

Scenes for two actors

12 texts

The two-hander is the most honest test there is: nobody is there to cover for you. If one of you stops listening, it shows on the first line, and no amount of talent hides it.

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The Balcony Scene

Romantic comedy · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Teen · Advanced

JULIETTE

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

JULIETTE

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

JULIETTE

or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMÉO

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIETTE

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;

JULIETTE

thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

JULIETTE

What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

ROMÉO

I take thee at thy word. Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized.

The Viewing

Supernatural · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Adult · Intermediate

(An empty house. The agent opens the shutters. The lady stays in the middle of the room.)

AGENTE

Double-aspect living room, original parquet. The fireplace works, the previous owners had stopped using it.

LA DAME

No, they hadn't. In winter. The draught jams when the wind comes off the sea; you have to crack open the little kitchen window.

AGENTE

...That's correct. It's in the survey. Have you viewed the house before, with a colleague?

LA DAME

The third step in the hallway, does it still sing? The children called it the nightingale. They jumped over it to come home without waking anyone.

(A beat.)

AGENTE

Madam... you lived here.

LA DAME

Sixty years. I was told I could come back and see it. One last time. Before the new people.

AGENTE

"Told"? By whom, the family? The house has been empty since the estate was settled, nobody...

(Somewhere, the third step sings. Yet they are alone.)

LA DAME

Don't sell too quickly, dear. Give her time to say goodbye. She was very much loved, you know.

(The agent looks down at her sheet: "Herbin estate, owner passed away in January." When she looks up, the room is empty. In the kitchen, the little window stands ajar.)

The Hands

Thriller · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Adult · Advanced

(A kitchen, at night. A tap is running. Nobody turns it off.)

LUI

You've washed your hands three times.

ELLE

They're not dirty. It's worse. They're clean, and I can still feel it.

LUI

Nobody knows. Nobody will know.

ELLE

We know. We'll sleep beside someone who knows, every night, until the end.

LUI

We had no choice.

ELLE

Don't say that. "No choice" is what you tell other people. Between us, let's tell the truth: we chose fast, and we chose wrong.

(The tap keeps running.)

LUI

Turn that tap off.

ELLE

Turn it off yourself. If I go near water again, I'll start scrubbing.

LUI

Tomorrow we'll get up, and it'll be an ordinary day.

ELLE

There won't be ordinary days anymore. There'll be days when we pretend. It's not the same.

LUI

You look at me as if I were the monster.

ELLE

No. I look at you like a mirror. That's the unbearable part.

(She finally turns off the tap. The silence is worse.)

ELLE

There. Now we can hear our hearts. We'll have to get used to that sound.

The Aquatic Existentialist

Comedy · Two-hander · 2 min · Female role · Young adult · Beginner

(Sam comes in, looking grave. Léa barely looks up.)

SAM

We need to talk. It's serious.

LÉA

Oh no. You're about to tell me you adopted something again.

SAM

... How do you know?

LÉA

Sam. Last time it was a turtle. Before that, a ukulele. Before that, "a passion for theatre."

SAM

That one I stand by. And it's related, actually: his name is Hamlet.

LÉA

You named a turtle Hamlet?

SAM

He's a fish. And he already seems to doubt everything.

(A beat.)

LÉA

Fine. Where does he sleep, your aquatic existentialist?

The Confession

Drama · Two-hander · 4 min · Female role · Adult · Intermediate

(Late. The table isn't cleared. Julie holds her phone.)

JULIE

I spoke to your sister. She thought I knew.

MARC

Julie...

JULIE

She thought I knew, Marc. Since when have you known?

MARC

What does it change now?

JULIE

Since when.

MARC

March. I found out in March.

(A beat.)

JULIE

We bought the car in April.

MARC

I didn't want to ruin...

JULIE

We took out a loan in April! You let me sign it.

MARC

I was going to find a way. I always do.

JULIE

You let our daughter change schools "to be closer." You knew we'd move.

MARC

I was protecting you.

JULIE

You were protecting yourself. From my eyes. From this conversation. From this exact moment.

(He doesn't answer.)

JULIE

The worst part isn't the money. It's that for six months you watched me make plans, knowing they didn't exist.

MARC

I was ashamed.

JULIE

Shame is still about you. Everything is always about you.

MARC

What do you want me to say?

JULIE

Nothing. That's the problem. There's nothing left to say that you shouldn't have said in March.

(She sets the phone down, screen against the table.)

JULIE

We'll see tomorrow. Not because I forgive you. Because I'm too tired to decide to leave you tonight.

The Form

Satire · Two-hander · 3 min · Male role · Adult · Beginner

(A counter. A glass partition. A form the size of a tablecloth.)

AGENT

Did you tick box 14?

USAGER

There is no box 14. It goes from 13 to 15.

AGENT

That's exactly box 14. Its absence. You must tick its absence.

USAGER

How do I tick a box that doesn't exist?

AGENT

With an invisible pen. They're sold from the machine. Out of order since 1998.

USAGER

So I can't fill in the form.

AGENT

No one can. That's what makes it a good form. If it could be filled in, everyone would get through.

USAGER

And the ones who get through?

AGENT

They don't get through. They give up. And giving up, here, is our way of moving forward.

(The agent stamps a blank sheet.)

AGENT

Here. Your certificate of surrender. Frame it. It's the only document you'll ever get from us.

USAGER

...Thank you?

AGENT

Don't thank me. Box 22 prohibits gratitude. You ticked it without

knowing, on the way in.

The Note

Romantic comedy · Two-hander · 1 min · Female role · Adult · Advanced

(Dorante holds a crumpled note he has just intercepted.)

DORANTE

This note, beneath your fingers, trembled like a confession. To whom were you writing, Madam, with such fire?

LÉONORE

To you. But having read it, I feared to reveal too much, and chose to hush it rather than be reborn in it.

DORANTE

To me? This burning word, this ardour I deny: it was for the one who doubted his beloved?

LÉONORE

Doubt is a mirror: it shows what one carries. You thought me fickle; I had to be strong.

DORANTE

Forgive this suspicion that a trifle gave birth to.

LÉONORE

I forgive the jealous man what self-love hates. But keep this note: let it be your rule. One does not force open a letter that offers itself.

The Double

Supernatural · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Adult · Advanced

(A café. She sits down across from someone with exactly her face.)

MOI

You wanted to see me. I almost didn't come. You don't have coffee with your own face.

L'AUTRE

I know. It's unsettling. Believe me, on my side too.

MOI

Who are you?

L'AUTRE

The question isn't "who." It's "which one." There was a choice, twelve years ago. The train, remember? You got on. I didn't.

MOI

...We have the same life up to a station platform.

L'AUTRE

And two different lives after. I came to tell you one thing: the life you didn't live is no happier. Stop regretting it at night.

(A beat. At the same time, they make the same gesture: lifting the cup to their lips.)

MOI

...How do I know you're not lying?

L'AUTRE

Because I'm the only person in the world you can't lie to either.

One Question Too Many

Thriller · Two-hander · 4 min · Female role · Adult · Advanced

(A bare room. A closed file between them. She doesn't open it.)

GARANCE

You haven't asked why you're here. In twenty years, everyone asks. Except the ones who know.

MERCIER

You haven't opened your file. People usually do. Except when it's empty.

GARANCE

The 12th, between 10 p.m. and midnight. Tell me.

MERCIER

The cinema. The 9:50 showing. I can tell you the whole film, if you like.

GARANCE

Anyone can tell me a film.

MERCIER

Not the projector breakdown in the forty-second minute. Twelve minutes of darkness, full house. Check it.

(A beat.)

GARANCE

Who told you about that breakdown, Mr Mercier?

MERCIER

I... I was there. I just told you.

GARANCE

It lasted four minutes. The twelve minutes, that's the figure from the next day's paper. The paper got it wrong.

(Silence. Mercier looks at the door, then at the one-way mirror.)

MERCIER

I want a lawyer.

GARANCE

I know. Funny how much people want one, all of a sudden, once they've seen a film from start to finish.

The Reservation

Comedy · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Adult · Beginner

(A restaurant. The host studies a screen with the gravity of a surgeon.)

HÔTE

Do you have a reservation?

CLIENTE

Yes. Under Marchand. Two people, eight o'clock.

HÔTE

I have no Marchand. I have a Marchal. A Marchais. A... Marwhatsit.

CLIENTE

Maybe it's Marwhatsit, then. I have a name with options.

HÔTE

Marwhatsit was yesterday.

CLIENTE

Yesterday I wasn't hungry. That's Marwhatsit's whole problem: bad timing.

(Types.)

HÔTE

I can put you down for three weeks from now.

CLIENTE

Three weeks? My guest over there has already started aging on the bench.

HÔTE

The gentleman in blue? He's ours. He's been waiting for a certain Marchand for twenty minutes.

CLIENTE

...I'm the Marchand.

HÔTE

Ah. You see. It all works out in the end.

CLIENTE

You nearly sent me back in three weeks for someone waiting six metres away.

HÔTE

Patience, madam, is part of the menu.

The Last Train

Drama · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Young adult · Intermediate

(A platform, at night. The board shows a last departure.)

SAMI

You'll miss it if you keep talking to me.

NINA

I know.

SAMI

Nina. There's another one tomorrow at six.

NINA

Tomorrow I won't have the nerve. Nerve doesn't sleep, it evaporates.

SAMI

And what do you want to tell me, here, in two minutes?

NINA

That I came all the way to the platform. That's already a whole sentence.

(The train approaches.)

SAMI

Get on. We'll talk through the window.

NINA

We spent two years talking through the window.

SAMI

Then step out of the idea you have of me, and stay.

(The doors open. Nobody moves.)

NINA

Fine. But you're the one who explains to your mother why her suitcase is leaving without you.

Strike That Off Your Books

Satire · Two-hander · 2 min · Male role · Adult · Advanced

PHILINTE

What is it? What's wrong with you?

ALCESTE

Leave me alone, I beg you.

PHILINTE

But come, tell me, what is this strange mood...

ALCESTE

Leave me, I tell you, and go hide yourself away.

PHILINTE

But one at least hears people out without getting angry.

ALCESTE

I mean to be angry, and I won't hear a word.

PHILINTE

In your sudden fits of temper I cannot follow you,

PHILINTE

and, though we are friends, I am the first to...

ALCESTE

I, your friend? Strike that off your books.

What you can do with it

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