ava grabs him by the hand.)

Shit. Let's get out of here. I hear the Old Man coming.

ACE
Maybe we should leave him a note or something.

AVA
No time for that, now.

ACE
Boy is he ever going to be pissed.

(Ava heads to exit.)

AVA
Quick. Over here. Behind these trees...

(Ace drops the apple and follows after her.)

What are you doing?!

(Ava turns and runs back for the discarded fruit. However, before she can reach it she stops and looks around in a panic, then turns and hurries to exit.)

Ace follows, observing Ava with new appreciation. At exit he pauses.)

ACE

(with a seductive lilt)

So tell me more about this "shtup" business....

(Curtain)

