

Pas de Deux

A Short Play in a Prologue, four Scenes and an Epilogue for two performers

Characters

Y – in the mid sixties, from Europe. Educated in the arts.

Thoughtful, expressive, and searching for connection. Grew up in a structured, academic household. Carries a sense of responsibility and emotional openness.

Z – in the mid thirties, from Africa. Grew up in a rural setting with a strong work ethic. Finished High School. Reserved in speech but expressive through action. Loyal, proud, and sometimes overwhelmed by emotional complexity.

Prologue

(A shaded area outside the house. Late afternoon. A pause. A small breeze. The leaves rustle like whispers. Y and Z are standing – the air between them filled with unspoken things.)

(Y steps a little closer, not touching.)

Y: Why don't you say anything?

Z: There is nothing I have to say.

(A bird calls. They both glance upward. Then silence again.)

Scene 1

(On the veranda. A soft breeze. The young dog whines in the background.)

Y(*softly*): The gate was open. I thought you'd taken the dog with you. But she came back alone.

Z: I am back.

Y: There was no sign of you. No sound. Just the gate, breathing with the wind.

Z: I said "I go out."

Y: Yes. As if that should still hold all the meanings it once did.

(Pause. The sound of birds. A car passes far off.)

Z: What do you mean by that?

Y: Sometimes I talk to you just to feel there's still something between us. I try to share my thoughts with you. But you, you never explain yourself. Like I am not worth your words.

Z: What should I explain? I am not your student. Nor your shadow. I don't owe you any explanation.

Y: That is not what I mean. We are not on court.

But you never ask me anything, like I am a nobody?

(Y shrugs. Looks away.)

Z: I depend on you too much. That is the problem. You want my thoughts dressed up in your kind of words. I don't live in ideas.

(Pause. Voices from neighbours)

Y: What do you need?

(Z hesitates.)

Z: To be enough—without you looking at me like I'm behind.

Y: *(almost a whisper)* And I need not to feel like I am too much.

(Pause. They are still. The light is golden now.)

Z: Do you want to change me?

Y: Yes, sometimes I wish you were more flexible.

Z: How?

Y: In your way of thinking. But that will be another play.

(They look at each other for a moment.)

Z: I don't know how to meet you where you are.

Y: At the moment I am here in this play.

Z: Maybe we don't speak the same language. Even when we use the same words.

Y: For sure silence is a language too. But me, I won't live only in it. I need to communicate through words.

Scene 2

(Same veranda. But now the air is thick. The heat is more oppressive. Both are standing. Both tired. But neither willing to leave first.)

Y: Why do you look at me like I've wronged you? I came back from a long journey. But you behave like I never traveled.

Z: You come with plans. With rules. With money. Not with space.

Y: Space? You always tell me you are fine with this house.

Z: Do you know what it's like to be looked at like a project?

(Y steps back. Hurt.)

Z: You think because I am quiet, I feel nothing.

But I'm full. Full to the top. And you keep pouring.

(Pause. Y steadies.)

Y: You know I want no perfection. Not obedience. Just... to be met. Halfway.

Z: Then stop walking ahead.

(A wind rises. The tension breaks slightly.)

Y: I'm tired, Z. Of feeling invisible beside someone who is right there.

(They hold the moment. Neither wins. Neither walks away.)

Scene 3

(Evening. The sky deepens. The gate is closed, but not latched. A breeze carries kitchen sounds faintly. One lightbulb hums. Y is standing near the table. Z stands, arms folded, looking away.)

Y: I didn't mean to start another argument. I just wanted to explain.

Z: You explain too much.

Y: I know. It's how I make sense of things.

Z: You want to make sense of me.

Y: No... I want to know you.

Z: *(Speaking low)* And when I don't talk, you get tired of me.

Y: No, I get desperate. I get tired of trying alone.

Z: *(Beat)* I painted the gate, brought the dog, took care of the house. But still—it's not enough.

Y: It is something. However, we have to continue.

Z: You want someone who performs. Who always entertains.

Y: No. But when you look bored, when you wait for me to lead everything—I feel alone.

I want someone who stands with me.

(Silence. Z sits. Y stays standing.)

Y: Do you love me?

Z: *(Shrugs)* Love. You say that word a lot.

Y: Because I need to feel it.

Z: I am there. I feed the dog. I fix things.

Y: That's love for you?

Z: Sometimes. Yes.

(Pause. Y softens.)

Y: Then, please tell me when you're tired. When you're hurt. What you would like to do. I need your input. Don't vanish.

Z: You talk like I disappear. I don't.

Y: But you go far in your silence.

(Silence. Z looks at Y. Y looks back. Not angry now. Just honest. Lights fade.)

Scene 4

(Night has fallen. The veranda is lit by a small lamp. Crickets sing. The garden is quiet. There's a sense that time has passed—maybe an hour, maybe a year.

Z sits on the edge of the veranda. Y stands a few steps behind Z, barefoot. There's space between them, but not distance.)

Z: Why do you always talk about past relationships?

Y: It is part of me. Something I want that you know about me. That is me.

(A pause. The wind stirs the trees.)

Y: I didn't know how much the sun would mean to me, until I lived in its center.

Z: *(Shrugs, a little smile)* You always say that. Every time the sun touches your arms.

(Pause)

Y: You fixed the gate again.

Z: It was stuck.

Y: I saw. Did you paint the railing too?

Z: Yes.

(Y nods. Silence.)

Y: Thank you.

Z: I do things.

Y: Yes. I see them. But sometimes I wish you'd see what I am doing too.

Z: *(Quietly)* I talk less. That doesn't mean I don't see what you are doing.

Y: I know. But when you say nothing... I start to feel like I disappear.

Z: You are loud in your head.

Y: Yes. I'm always wondering. There is a lot in my head. I want to know.

Z: I am here.

Y: *(Smiles gently)* Yes. You are.

(Silence. The dog shifts. Z kneels to pet it. Y watches. Then sits on the step beside Z. They don't touch.)

Y: There's always something to fix. Maybe the trick is to do it side by side, not to blame who broke it.

Z: Or who saw it first.

(Pause)

Y: Let's paint something we haven't painted before.

Z: Like what?

Y: A door that stays open... but no one runs away.

Epilogue

(Stage is empty except for two chairs far apart. Z enters slowly, sits. Looks out.)

Z *(to audience)*: I didn't grow up with someone asking me how I feel. We worked. We woke. We prayed. We worked again. You show love through doing.

When Y came into my life, Y brought another language. One I didn't speak. Words I couldn't always follow. I never promised to know the right words. Sometimes I stayed silent because I didn't know what to say. Other times, I stayed silent because I thought it was safer. But I saw Y. Even when I looked away. I watched how Y cared with the whole being. Even when it hurt. Sometimes I pushed away, not because I didn't care—but because I didn't know where to put that kind of love. Y made space for me when I didn't ask. Maybe that's why I am still here. Not because I never failed, but because Y kept seeing me as someone who might grow.

(Z exits. Lights dim. Y enters from the other side. Sits. Looks out.)

Y *(to audience)*: I used to think love meant being understood. But maybe it's something else—being allowed to remain unknown, without being cast aside. We built something in the quiet, in the hours after arguments, in the unfinished gestures. I wanted Z to talk like I do. To explain. To open up. Now I see what Z was already saying. With hands, steadiness. The silence wasn't absence—it was presence, just in another form. I had to let go of needing Z to be me. Now, when I speak, I listen too. And when Z doesn't speak, I watch Z's doing. We live differently. We love differently. But we built something—together.

(Lights fade to black. Sounds of birds. A dog barks in the distance.)

End of Play.