

ct

Fables

What doesn't fit en the morals

de
Juan Pablo Heras

traducción de
Rick Hite

(fragmento en inglés)

Aesop

(RACHEL, a university undergraduate, is discovered on stage alone. She is just about to begin an assignment for a Speech class. Occasionally the teacher, whom we don't see, corrects her with a look.)

RACHEL

When do I start (. . .) Now Yes Is the projector ready (. . .) Jay, Pretty please. Push the button. (An image of Velázquez's Aesop is projected onto a screen.) Good. Awesome. (. . .) Yes. OK. OK. OK. It's . . . I'm just a little nervous. OK. I'm ready. OK This is Aesop. Right, Aesop. Cool. Probably really some guy Velázquez ran into on the street, gave a sandwich, dragged to his studio, threw some rags on, and painted. And then he painted in a book and up at the top put a name. You see it Right here. AESOPVS. Whatever. Aesop in Latin. The whole story. Diego Velázquez did this painting in sixteen . . . (Looks at her notes.) thirty eight. (. . .) I know I'm supposed to do it without notes. But it was only one date. You wouldn't fail me for that OK. OK. I won't look again. OK. Let's see . . . Well, in sixteen . . . thirty-eight Diego Velázquez does this painting for the king. For the king . . . (Just about to look at the sheet of notes but then resisting.) Philip . . . Philip . . . the Fourth!

Velázquez paints it to go in the Torre de la Parada, which was a place where the king went some times for a little R and R. And so, well . . . One would have to ask the question: why I mean, why do the king and Velázquez decorate up his hunting lodge with a painting of some guy so . . . so . . . like in rags Right In rags. Well, let just see. Aesop was a slave. Not for ever. But almost for his whole life he was a slave. Not during Philip the Fourth's time. No. No. A lot earlier. More than two thousand, five hundred years earlier. In Greece. And so, why do we even remember him Huh Because he was a slave who knew a lot more than his masters. And so that's why philosophers and kings took him into their service. Because Aesop knew how to give advice. He could tell people what they should do but without hassling them. (. . .) Without talking them to death. (. . .) And without being a pain in the . . . without being a pain. (. . .) Without being boring.

Is that better OK. And how'd he do that By telling fables, which were little stories with animals in them that talked and stupid people who were always putting their foot in it. And at the end of each fable there was a moral. It worked like this: one would have fun with the story about the little critters, with lots of yucks, ha, ha, ho, ho, and then, slam! the moral. (. . .) Sorry, Teach. Let's see. It was a way of getting people to learn something by having fun. Which a few teachers might take note of. (. . .) Sorry, again, teach. Anyway, Back to where we were. You could have thought that Philip the Fourth used to bust a gut laughing over fables and that's why he ordered Velázquez to do a painting of his favorite author.

But no. No, no, no. Have you ever taken a good look at that face That look of his, that tilt of the head . . . Aesop is telling us something . . . Or probably he's saying to the king (Putting on a male voice.): "Buddy boy, you're doing bad stuff, you're forgetting what I've been telling you . . ." Oh, no. Probably Velázquez figured that the portrait wouldn't spend its whole life in the king's hunting lodge and that someday we'd all be looking at it, so it's like saying to us (Same male voice.): "You still haven't understood anything. Over two thousand years I'm giving you advice and you're still doing the same stupid stuff. You dumbos." So, I don't know. (. . .)

OK. OK. I'm finishing up. There's one thing in Aesop's life that really gets my attention. Which is that he wasn't born already smart. I mean, nobody's born knowing everything, but it's like Aesop was . . . He was . . . I mean, the poor dude never talked or heard or thought stuff except what was on the mark just right. And, besides, he was a humpback . . .

(Light comes up on another part of the stage. We see an actor wearing a mask of AESOP who will mime from this point everything the student says.)

But then one day, while he was digging a ditch for his master, a priestess of the long lost goddess Isis appeared.

(A priestess of ISIS joins in the pantomime of Aesop.)

She saw Aesop and asked him if he knew which road led to the city. Aesop couldn't understand her or tell her anything. But when he saw how tired and hungry she was, he brought her some fruit and water and took her to a place to rest which just happened to be beside the road to the city. The priestess went on her way so happy that a few days later she came back to thank him. But this time what had looked like a priestess . . . was no longer one.

(The actress impersonating the priestess now becomes ISIS.)

She was Isis, the goddess. She approached Aesop and as a reward for his kindness, she offered him three gifts:

An ear able to understand all languages. Of men, of animals, and of gods.

A voice able to speak about everything that exists. Of past, of present, and of future.

And courage to say what some keep quiet and others will not hear.

(Lights go out on RACHEL and ISIS. AESOP straightens out of his humble posture into a more dignified one. He pulls off his rags uncovering contemporary clothing but still the worse for wear. He is now RACHEL's teacher.)

AESOP

Thank you, Rachel. A great job. Students. Don't forget that look (Indicating the painting.) This portrait is telling us something. We've probably been mistaken about some things over the past twenty-five hundred years. I mean, Aesop wrote the fables, of course, but every generation comes up its own morals. Probably what that look of his is telling us is that we shouldn't . . . What was it Frazzle. Hassle Don't hassle other people telling them what to do and instead try to start understanding one other. (. . .) I mean, how should I know what that look means I'll tell you a secret. The truth is, Isis didn't give Aesop only three gifts. (. . .) She gave him four. And the last one, dear students, was . . . immortality. (AESOP pulls out a book like the one in the painting and holds it exactly in the same position as in the portrait.)

(Blackout.)

1. The Lovestruck Lion and the Woodcutter / Fable

AESOP

A lion fell in love with the daughter of a woodcutter. So much in love that one day he approached the father to ask for her hand. The peasant, out of fear, could not refuse, but he set one condition: he would give him her hand if the lion had all his teeth pulled and was declawed. The lion felt so much love for the girl that he had both things done without complaint. But then the peasant lost all respect for him, so much so that when the lion reappeared, he beat him with a stick and drove him away.

So, yes, friends it's very pretty and very romantic to give up everything for love and renounce all you ever were. Yes, very pretty indeed! But what kind of love is it that will not allow us to be what we truly are What kind

(Blackout.)

The Lovestruck Lion and the Woodcutter / Scene

(A hallway in a high school. LEONARD, a student, somewhat withdrawn, stops midway along the hall hoping to see GRACE pass by. She is a pretty, captivating girl whom he obviously finds attractive. She happens to be wearing an eye-catching nose piercing. As she comes by, a sensual music swells up while LEONARD watches her completely overcome. The music suddenly stops. GRACE turns to LEONARD.)

GRACE

Leonard, is something wrong?

LEONARD

No.

GRACE

Ah. It looked like you wanted to ask me something. Do you have the notes from yesterday

LEONARD

Yes. I was in class.

GRACE

I didn't notice.

LEONARD

You had your nose pierced.

GRACE

Cool, isn't it I love piercings. (Bell sounds for class.) Later, Leonard.

(LEONARD looks at the audience. He smiles. Suddenly the HEAVY appears, rough looking and carrying a stool. He [or she] pushes LEONARD onto the stool with his back to the audience and does something to him. Then [s]he pulls LEONARD up, gives him a slap on the cheek, grabs stool and exits. LEONARD now wears a metal tongue piercing which he displays to the audience. The music heard before swells up again, and GRACE enters and crosses as before. This time LEONARD, more sure of himself, steps out and stops her. His pronunciation is so seriously altered by the piercing that it becomes necessary now for a TRANSLATOR to appear somewhere on stage holding up large, cardboard signs to let us know what LEONARD is trying to say. The TRANSLATOR might also indicate with facial gestures surprise at what LEONARD is trying to say.)

LEONARD

Hey ehhe. Buuwaahaall! (Hey there, beautiful!)

GRACE

What?

LEONARD

Hey oohh. Buuwaahaall! (Hello, beautiful!)

GRACE

I can't understand you, Leonard.

LEONARD

Ah yuss hod a peedsheen. (I just got a piercing.)

GRACE

A piercing In your tongue Awesome! Can you show me

LEONARD

Ih yoo wahhd zoo. Wes go ouw zonah zoo yoo caa zee izz. (If you want to. Let's go out tonight so you can see it.)

GRACE

What?

LEONARD

Ih yoo wahh zoo. Wes go ouw zonah.

(GRACE still doesn't understand but begins to show more interest in him.)

GRACE

It's been a long day, hasn't it?

LEONARD

Whyde. (Right.)

GRACE

What?

LEONARD

Ih zeeth whyd. Baa waath ith ith athh tha ennth of tha they Ih gethh thuu thee yoo ahhh... (I said right. But worth it if at the end of the day I get to see you and ...)

GRACE

I don't know what you're saying, but it must be something sweet.

LEONARD

You zzaa waaa hooth thweee. Yooow ssheechs aaaa wai tha saa thaaa whyzzes agh thaaa hoowhyzan aaaa iwoominethz my zool. (You're the one who's sweet. Your cheeks are like the sun that rises on the horizon and illuminates my soul.)

GRACE

You know what I think you're very cool to get your tongue pierced.

LEONARD

Aaaa theeeee maaazelth wayfwaythed enn yooo ayth. (And see myself reflected in your eyes.)

GRACE

But I can't understand a word you're saying.

LEONARD

Thaaaaath naaad imporzanth waann ithz zhaa haarth thaaa zpeakth. (That's not important when it's the heart that speaks.)

GRACE

Maybe you can take out the tongue ring for a while when we see each other tonight

LEONARD

Zaith aaa thone, thweehearhh. (Said and done, sweetheart.)

(GRACE exits. LEONARD jumps for joy. Music, "We Are the Champions" comes up but is cut off when the HEAVY appears again with two stools. He sets LEONARD down in one, and removes the barbell from his tongue and then exits leaving both stools side by side. GRACE re-enters and sits down on the other stool. Lights go to evening.)

GRACE

Well, Leonard . . . I never really noticed you. It's true. I just thought you were . . . you know, one more guy. But there's something, like, I don't know, that kind of makes you . . . different.

LEONARD

Yes. Well . . . Thanks.

GRACE

Did you like the movie?

LEONARD

Yeah.

GRACE

What was your favorite scene Mine was when they met at the top of the skyscraper . . . so romantic. What was yours

LEONARD

Yeah.

GRACE

Yeah, what

LEONARD

I mean, yeah. That part. That was my favorite . . . part. Yeah.

GRACE

Well, It's nice we agree. Isn't it?

LEONARD

Yeah. Nice.

GRACE

Does the hole in your tongue hurt with the thing's out

LEONARD

No.

GRACE

No. Not even a little

LEONARD

No.

GRACE

Doesn't your tongue hurt (Suggestively.) Wouldn't you like me . . . to make it feel better

LEONARD

No, don't worry. I'm fine.

GRACE

Ah.

LEONARD

Eeeee . . . Mmmm . . .

GRACE

Leonard? What?

LEONARD

No. Nothing.

GRACE

What were you saying to me this morning

LEONARD

This morning?

GRACE

Yeah. When we were leaving school.

LEONARD

Oh, yeah. Well, that your cheeks . . .

GRACE

My cheeks . . .

LEONARD

Your cheeks . . . The sun . . . They are . . . like . . . (Very softly.) so pretty.

GRACE

So what?

LEONARD

So pretty.

GRACE

My cheeks are pretty?

LEONARD

Yes. Well, no.

GRACE

No?

LEONARD

I mean, yes. But if it bothers you I said it, I mean, no.

GRACE

Oh, LEONARD

I think I understood you better when you had the barbell in your tongue.

LEONARD

You want me to put it back in

GRACE

If I asked you, would you put it back in

LEONARD

Yeah.

GRACE

And would you be OK with nobody understanding what you say . . . about me

LEONARD

Yeah.

GRACE

I mean, that you got the piercing done the other day just to please me.

LEONARD

Yeah. You think it's cool.

GRACE

Well, yeah, if you did it for you. But not if you did it just for me.

LEONARD

What Now I'm the one who doesn't understand.

GRACE

I like cats because they look like lions but they don't bite. And I don't like dogs because they're always waiting for you to tell them it's time to take a walk. Thanks for the movie, Leonard.

(GRACE exits. LEONARD stays put, staring into space.)

LEONARD

Grace! Wait! I didn't tell you: tomorrow I'm getting a tattoo! And I decided to do it all on my own. I thought you would . . . really . . . like it.

(Blackout.)