

Appreciation

a play by Albert Fried-Cassorla

CHARACTERS:

FRIEDRICH- a man in his 30's

ANAIS - a woman in her 30's

SETTING:

The streets of Center City, Philadelphia, beginning at 2nd and Bainbridge on a warm fall day. FRIEDRICH and ANAIS are in jogging gear. Almost the entire play should be played as a long jog, with actors mainly jogging in place, but making incremental progress around the stage and making turn according to planned cues.

AT RISE:

FRIEDRICH and ANAIS are running in place at an apparently brisk clip. FRIEDRICH'S head is turned unsafely towards ANAIS as he says:

FRIEDRICH

So I said--

(Anais spots a sleeping dog that FRIEDRICH is about to trip over. She points towards it and yells:)

ANAIS

Watch it!

(FRIEDRICH leaps over the sleeping dog.)

Thank God you missed it!

FRIEDRICH

Damn dog-owners! Leaving their dumb pooches in the middle of the sidewalk.

Anyhow, thank *you*, not Thank God.

ANAIS

Excuse me? You have a problem with thanking God?

FRIEDRICH

Of course I do. I'm an atheist, remember? But that's another sleeping dog I'd rather let lie.

ANAIS

Well, *you* didn't thank God -- I did. You don't like that either?

FRIEDRICH

I know I don't like arguing with you about stupid stuff.... Whattaya say we to just a short run today, then stop for lunch at the 4th Street Deli.

ANAIS

With both of us all sweaty? I don't think so. *I* wouldn't appreciate a couple of sweaty joggers sitting next to me while I'm enjoying a great pastrami sandwich, would you?

FRIEDRICH

Hmm... I'd appreciate the aroma of the sandwich. And if the joggers were like you and had such sweet-smelling perspiration, then *no problemo*.

ANAIS

Well thank you... I think. At least you'd be appreciating something, thank god.

FRIEDRICH

I appreciate LOTS, thank Unicorn.

ANAIS

Let's go right on Sixth.... Thank *what*?

FRIEDRICH

Thank Unicorn!

ANAIS

Thank *Unicorn*! Who says that?

FRIEDRICH

I do... sometimes.

ANAIS

You do *not*! We've been dating what - six months? And I never heard you say that.

FRIEDRICH

That's because I usually think it, without saying it.

ANAIS

Oh come on, thank the frickin' Unicorn? I don't think so.

FRIEDRICH

You should, because that what I usually think, only now I'm saying it.

ANAIS

I wish you wouldn't.

FRIEDRICH

Wouldn't what - say it or think it?

ANAIS

Either.

FRIEDRICH

Oh? Why not, pray tell?

ANAIS

Don't say *pray* tell either - remember, you're an atheist. And the reason I don't want you to say it is because it's irreverent. And- watch that doggy-doo.

(FRIEDRICH hops.)

FRIEDRICH

Irreverent? You don't even go to your own church, except Christmas eve? How can you call anyone irreverent?

ANAIS

Your attitude towards G-hyphen-d goes way beyond that -- it's, it's blasphemous!

FRIEDRICH

Well thank you, my Ayatollah.

ANAIS

What did you say?

FRIEDRICH

My sherona. You know, *(sings)* My Sherona, oom-PAH, -oo-oom-PAH, oom-PAH, -oo-oom-PAH - MY SHARONA!!

ANAIS

Ya know what? I liked your idea of a joint jog, but now I need a break.

FRIEDRICH

What do you mean?... I've been afraid of this.

ANAIS

No. A short break - about a minute -- okay? I'm gonna listen to my Deepak Chopra. He gives me inner peace.

FRIEDRICH

Okay, if you have to.

(ANAIS plus in her ear-buds. During the next two scenes, one actor has ear-buds on and the other talks as if thinking aloud. The other actor acts mostly like he/she does not hear what is being said.

Sometimes ,though, they exchange looks as if one has telepathically understood what the other is thinking or saying.)

ANAIS

Yeah.

FRIEDRICH

Deep-packed bok-choy.... frozen for your gustatory delight. Sometimes I wonder. ... Thank the Unicorn she's not always busting my chops about inconsequential BS. And yes, thank Existence for her killer smile.

(ANAIS smiles, as if on cue.)

Thank the Unicorn that she's absolutely gorgeous... and the best thing in my life. And her cooking, what an incredible *bouillabaise* she makes. I even forgive her for the way she bolts out of bed right after sex.

(ANAIS frowns, FRIEDRICH smiles.)

I thanks the Unicorn for so damned much! Now let's see if I can avoid offending my darling goddess for just five minutes. Now do NOT tell her about calling Kathy. Don't even think of it. That's your challenge, boy! Hear me?

ANAIS

I'm back.

FRIEDRICH

Cool! My turn for a little soul-soothing relaxation, if you don't mind, sweetie.... Do you?

ANAIS

Not at all.

(FRIEDRICH dons ear-buds.)

ANAIS

Girl, you're letting yourself turn into a religious ogre for no good reason! Look at your sweetie-pie! *(turning towards FRIEDRICH)* So handsome... *(facing ahead again; FRIEDRICH reacts to her comments as if telepathically)* and normally good-natured... Even-tempered... And what a great lover!

(FRIEDRICH smiles.)

Plus,he's a fantastic conversationalist. Girl, you learn something from him every single day. So what if he's not religious? Why care if he sometimes gets on your nerves? Look at how charming he is.... Everybody gets on everybody's nerves some of the time.

(FRIEDRICH nods.)

What difference will that make to a life together?

(She taps FRIEDRICH on the shoulder.)

Please take off the ear-buds. I have something to say to you. Let's just walk now.

(They walk.)

FRIEDRICH

Oh shit. Well, I have something to tell *you*.

ANAIS

You do? You go first.

FRIEDRICH

No you.

ANAIS

All right... *(pause)* Listen, I sometimes get in a snit... and... I don't appreciate you enough. So, you know... this is hard for me to say, so forgive me if I don't look at you... You know you occasionally drive me crazy don't you?

FRIEDRICH

Yeah. Sorry. My chakra gets tangled, and I....

ANAIS

Please, don't make fun of my New age-ey stuff now. There's something really positive I'm trying to say..... I'm startin' to have even stronger feelings for you, even if you are impossible.

FRIEDRICH

Cool.

ANAIS

Do what you want with that... it's up to you... or to both of us, I guess.... whether we want to appreciate that and deepen it... if it's mutual.... or just move on.

FRIEDRICH

Yeah.

ANAIS

Yeah is all?

FRIEDRICH

Only because I'm nervous.

ANAIS

About what?

FRIEDRICH

Well.... this is hard to say. Ooh! Here's the Shubin - let's see what's coming up.

ANAIS

I already have tickets for practically every show. Now out with it.

FRIEDRICH

Hey, you wanna tour the Magic Gardens? I've never, and--

ANAIS

No.

FRIEDRICH

Well, last night, remember you said you had to check your prescriptions for refills and you went into the bedroom? And I was watching Wipeout?

ANAIS

Yeah. And?

FRIEDRICH

Only I wasn't watching Wipeout. I heard you on the phone, and I was listening. I feel so bad about this....

ANAIS

You should. My own boyfriend -- eavesdropping!... And?

FRIEDRICH

And so I could tell you were talking to Kathy, about something real important -- like a big secret from your tone-- only I couldn't make out what about.... So I was very scared... that you were telling her you wanted to break up with me, or you had a new boyfriend. I was so scared!....So I called her later, when I went out for a walk. I forced her to tell me it was about any of those things.

ANAIS

A stupid thing to do.

FRIEDRICH

Yes... But I was insanely worried. And she promised me it wasn't about any of those things. So I was relieved.

ANAIS

That was very foolish of you.... to violate my privacy.

FRIEDRICH

I know, and I'm ashamed. But I still want to know -- why the secrecy? What was it about?

ANAIS

Well, I didn't want you to know this, because you worry so....I've been having abdominal pains, and I was thinking of seeing Dr. Frankel but I was scared about it. She encouraged me, said I should do it right away. So I did.

FRIEDRICH

And?

ANAIS

And I had a series of tests. Turns out to be nothing serious. Gastritis.

FRIEDRICH

Oh, thank Goodness!

ANAIS

Hey, you didn't thank the Unicorn!

FRIEDRICH

Not this time. So what's the treatment?

ANAIS

You'll appreciate this... Every other day, I need to have a great hot pastrami sandwich.

(They arrive back in front of the 4th Street Deli.)

FRIEDRICH

Isn't this the perfect place?

ANAIS

I'd say so. But I'm so sweaty!

FRIEDRICH

Fear not! And I brought these delicately scented moist towelettes. Lavender.

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FRIEDRICH

May I daub you?

ANAIS

Right here, in public? Well, South Street's funky. What the heck. Go ahead.

(FRIEDRICH daubs her sensually, beginning at her calves.

She leans over and caresses his cheek or head with a smile and says:)

Why thank you, Friedrich.

(FRIEDRICH hands her a small plush unicorn

that he has been secretly carrying.)

FRIEDRICH

Don't thank me. Thank the unicorn.

(Fade to black and he daubs and caresses her, while she strokes his head.)

THE END