

A Nylon Flower
A one act play in three scenes for two characters
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Translated from the Greek by Kathryn Price

Scene I

(Two people are asleep on either side of a white-painted barrel. The light comes up very slowly. An alarm goes off. A gets up.)

A: A new day. *(B wakes up.)*

B: And it's sunny again.

A: Morning sun.

B: *(He inhales deeply.)*

A: I feel...somehow...new inside myself.

B: So do I. We feel this every morning when a new day dawns.

A: *(darkly)* Yesterday evening it wasn't sunny.

B: Don't talk about yesterday evening.

A: Yesterday evening...like every evening...

B: We need to forget what happened yesterday evening. *(He looks elsewhere – a new tone of voice)* Nothing bad happened yesterday evening. Absolutely nothing bad.

A: That's a lie and you know it.

B: I don't know anything.

A: Yesterday evening...like every evening...

B: I can't hear you. *(He covers his ears and laughs.)* Talk now. Tell your lies. Talk about your fancies now. Speak! *(He dances about happily.)*

A: *(slowly)* Yesterday evening – when we looked to see if the flower had grown, we found—that it hadn't—that again it hadn't grown. After that we began to complain and burst into tears. And later we fell asleep. *(He changes tone.)* Today's a new day. A beautiful, new day with new sunshine.

B: Isn't it a wonder?

A: All morning sunshine is a wonder. *(happy now)* We have lots to do again today.

B: *(a happy atmosphere)* New soil to bring from the mountain.

A: New fertilizer to look for and find for the gardens.

B: To fix the watering can that fell apart.

A: *(entirely serious)* Of course, there is the watering can that fell apart.

B: Well, the body of the barrel? Have you noticed what has happened to the body of the barrel? *(They look carefully.)*

A: What is it?

B: A hole. A hole has opened up.

A: A hole which needs stopping up. *(standing now and with a changed tone)* How beautiful it is again today.

B: Yes, it is so beautiful again today. *(They embrace.)* Just like every morning.

A: Shall we begin? What do you say?

B: I'll go for the soil.

A: And I'll go for the fertilizer.

B: I have to climb mountain after mountain.
A: I have to search for gardens upon gardens.
B: I have to dig and delve.
A: I have to mix and carry. *(They kiss one another and then shake hands.)*
B: Good day to you.
A: Good day to you. *(They leave from opposite sides of the stage.)*

Scene II

(They return, tired out; They are carrying bags and sacks. Next to the barrel there is a watering can. They look at one another with smiles; they put down their burdens.)

A: How was it?
B: Just fine. You?
A: Wonderful.
B: How beautiful today's day is, too!
A: On to the present...*(reining in B's happiness)*
B: How beautiful today's day is, too. *(insistence – severity)*
A: On to the present. *(insistence – severity)*
B: No, today's day will be beautiful all the way to the end. *(insistence)*
A: How are you...so sure?
B: *(He tenses; he bursts out.)* Well, there! It will be. *(LONG PAUSE – obstinacy)* It will be, it will be, it will be!
A: No one knows the wishes of God. *(defeat)*
B: Even so, wouldn't it be nice? *(complaint)*
A: Yes, it would ne very nice. *(Heavy—LONG PAUSE—change of tone)* Shall we continue?
B: Yes. The red soil ought to be good. *(He takes out a little; he looks at it; then he throws it back into the bag because he's remembered something much more important.)* I brought it from the slope that was the most difficult to climb. There are lots of nettles up there. *(joy)*
A: Was the place very dangerous? *(smile)*
B: The mountain was the most difficult to climb. I dug for hours. *(a crescendo of joy)* The red soil is not near the surface. Of course, I was digging for hours. Hard work. *(an atmosphere of satisfaction)*
A: Nice work.
B: Nice hard work. You? Did you tire yourself out, too? *(Always both are showing joy.)*
A: Well, until you find the suitable garden, the suitable rotted leaves, the suitable little worms. All that...
B: Afterward? Afterward?
A: Well, look: Mix it all with sand, with a little water in the appropriate shady place. It's a difficult task for one to find down here an appropriate shady place. We are getting tired.
B: Yes, we are getting tired. That's what's correct, my friend. *(Their tone is didactic.)*
A: That's what's proper.
B: Propriety and morality.
A: *(He's watering while whistling an epic song.)*

B: (*He throws soil into the barrel.*) Bits of red soil for our beautiful little flower?

A: Throw it in little by little, a tiny bit at a time. (*They both use the tone of sweet nursemaids.*)

B: Our lovely little flower.

A: (*They are uneasy for a bit.*) Do you see anything growing?

B: Nothing yet.

A: You haven't grown yet, little flower. Why haven't you grown, our lovely little flower? (*His attempt to conceal his anguish is obvious.*)

B: It will grow; I'm sure. Today, by evening, it will grow, definitely. (*from certainty to perplexity*) But just bring the fertilizer, OK? (*change*) Come, our lovely little flower.

A: Yes, yes, here's the fertilizer. (*He brings it.*) Here it is. Shall I begin to pour it?

B: Stop when I tell you to.

A: Sweet fertilizer for our little flower? (*He pours it on.*)

B: That's enough. Now it needs a refreshing little watering.

A: Yes, our lovely little flower.

B: Lovely – lovely – lovely. (*He caresses the barrel.*)

A: There's the sweet watering can, too.

B: (*He waters.*) Do you see the fine water? Refreshing, fine water for our little flower to drink.

A: The little flower is lovely, lovely...lovely...

B: (*Uneasiness again for a bit*) Do you make out that anything has grown?

A: Nothing yet. (*LONG PAUSE*)

B: By evening it will have grown. (*obviously false certainty*)

A: Where in the world do you find such certainty?

B: (*He tenses.*) It has to; this evening it has to grow. (*to A*) Shouldn't it?

A: I don't know. What do *you* think?

B: It has to. My God, it has to. (*a change of tone; he's sure now.*) This evening it will grow. I know well that this evening it will grow.

A: (*annoyed*) But how can you be so sure? There's no factor that justifies your position.

B: Shut up, you lying philosopher. You hate me. I know that you hate me.

A: You're talking nonsense.

B: I'll say what I want. You leave me alone.

A: Every day you come out with the same baseless fancies spun from air: "It will grow, yes, of course, it will grow." Anyhow, you're sure that it will grow. So much time has gone by with these idiocies, while every evening... You see what happens every evening.

B: (*looks elsewhere*) Stop it, please.

A: And every morning you try to forget what happened the previous evening. You keep working at insistent attempts.

B: Leave me be. C'mon, why...You think you're really something. (*LONG PAUSE – some anxiety*) What will happen this evening, I wonder? (*getting louder*) Will it grow or won't it grow this evening?

A: No one knows the wishes of God. (*LONG PAUSE – obvious attempt to cover the defeat*) C'mon, we ought to throw on a little dark soil.

B: Yes, we have wonderful dark soil for our little flower. (*He brings it.*)

A: For you our beautiful little flower here's some sweet dark soil. (*He pours it on.*)

B: This much...this much...very good.
A: Now we have to water it again.
B: Of course, let's water it.
A: And afterward a little more fertilizer.
B: By evening it ought to grow.

Scene III

(They wait uneasily.)

B: It has to grow.
A: *(He takes a look.)* Still nothing.
B: You speak well; not even the tiniest little leaf?
A: Nothing. Still nothing.
B: I feel evening approaching.
A: An evening just like all the evenings.
B: Silent.
A: Pitiful.
B: I can't stand it. The morning seemed so auspicious.
A: It looks again like it's not going to grow.
B: Not the same thing again. This situation cannot continue.
A: Our work is difficult. Our work is very difficult. *(inner pain)*
B: Yes, I won't deny *(as if he were saying something which he had learned by heart from much use)* that which is correct and ethical and necessary: we should start out on difficult tasks *(a real complaint now)* but this flower, too? *(He gets fierce.)* This flower, the devil take it, has no intention of growing. *(LONG PAUSE)*
A: And if...we were to stop? *(He is frightened by his idea and hesitates.)*
B: If...we were to stop? *(His eyes bulge out.)*
A: *(as if he's averse to his own idea)* It would be unethical and unseemly.
B: No, no, those are filthy things. A respectable human being... Do you remember the story with that unethical gardener?
A: That's what I was telling you. I remember. *(ironically and slowly)* The gardener who planted tomatoes and they wouldn't open up. Well, one day *(He begins to be frightened as he goes on.)* he got tired of planting. He didn't do anything any longer. And then...he decided...to com-mit su-i-cide. While he was still quivering, they heard him shouting, "Since I'm not doing anything any longer, what business have I in this land? What business have I in this land? What business have I in this land?"
B: And you...What answer would you give him? *(LONG PAUSE)*
A: *(He smiles and gets up.)* How is our little flower doing? Will it have grown?
B: *(In like vein)* Yes, what should our little flower have done? Yes, will it have grown? *(They look—LONG PAUSE)*
A: Nothing. Nothing has happened this evening either. *(He advances forward heavily.)*
B: *(He takes a nylon flower from a satchel and places it in the barrel; he laughs and is glad.)*
A: *(complaining)* And yet, this morning it seemed that all would proceed beautifully. This evening was depressing. Nothing yet again today. And the more times evening falls, the more often do I see the gardener committing suicide breathing his last. "What

business have I in this land? Since I have nothing any longer to do, what business have I in this land?"

B: It's grown—it's grown—the flower has grown... *(He chants happily.)*

A: What are you doing?

B: Our flower has grown. Our little flower. The one we to which brought a little fertilizer and soil. The one we poured water on from our dear watering can. It has grown.

A: *(He looks at it hesitantly—LONG PAUSE—anger)* That's a nylon flower. That's a flower made of vulgar nylon.

B: YOU are vulgar. *(He looks at him no longer.)*

A: Are you quite sane? Nylon; nylon; you see, nylon!

B: Leave my flower alone immediately. My beautiful, genuine flower.

A: It is not genuine and you know it. *(He ceases to look at him.)*

B: Leave me alone.

A: You bought it from the shops. It's false and you know it.

B: I don't know anything.

A: What you're saying is really filthy. Completely unethical.

B: YOU are filthy and unethical because you won't leave me alone. *(LONG PAUSE)*

Did I annoy you? Did I harm you? Who are you?

A: Do I know what to say? That's what I saw and that's what I said.

B: No one gave you the right to get involved in other people's business. No one!

A: But...the truth...what you say...

B: *(He dances about happily.)*

A: *(To the audience)* This evening is ugly. Just like every evening. In this district for so long a time not even one day intends to come which will end beautifully.

B: *(taking no part in A's dramatics)* How beautiful it is this evening.

A: It's unfair. So much work...so much digging...so much hauling...and tomorrow again from the beginning. If God doesn't want it...Why are we digging and hauling? If it's the will of God—even if it isn't—all the rest...In vain. We're going to accomplish nothing. And this tale with the daily little adventures must come to an end. It's all no use. *(He sits down.)*

B: *(He dances.)*

A: *(He drives something imaginary from his person.)* No...no...*(He becomes frightened.)* There's the gardener again. He's still quivering: "What business have I in this land?" *(LONG PAUSE)* He's killed himself.

B: *(dancing)* Wonderful!

A: *(Again he drives something away.)* No, no, I've said a lot of nonsense. I've said a lot of nonsense this evening. It's neither right nor ethical to sit here and wait for God's help and not do whatever is possible.

B: Certainly, that's a completely correct statement.

A: A very wise statement.

B: How beautiful it is this evening. *(He sits down.)* Very beautiful. *(LONG PAUSE)*

Now? *(He shifts his feet uneasily.)* What shall we do now?

A: We should move to another district. In some districts of the country our seeds grow, in others they don't. Whatever is lucky. Who knows? Perhaps we'll be lucky in the new district where we move. Tomorrow's a new day...with new sunshine...

B: *(joy)* Let's go to another district. *(upright)* We'll find something to do there.

A: *(upright)* Let's go then.

B: Let's go.

(They pick up their bundles and leave looking around searchingly.)