

You are full of energy today, so you decide to go to the cafe first and have some tea, and then go out and get something done. Maybe you'll get some shopping done. You don't know. Your days, which are like caramel mixing with chocolate, or lostness mixing with lostness, aren't about knowing or planning. Today you don't mind, because you are free.

You get your bag for going shopping. You could use a new shirt, or a new pair of slacks. No laptop today. You walk, thinking about the woman from some time ago named Angela, thinking about how you could help tutor kids through her program. Your mind is very much of this world, of this city.

Soon you make it to the door of Mitzi's Cafe, and step inside...

(waiting for margot ep. 8 -- starring YOU as EVERYONE.)

Julia and Brian greet you when they notice you, and you set your bag down at their table. They're playing Scrabble. Julia has just played PAT. You go over and order your lemongrass tea. The barista, a new person named Erin, puts the loose leaves (or stalks?) in a bag, pours scalding-hot water in the cup that will be yours, and immerses the bag in the water. Then she hands you the cup and you return to your friends.

You sit down and Brian plays APATHY.

YOU: "Apathy", that's funny. Today I feel like the opposite.

BRIAN: Yeah. I feel kind of apathetic.

JULIA: How does that feel for you?

BRIAN: I don't know. It's kind of hard to talk about. I guess it's like, there's nothing to do. There's no world out there.

JULIA: But there is a world.

BRIAN: Name one place in the world.

JULIA: The Hell Hills, where we saw the sunset after we went camping.

BRIAN: Name two places.

JULIA: The place we went camping.

BRIAN: What was it called?

JULIA: I guess... I don't remember...

BRIAN: You see what I mean?

YOU: It's weird, but you're right. The world barely exists to me too now.

BRIAN: So yeah, I care a lot. But there's nothing left to care about.

JULIA: We must be under some kind of delusion.

BRIAN: But how do we get out? Can we care our way out of it?

JULIA: I think we have to stop being ourselves. It's our only hope.

YOU: But if we stop being ourselves, then what? What's the point of living if you can't be yourself?

BRIAN: I think if we stop being ourselves, then we can adjust to the reality outside ourselves.

JULIA: And not being ourselves is a choice we can make... boy, I wish that were true.

YOU: I think being myself has been the main thing that made me a good person.

BRIAN: Same here. But paradoxically, now it makes us bad people.

YOU: Are we bad people?

BRIAN: I don't know. Maybe everything is as it is and will be as it will be. If there's a world outside of Mitzi's, it'll be okay. If there isn't, then nothing bad can happen to it.

YOU: No responsibility.

BRIAN: Exactly.

JULIA: What about God, Brian? Does God care?

BRIAN: God is why things are okay. Julia, what about the Universe? Does the Universe tell us things are okay?

JULIA: Yeah, but then we are smarter than the Universe sometimes, and see people in need. But not right now. Man, this is amazing.

YOU: Are we in heaven?

BRIAN: Here in Mitzi's? Has Mitzi's ever seemed like heaven to you?

YOU: No, and it doesn't seem so right now.

BRIAN: Maybe we're in hell.

JULIA: Brian, don't believers believe in an eternal life where everything's good?

BRIAN: Yes.

JULIA: Do you?

BRIAN: Usually.

JULIA: So you don't think this is it?

BRIAN: No.

JULIA: So how does heaven work? How can it be any better than this?

BRIAN: I don't know. But this is pretty good. Here we are. It's afternoon. It's golden. We're playing Scrabble. Are any of us in pain?

JULIA: No.

YOU: No.

BRIAN: So this is good. It's a beautiful day outside.

JULIA: So we're in heaven.

BRIAN: No, not at all. We're in a horrible place.

JULIA: Why?

BRIAN: Because this isn't the life God has given us.

JULIA: I don't believe in God, but I think I know what you mean. There's something empty and dead about this place, and it would still be empty and dead no matter how nice things were. Let's go outside and see if things look differently out there.

You all go outside, conscious that the  
Scrabble game remains for you to finish.  
Cars pass on the avenue. People walk by.  
Julia breaks the silence.

JULIA: There's less apathy and more world. But... the apathy is still here.

BRIAN: Sometimes I go two days at a time submerged in apathy.

YOU: I feel it too.

BRIAN: And it's beautiful. It's hard to argue with.

YOU: But yeah, I'm an atheist, and the best way I can describe it is that it's not the life given by God. I'm still terrified of death sometimes, but this is also bad.

BRIAN: Well, shall we go out and save the world?

JULIA: No, not today.

BRIAN: Then, I guess we're going to go back and finish our Scrabble game.

JULIA: But that would be too depressing.

BRIAN: Ah, so for the sake of our feelings, we're going to do things differently?

YOU: Yes, Brian, we're grieving that God is not speaking our lives to us.

BRIAN: Okay, let's go for a walk.

YOU: But the walk is just going to loop around back to home.

BRIAN: Perhaps a journey to a different place?

YOU: But after the journey, we will just have to go on another journey, and soon enough going on a new journey will just be turning back to home.

BRIAN: What if we continue our productive lives, working our jobs?

YOU: That's what we already do.

BRIAN: But we could work new jobs.

YOU: The new jobs would just become new journeys.

BRIAN: So there is nothing to be done but to return and finish our Scrabble game.

JULIA: No, I still want to take a walk.

BRIAN: Okay, why not?

YOU: Sure.

BRIAN: Let's get our stuff, then.

You return, gather your belongings, and

go out on the street. Soon enough, you encounter a homeless person asking for money. Brian roots around in his backpack and finds a dollar.

BRIAN: Here you go.

MAN: Thank you, God bless.

You walk some distance past.

BRIAN: Well, there is a world, after all.

YOU: Someday all the homeless people will have houses.

BRIAN: You have a point there. Maybe it was best that I only gave the man a dollar.

JULIA: Part of me feels like that is really horrible, but part of me understands.

YOU: Maybe it's not good to be understanding.

JULIA: What if we're the messed up, unfortunate people, and there are other people who get a big kick out of everyone being happy? So they don't need God to speak life to them.

BRIAN: Maybe God speaks life to them just in people being happy.

JULIA: So they're going to be happy someday, when we reach the end of time and everyone's happy.

BRIAN: They're going to be really happy.

JULIA: So we should just kill ourselves right in

front of them.

BRIAN: Why would we do that, Julia? That's crazy!

JULIA: Because that's what they want. They want us to die so that everybody who is alive can be happy. Since we can't be happy, the logical thing to do is to commit suicide so that everybody else can have a perfect reality.

BRIAN: Julia, I think we're being childish. The only way we can truly acknowledge our inferiority is by maturing past it.

JULIA: Brian. I've always been past this inferiority. And I still long for the life spoken by God.

BRIAN: You don't believe in God, but you long for God.

JULIA: If life could be given by the Universe, I'd prefer that.

BRIAN: You don't think life could be given by the Universe?

JULIA: I need the life that is given by the truest being, whom I love.

BRIAN: Why not love the Universe?

JULIA: The Universe is real. I know that. I don't know if God is real. How do you know that God is real?

BRIAN: I've seen things.

JULIA: How do you know they weren't from the Universe?

BRIAN: They spoke to me on the level of trust. I know that there is one God above all because everything has meaning, and only God could both be meaningful and convey meaning, and convey the meaning of himself and all things.

JULIA: A speech!

BRIAN: Yes, I wanted to say that sometime.

JULIA: Brian, are you caring about something right now?

BRIAN: Yes, Julia, I am.

YOU: "On the level of trust"?

BRIAN: Intellectually, I know that God exists as one being over all because only he could speak everything to me. But it doesn't speak to me on the level of what I trust in, so I don't trust the meaning that is everywhere. But the signs that I've seen, which might be from the Universe, seem more to me like they're from God, and they speak to me in a way that makes my body trust.

JULIA: But how do you know that those experiences weren't from the Universe? Or from many different spirits?

BRIAN: Maybe they were from many different spirits. But they were all working for God.

JULIA: Yeah, when things happen in my life that seem to be set up, it does make more sense to think that at least the spirits are all organized.

BRIAN: Yeah, the spirits are all working together, and they want me to think that God exists, and

because they are so trustworthy, I can trust more, and I'm able to trust what I experience fully, and thus see that everything is spoken by God.

JULIA: But you still don't feel like this life is given by God.

BRIAN: Part of the life given by God is the parts that don't seem like they're given by God.

YOU: The parts where you can't trust life?

BRIAN: Right, some parts of life I would trust, but God doesn't let me.

YOU: It's strange, I feel a little different now...

JULIA: Me too...

BRIAN: I think the apathy's lifting.

JULIA: Beth, you don't have your laptop bag with you.

YOU: Yeah, I was going to go shopping for clothes.

JULIA: Well, here's a thrift store. Do you want to see what's here?

BRIAN: I don't need anything, so you two can go in there. I'll be back at Mitzi's.

YOU: Okay, maybe we'll head there when we're done.

JULIA: Bye!

BRIAN: Bye.

Brian walks away and you and Julia step into the store. The store has a number of racks of clothing, organized into men's, women's, and children's sections.

JULIA: What are you looking for?

YOU: A new shirt and some slacks.

JULIA: I'm not sure what I want... I'm not sure I wanted anything until I saw the opportunity.

YOU: What are we going to do with our lives, Julia?

JULIA: What do you mean?

YOU: Now that the apathy's lifted.

JULIA: I don't know. That was really weird.

You leaf through some shirts and find one you think might work.

JULIA: I like the color on that one.

YOU: It really does stand out.

JULIA: You want to be more colorful in the near future?

YOU: I think so.

JULIA: Thinking of bringing joy into somebody's life? A stranger, though, not a boyfriend.

YOU: Why not a boyfriend?

JULIA: Boyfriends want something different,

something more complicated and subdued.

YOU: Brian was telling me about this philosopher named Emmanuel Levinas who said something like "uncertainty turns people on".

JULIA: Yeah, boyfriends want that. They don't want you to be a breath of fresh air.

YOU: Julia, have you ever gotten past a first date, in your life?

JULIA: No. I found the same guy and I've been dating him in different forms for my whole dating life.

YOU: Have you ever tried dating someone different?

JULIA: Yeah, and it's always the same guy.

YOU: Maybe if you dated the same guy twice, he'd be different.

JULIA: No, I tried that and he was even more the same, and the date was still a first date. And then the next time I called him, his name was different and his voice was different, but he was the same guy and we had a first date. Hey, this looks nice, and I think it's in my size.

YOU: It's different than my shirt, but it has the exact same feel to it.

JULIA: Perfect for lifting up strangers, but not boyfriends.

YOU: Because boyfriends don't want lifting up?

JULIA: Maybe sometimes they do.

YOU: I had a boyfriend once who wasn't into darkness at all.

JULIA: Did you ever have sex?

YOU: Yes, sometimes.

JULIA: Sometimes? Okay, that makes sense. Sex is all about darkness -- not necessarily evil, but darkness.

YOU: It wasn't like that for us.

JULIA: Then what was it like?

YOU: It was just... nice.

JULIA: What happened to this guy?

YOU: I don't know, we kind of lost interest in each other.

JULIA: Are you still in touch?

YOU: Sometimes.

JULIA: You should ask him out! Wearing that shirt because apparently that turns him on.

YOU: I have to try it on first.

JULIA: Oh, yes, that would be wise.

YOU: Maybe darkness is what bonds people together.

JULIA: Yeah. Mutual hunger is dark.

YOU: But sometimes you find people that you want to be with because you're not hungry for them. And I think the way to find those people would be by wearing a shirt like this.

JULIA: If you're not hungry for them, why would you seek them out? Wouldn't you at least be hungry for the lack of hunger you feel for them?

YOU: It's a different thing, you just feel the word "yes" toward someone. It's a really simple thing. Sometimes you can hunger for someone on one level and have the simple "yes" toward them on another.

JULIA: That ex-boyfriend, did you hunger for him and feel the "yes" for him?

YOU: Yes, at first. But then I got over the hunger.

JULIA: And then you drifted apart...

YOU: Yeah... Well, maybe we have to decide to be together.

JULIA: You said it, not me.

YOU: Why do you want me to be with him again?

JULIA: I don't know, I guess it's an instinct.

YOU: Yeah, maybe you want someone you like to pass on her genes.

JULIA: Or maybe I got the vibe that he would make you really happy and that would make me happy. I get selfish sometimes, craving other people to change their lives so that I can be happy.

YOU: That's interesting. What if it wasn't the life the Universe wanted them to live?

JULIA: You mean that God wanted them to live?

YOU: Yeah, I guess I really meant that.

JULIA: I don't know.

YOU: I wish I could be happy in the world where everyone was happy without God, but I can't be.

JULIA: Same here.

YOU: It's weird that we don't believe in God.

JULIA: I think maybe we do, we just don't believe he exists.

YOU: Yeah, that's weird, but it feels true.

JULIA: Maybe he does exist, I don't know.

YOU: Yeah, I've thought of myself as an agnostic before, but then I think "Honestly, I believe that God doesn't exist.", so I think I'm an atheist.

JULIA: I can be happy with everything being happy, in theory, but when I see everything happy around me, and I get each of the individual happy things in my life, like sometimes, when I have the right past, and I'm in the right moment, everything lines up, then I'm happy, but there's something in me that wants something beyond happiness.

YOU: Maybe what we want is meaning more than happiness.

JULIA: Yeah, like it's not that meaning makes us happy, but that meaning is about itself. And it does make us happy when we connect to meaning, but it's not about ourselves. Speaking of which, you seem to have a pair of slacks and a shirt, and I have a shirt, and this thrift store was not made for talking as loudly as we do when we get into things.

YOU: You're right. We should try on these clothes.

You each go to the little stalls set aside for changing and enter and shut the respective doors. There's a full-length mirror on one wall of the stall and you change into the clothes, which fit you fine, and contemplate your image. Yes. This works. You change back into your previous clothes and step outside the stall, where Julia waits for you.

YOU: Okay, ready to go?

JULIA: Yeah.

You go to the cash register and pay for your new belongings, and then Julia does the same.

Then you walk out onto the street and head back toward Mitzi's.

YOU: I wonder what Brian will think about our shirts.

JULIA: Hm... he seems like someone who wouldn't be that impressed by them.

YOU: Do you think he's attracted to darkness, or

light?

JULIA: Is it possible to prefer neither?

YOU: Yeah, I don't know about Brian.

You arrive at Mitzi's after a bit, but Brian isn't there, so you walk back out into the sunshine. Julia finds her car and you part there, and you walk back home.

You try to make sense of everything that happened that day, as you cook some dinner, listening to jazz on the radio. You eat, listening to the announcer tell the history of the song you just heard. The sun is still fairly high in the sky -- you're somewhere between spring and summer. You can't help but think of yourself living in the golden afternoon at the end of the world. Is this apathy, or is it beauty? You know that right now there are millions upon millions of hungry people. There are wars. You could do something about these problems, if you cared. But you're in a beautiful place, and you feel as though none of the starving people or the people being shot at would begrudge you this beauty. Beauty is what lets life be what it is, with all of its joy and suffering.

You clean up after dinner and clean your apartment some, and start to thinking about what you can do with your life. What can you do about the people who starve? Maybe you can do something for those kids in Angela's program. The easy thing is just to live your life as it is, having reached this point in life. You

were always a loving person, but not as loving as what the world calls for. At this point in life, your life is what it is, and it took some effort in your younger life to get it to be that way. It looked like it might not be what it was. So now that it was what it was, how could it be anything otherwise? You have to make yourself think these thoughts. Naturally, you're still suffused with the beauty of the fading evening. You want to have an internal conflict over this, but your days of ready internal conflict seem to be done. And no one begrudges you this. You are a gentle woman, with perspective on life. People like you the way you are, and you could hardly change even if you wanted to go against them.

Thinking these kinds of thoughts, you wish you had some kind of assurance that you were living the life that you were supposed to, that even the starving people were in God's hands. But it would be hard to see things that way, either. When you were young, you were afraid you would deceive yourself by believing that God would take care of everything, and you wouldn't do your part, in a world where people really do need saving by people. But now you aren't afraid of that. It might be because you yourself aren't that different from someone who puts everything in God's hands. It might be because you have learned to not fear, have gotten past that aspect of yourself, and now you can't fear even when you might wish you could fear. Or you might

just not be afraid.

You get in bed with the lights off and keep thinking, and then try listening to a podcast to get away from this thinking that won't stop, but won't move you. Eventually, you become drowsy and sleep.

[closing theme]

WAITING FOR MARGOT  
Episode 8 "Shopping"  
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## COMMENT

1. You would think that Julia would know everything, from all the pasts she's had, but she doesn't.

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