

Chiquita.

A Play in One Act

Maya Jaffe

SETTING

An all-white room. There is a large rectangular table with several chairs on center stage, also all completely white. Sitting on the table is a single banana. A and B sit at the table.

CHARACTERS

A a male philosopher
B another male philosopher

TIME

When they have nothing better to do.

SCENE ONE: 11:47 AM, A DISCOVERY

B

Yellow.

A

Yes.

B

Pale yellow.

A

But with small, light brown spots, varying in size and shape.

B

Yes.

A

and?

B

and with a hint of green at the top.

Slightly curved.

A

A minor arch, not a half-circle, something more subtle. A faint bend.

B

Not perfectly round either.

A

It all comes together in a stem at the top.

B

The stem ends in a fibrous brown edge.

A

Seven inches in total length, give or take.

B

Not bad.

A

Firm to the touch, but gives way when pressure is applied.

B

The brown spots are softer.

A

Smooth. Smooth when you run a finger down the side.

B

Easily marked with pressure, color changes when you scratch the side or press down too hard.

A

and it smells?

B

slightly sweet. The smell is stronger in the darker areas, specifically the brown spots. The yellow spots have just a hint of scent whereas the brown spots are pouring with it.

A

and when you look closely?

B

There is a faint grain on the outside. Under the surface, there are threadlike lines going up the length of it. They're more prominent in the aged spots.

A

What are we missing?

B

Taste?

A

(excited at the prospect of a new discovery)

Hmm! Yes, very good!

(A picks up the banana and inspects it for a moment. Then he licks it from bottom to top. Slowly. Focused. It's not peeled yet so he's licking the outside. He really cares about this. It's suggestive. He does not care.)

No distinguishable taste on any yellow area.

(He licks a brown spot with the tip of his tongue, like a little too much. Like with some hefty tongue wiggling)

No distinguishable taste on the brown spots either.

B

Interesting.

(B holds the banana up to his ear, like he's going to listen to it. He pauses in this position and notices A looking at him. A looks like a thought has occurred to him and reaches out to reposition the banana in B's hand. He positions it to look like a phone. A and B look at the banana phone in B's hand for a moment as if they've just discovered something. Then they abruptly shake their heads "no" and go back to how the banana was before. B listens to it for a beat)

No distinguishable sound. Completely silent.

A

Silent because it's incapable of making a noise or because it is not at this moment in time making noise?

B

Unclear.

A

So, what is it?

B

All signs would point to it being a banana.

A

Yes. But is it?

B

I suppose it depends on how one would choose to define banana. Is there a universal definition that one must adhere to when making such a decision?

A

Yes, I would say there is. If we don't adhere to universal standards then there is no truth. No standard definition means anyone or anything can claim to be something they are not. If we don't follow the universal standard of a "banana", then what is stopping me from claiming you are a banana and that thing on the table is a pen?

B

Why is there harm in that? There is no substantial effect on me if you were to decide I was a banana. Your deeming me a banana would not change my form, I would remain human.

A

But if I called you banana then I wouldn't recognize you as a man!

B

That sounds like your own problem, not to mention a fault in your observational skills.

A

But I—

B

Must I be defined by other people to retain validity?

A

Yes!

B

No, that was clearly rhetorical!

SCENE TWO: 12:14 PM, THE FUNCTION

B

Maybe it is a pen.

A

Excuse me?

B

Maybe it is a pen. After all, what is the function of a pen? To write? If this banana in question could write, would that make it a pen?

A

No, not if the proper purpose of the item is to be a banana.

B

Then how does one know the “true” function of an object?

A

Each object has an essence which allows us to know its function. The essence of a pen is not the same as the essence of a banana.

B

But what creates the object’s essence?

A

It is inherent in the object’s existence.

B

So which came first? The object or the essence of the object?

A

The essence.

B

Wrong.

A

Excuse me?

B

You argue that objects all have an inherent essence that makes them what they are and gives them their function. That means both the object and its essence must come into being at the same time. Otherwise, you have the essence come first, with nowhere to go or the object comes first and if it is without essence then it is not itself yet. They have to exist simultaneously for your argument to have any weight.

A

I disagree, the essence could exist first, and be thrust into the object when it comes into being.

B

Thrust into the object by whom?

A

Maybe that is not for us to know.

B

If your argument is lacking in merit, you can say just say that.

A

Arrogance is not a strength.

...

B

Fine, then what is the essence of a banana?

A

Well, what is its function?

B

Food. Nutrition.

A

Yes.

B

So a banana's purpose is to be food. To be eaten.

A

Yes.

B

So if a banana is unappetizing does it cease to be a banana?

A

No, food can be unappetizing. “Unappetizing” is an opinion, not a state of being.

B

Okay. Then if it's inedible. Is it no longer banana?

A

Uh- ...

B

Exactly! So you're wrong. Function cannot be the defining characteristic of an object because it can lose its function without becoming something else.

A

Fine! Then how do you know that that is a banana?

B

Assumption and context. Based on all we have observed up to this point, I would be confident in deeming this object a banana, at least until counter-evidence is provided.

A

So open it.

SCENE THREE: 12:48 PM, THE OPENING

(B picks up the banana, holds it in one hand, and uses the other hand to grab the stem. Slowly, but with purpose, he pushes the stem back until it snaps open the peel. But he does not peel it at all. He stops with the stem pushed back. He examines the hole.)

A

What is inside it?

B

A banana.

A

Describe it. Explain why you think it's a banana.

B

It looks like the top of one. It's a subtle pale yellow, the peel is clearly defined against the fruit. It's soft, slightly mushy-looking. Its smell is stronger, now that the peel is open.

A

Shall you peel it more before you decide for certain?

B

Alright.

(He peels back the banana peel by the stem, until about halfway. At this point, only the side of the peel that connects to the stem is peeled back, so the banana peel is still on $\frac{2}{3}$ of the banana.)

A

See that? There are flimsy string-like sections of the object that come off the outer peel. They run up and down the length of the inner fruit.

B

Yes. The inside of the peel itself is textured, almost like it has a layer of flesh on itself.

A

Interesting.

B

I'm going to open it more.

A

Yes, good.

(B peels the rest of the peel to about halfway down the banana.)

B

The inside holds its shape.

A

But the outer shell doesn't. It flops down.

B

And if I tried to put it back, the outer section will not re-adhere to the inner.

A

The inner flesh is mostly uniform, though it has some spots which are darker, wetter, and stickier than the rest.

B

Said spots correlate with the dark bruises on the outer peel, meaning that with enough pressure, one could alter the inside object from the outside.

(B peels the banana fully so that now the banana and the peel are two separate objects).

B

There are two now. Two objects. Which is what? Which is the banana now? Are they both? Have we suddenly created two bananas? Or has one ceased to become a banana somehow?

A

I don't know.

I suppose if one has ceased to become a banana, then its purpose must have changed.

I'm not sure what I believe.

B

Can we deem one of them a banana? With one hundred percent certainty?

A

Not yet, though I am closer than before, now that we've inspected the inside to some degree. I'm not sure we have been thorough enough, though.

B

(holding up the banana)

Stiff.

(holding up the peel)

Limp.

A

How does it make you feel? Are you hungry?

SCENE FOUR: 1:03 PM, A TASTING

(A and B are sitting, both holding half of the banana.
They're looking very intently at their halves, a bit unsure of
how exactly to proceed.)

A

It's sort of slimy.

B

Yet also strangely.. fluffy?

A

Soft.

B

Has lines and indents running down its length.

A

Reaches a point at the end.

B

Nearly a perfect circle in diameter. Rounder than it was with the peel still on.

A

(A slowly licks his half of the banana up its length. It's
fairly sexual.)

There is a taste. When licking, there is a taste that was not there when the outside was
still intact.

B

(runs his half of the banana under his nose while inhaling
deeply and loudly)

The smell is stronger and comes from the entire surface of the object.

A

(breaks off a piece of the banana)

Breaks off easily and is dented by pressure.

(He takes a small nibble off the newly broken-off piece and makes a big deal of chewing it like one of those rich old white men doing a wine tasting. He chews it, tastes it, swishes it around in his mouth, and smacks his lips, it's gross)

Interesting texture. Becomes smooth in your mouth when chewed, almost puree-like.

(he takes another bite and does the same gross stuff)

Keeps some lumps though.

B

(B takes a bite. Does not do nearly as many gross things)

Subtly sweet. Tropical taste, like fruit.

A

But not juicy like most fruit.

B

No, it isn't. It's more creamy.

A

(A takes the piece that he broke off and took bites of and smashes it between his fingers. Like, a lot.)

Moist. Wet, really.

B

(disgusted)

Very observant.

A

(A takes a bite out of his half, but from the side. He creates clear bite marks in it)

Impressionable. Gets marks from biting. Easily shaped by specific pressure.

B

(B holds his half really close to his ear and breaks it again, slowly)

It makes a small noise when broken in half. It's like a faint ripping or shredding.

A

(A puts down any banana that he was holding and picks up the peel)

What about this?

B

The outer shell.

A

Yes.

B

Well, it's not stiff. It doesn't hold its shape as we discovered earlier. It's technically still in one piece. It's ripped all down the sides but it's held together by the nub at the bottom.

A

Yes, what else?

B

(B picks up the peel from the bottom where it's held together and violently shakes it so that it flaps around)

Flimsy, very flimsy. And makes a small noise if shaken. Makes no noise when not moving.

A

Reminiscent of melancholy.

B

...okay

SCENE FIVE: 1:19 pm, A CONVERSATION

(B gets out of his chair, taking the banana peel with him.
He drops it on the ground.)

B

Makes a noise when dropped on the ground.

A

Reminiscent of “splat”

B

Step on it.

A

Good idea.

(A steps on it. Nothing. He jumps on it and slides a little).

Slippery.

B

Really?

A

Oh yes. Watch.

(A jumps on it again and slides a little again. Then he looks around the room like he's thinking. He moves to the edge of the stage, then, as composed as possible, like this is something that really matters, he takes a running start from the edge of the stage to the banana peel and slips on it. Then he gets back up, pleased with himself).

See?

B

Yes, I do, slippery indeed.

A

Almost dangerous.

(A picks up the banana peel and puts it back on the table.
He stares at it for a moment.)

A

Hello.

(Nothing).

Yes, you. Hello.

(Nothing).

Oh! Excuse me!

Hola.

Bonjour.

Shalom.

Guten Tag.

(Nothing).

I suppose I do not know the language it speaks. If it does speak.

B

Or maybe it's just mad you stepped on it.

A

Oh, my apologies.

(Nothing).

Nope, I don't think it speaks.

B

Maybe the inside speaks.

A

Very thorough!

Hello.

(Nothing) (duh)

No, I suppose not. Disappointing.

B

Yes, very.

A

That is unless it is speaking but we can't hear it.

B

What?

A

Maybe its voice is at a decibel that the human ear cannot register.

B

Or it just can't speak.

A

Well, how would we know?

B

It doesn't have vocal cords. Or a brain.

A

Unless it does and we just can't observe them.

B

Because they're invisible to the human eye?

A

Yes! Maybe!

Though I suppose you are correct in that it has no observable vocal cords or speaking capabilities. Although...

(A takes a moment to look at the banana peel, then he begins to tap it. He taps out a specific rhythm. After a few times of doing it, B realizes it is SOS in Morse code)

B

Are you trying to speak to it in Morse code?

A

Yes.

B

But why SOS?

A

Maybe it needs help! Or will talk to us if it thinks we need help!

B

Or maybe it's a banana peel.

A

We have to thoroughly explore all our options.

Perhaps it does not speak a man-made language!

B

oh no.

A

(A barks at the banana. Yes, he barks.)

Ruff Ruff!

B

It's not a dog!

A

But we don't know that!

SCENE SIX: 1:37 pm, THE ENDING?

(A woman enters. She's dressed kind of officially, maybe like a nurse, maybe like a scientist. She walks up to the table with a tray in her hands. She silently puts all the remnants of the banana on the tray, wipes up any mess made, and then without looking at either A or B, puts an apple down on the table between them. She exits the side opposite her entrance.)

A

Red.

B

yes, bright red.

THE END