Why We Can't Have Nice Things

by Lloyd Suh

Bobby and Andy (any age, any gender, any ethnicity) at home. Bobby is on a laptop or something. Andy might be reading or something.

BOBBY
Babe, look at this.

ANDY
What is it.

BOBBY
Come here and look.

ANDY
But I'm super comfortable right now can you just tell me what it is?

BOBBY
It's this thing I think I'm gonna order. Rare out of print vintage artifact luxury deluxe heirloom collector's edition antique.

ANDY
Nope.

BOBBY
It's twenty percent off.

ANDY
Bobby no.

BOBBY
But look at it!

ANDY
I don't need to look at it!

BOBBY
But baby I want it.

ANDY
Bobby you cannot have it.
BOBBY
Yeah but why not?

ANDY
Because, baby. You. You are too clumsy.

Silence.

BOBBY
I’m too clumsy?

ANDY
You are catastrophically clumsy.

BOBBY
And you’re not?

ANDY
Fair point, I am also clumsy.

BOBBY
Epically clumsy.

ANDY
True. And so. We cannot have such things.

Silence.

BOBBY
Free shipping though.

ANDY
Bobby.

BOBBY
Okay so we’re clumsy! So what? This means we can’t have nice things? Ever? Not even for a little while, not even if we take precautions, if we buy a case for it, get it insured, if we put it somewhere out of the way of our regular pathways yet near enough where we might still enjoy it?

ANDY
Let’s not forget that one thing we got from that one guy at that one place that one time.

BOBBY
What about it?
ANDY
Cataclysmically destroyed.

BOBBY
So?

ANDY
Do you remember how it got destroyed?

BOBBY
Because of our clumsiness.

ANDY
Because of our clumsiness. And what about that delicate matching one of a kind artisanal decorative set we once had?

BOBBY
Also clumsiness.

ANDY
And so.

BOBBY
Yeah okay but babe. I don't regret getting those things. I don't regret having those things. Even though they were destroyed, even though it was sad, I remember them fondly. My life - our life, babe - was better. Is better. Because we have the memory of once having those those memorable, remarkable, very nice things. Don't you think?

ANDY
This is precisely the difference between you and I.

BOBBY
No it’s not. I don’t believe that. I don’t believe you believe that. I think you might think you believe that but you don’t believe that really. Because if we had never had any nice things at all, if all we ever did was consider our clumsiness and live our lives in fear of the things we might knock over and destroy, then I think you would somehow feel... I don’t know, like a hollowness inside. You might not be able to articulate it, but you would feel like you hadn't really lived. You would feel the emptiness, the absence of nice things, the lack of adventure in your life. Even if it's a kind of adventure that inevitably leads to catastrophe. Because I think, if you never give yourself permission to stretch the limits of what you consider yourself capable of, well then babe I think you'll look back - you'll look back on your life. You'll look back on this day, and you will feel... yes, you will feel regret. But no. Even more than
regret. You will feel shame. A deep, metaphysical, cosmic, existential, shameful emptiness.

Silence.

ANDY
I seriously cannot talk to you when you're shopping, babe.

BOBBY
But how can you live like this?! I mean come on don’t you want nice things too?

ANDY
I have nice things, you philistine! You pecuniary, literal-minded goober! Because yes I remember the thing from the guy at the place, but I don't remember fondly the thing itself, babe, I remember instead the moment. The look on your face when we got it, the way the sun hit your hat and the texture of your hands when I held them in the plaza. That was the nice part. Not the thing. Not the thing, you weirdo. And sure the matching set of rare delicate out of print was nice, it was very nice, but not as nice as the experience, the experience not the thing. Right?

BOBBY
Yeah but the thing makes the experience more fun, doesn’t it?

ANDY
I dunno maybe sometimes babe but it doesn’t have to, does it? It only matters if you want it to matter. I like your face when it’s happy, that doesn’t mean I need a thing to make your face happy. Unless you need a thing to make your face happy. But even if your face does need a thing to be happy, it doesn’t mean that I liked the thing just because I liked your face. So... yeah, if you need the thing then I'll get the thing, but if you don't need the thing - if I can make your face happy without the thing then I can spare us both the inevitable sad face to come from the thing, the sad face that shows its face whenever our everlasting clumsiness causes the inevitable destruction.

BOBBY
Did you just say you'll get the thing?

ANDY
Sure. Sure, babe, if you want the thing babe I'll get the thing babe, but just keep in mind that I don't want the thing. Because this entire world is built to break. Right? Our societies, our cities, our bodies, our identities. We plant trees and those trees die, we raise up puppies that one day become old dogs, everything, our lives, our ecosystem, the oceans, the skies, the fruits of our labor and the interior designs of our apartments, they are temporal and fragile in the face of our collective human clumsiness, so I don’t need fragile things to remind me of this truth, this cosmic joke; all I care about is... is... the point. The point to all of this, the only thing that matters is what it feels like when it’s happening. And I don't mean if it feels good or bad, good
feelings and bad feelings are too fragile too; I'm talking about meaning. If it feels like it means something then it means something. And that's all I want, babe. I want to mean something, I want the things I do, the thoughts I think the feelings I feel, I want them to... to.... to not be... meaningless.

Silence.

BOBBY
I don't understand what that has to do with anything, babe, but. I think you're sweet.

ANDY
Shut your face.

BOBBY
Wow you love me so much.

ANDY
Shut your stinky goober face.

BOBBY
I think you just said I give your life meaning.

ANDY
I just - I can't even with you babe.

BOBBY
But you do love me.

Silence.

ANDY
I really do.

BOBBY
You're such a cheeseball.

ANDY
And you're a stinky goober face.

BOBBY
I love you too.

Silence.

ANDY
Alright babe, I think you should go ahead and order the thing.
BOBBY
Yeah, about halfway through our conversation I already did.

Silence.

ANDY
Okay.

Silence.

Bobby goes back to the laptop or something, and Andy goes back to the book or something.

BOBBY
Ha!, hey babe they also have this other thing on sale that

ANDY
Nope.

End of play.