

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Excerpt

by Peter Cavell

...

D: Hey, I have an idea! Instead of following the script, can we try some improv?

J: Improv? I don't know...

D: Come on, it'll be great! Besides, this is a brand-new script, nobody will notice if we invent some of the lines. Let's do it! Okay, first we need a location.

J: The wilderness.

D (*getting excited*): Right, the wilderness. And we'll need an emotion.

J: Hungry.

D: Great! Finally, a profession...

J: The Son of God.

D: All right! So the Son of God is in the wilderness, and he's hungry... (*Pause. D deflates, then continues grumpily.*) Fine, I get it. You don't want to play.

J (*sympathetically*): I'm sorry, we just really need to stick to the script right now. This is a really important scene. (*Pause.*) Did I ever tell you the parable of the Two Actors?

D (*curious, but still a little sulky*): No.

J: There were once two actors. One day, their master called them to him and said that he was going on a journey. He gave them each a monologue and told them to learn it, to perform at a great feast upon his return. The first actor diligently rehearsed his part every day, and was off book in less than a week. He spent hours running lines in front of a mirror, and polishing each gesture and nuance. The second actor, however, buried the script in a hole in the ground, announcing that he could write a better one. Instead of rehearsing, he spent his days sleeping, and his nights hanging out in bars with his other actor friends. When the master returned both actors performed at the feast. The first actor moved everyone to tears with his performance. The master gave him a starring role in his next production, and he went on to have a rich and successful career. The second actor, having not learned the script, decided to wing it. He stood up on stage and asked if there was anyone there from out of town. The crowd booed and heckled. The master, in his wrath, declared that the second actor was finished in this business, and that he would never work again. And so he spent the rest of his days waiting tables in a second-rate bistro.

(*Pause.*)

D: You know, that's not one of your best. I've heard you tell much better parables than *that*.

J: Yes, I know. But the point is —

D: No, I get it. We have to stick with the script.

...