Towards the Future

A one-act play in prose that can be staged in any country, with small changes in the details of the presentation which local custom may require.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

SHE
THE POET
THE CLAIRVOYANT
THE PAINTER
THE SCHOOLFRIEND
Towards the Future

As the curtain rises, She and the Schoolfriend are sitting side by side on the sofa.

SHE
How nice of you to come and see me after such a long time... I thought you had forgotten me.

SCHOOLFRIEND
Certainly not. But I had lost trace of you and did not know where to find you. And now that I have found you, what a surprise! You, married... how strange! I can't believe it.

SHE
I too find it hard to believe.

SCHOOLFRIEND
I understand... I remember how ironically you used to refer to marriage as “a co-operative venture in consumption and production”, and how distasteful you used to find everything that displayed human animality, the beast in man. And how you used to say, “Let us not be mammals...”

SHE
Yes, I have always enjoyed making fun of current ideas and social conventions. But in all fairness you must admit that I have never said anything against true love, the love that comes from a deep affinity and is marked by an identity of views and aspirations. I always dreamt of a great love that would be shared, free from all animal activity, something that could physically represent the great love which is at the origin of the worlds. This dream accounts for my marriage. But the experience has not been a very happy one. I have loved deeply, with great sincerity and
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intensity, but my love has not met with the response it hoped for...

SCHOOLFRIEND
My poor friend!

SHE
Oh, I am not telling you this to arouse your pity. I am not to be pitied. My dream is practically unrealisable in the world as it is. Human nature would have to change so much for this to become possible. Besides, my husband and I are very good friends, although that does not prevent us both from feeling very isolated. Esteem and mutual concessions create a harmony that makes life more than merely bearable. But is that happiness?

SCHOOLFRIEND
For many people that might be happiness.

SHE
True, but sometimes I feel such an emptiness in my life! It may have been to fill this emptiness that I gave myself entirely and in all sincerity to that marvellous cause which is so dear to me: to relieve suffering humanity, to awaken it to its capacities and its true goal and ultimate transformation.

SCHOOLFRIEND
I can see that something great, something out of the ordinary rules your life. But as I do not know what it is, it seems rather mysterious to me.

SHE
Of course, I owe you an explanation. I must tell you about it in detail, but that will take some time. Would you like me to come and visit you?
SCHOOLFRIEND
What an excellent idea! Nothing could please me more. When will you come? Would you like to come today?

SHE
Yes, I would be very glad to do so. I always find a deep joy in speaking of the marvellous teaching that guides our life and directs our wills. Just now, I have a few things to arrange so that when my husband returns from his walk he will find everything ready. And as soon as he has started his work, I can go out and I shall come and see you.

SCHOOLFRIEND
Very well, then. Goodbye, I shall see you soon.

(She accompanies her friend to the door behind the screen. Then She returns to the writing table to arrange some papers and books and writing materials. She places some flowers in a vase on the table and looks around her to see that everything is in order. At that moment a key is heard turning in the lock.)

SHE
Ah, there he is. (The Poet enters. She approaches him affectionately.) Did you have a pleasant walk?

POET (absent-mindedly)
Yes, thank you. (He puts his hat down on a chair.) I have found an ending for my poem. It came while I was walking. A little activity in the open air really does help the inspiration. Yes, I think this will be good: I end with a song of triumph, a hymn of victory in praise of the evolved man who has discovered, together with the consciousness of his origin, the knowledge of all that he is capable of doing and the power to realise it. I describe him advancing in the happy
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splendour of union towards the conquest of earthly immortality. It will be beautiful and truly universal, don’t you think? It is high time that art should stop being a justification for ugliness and defeat... What a happy day it will be when poetry, painting and music express only beauty, victory and joy, leading the way towards the realisation of the future, towards the advent of a world in which falsehood and suffering, ugliness and death will be no more... But meanwhile, how much misery still for man, how much pain and anguish and bitter solitude... It is terrible! Each one has his burden to bear, come what may, whether he wants it or not. (*He stands deep in thought.*)

SHE (approaching him affectionately and putting her hand on his arm)
Come, set to work, you know that is the best cure for sadness. I am going to leave you to your inspiration. I promised my friend that I would go and spend the afternoon with her and tell her something about the marvellous teaching that guides our life. We shall probably read together some of those pages that are so full of profound truth. To meditate on these things is a great joy to both of us. That would upset the ideas of many men, wouldn’t it? They are convinced that women cannot do anything except talk about clothes. On the whole, they are not entirely wrong. Most women are terribly frivolous, or at least they seem to be. For very often this lightness on the surface hides a heavy heart and veils an unfulfilled life. Poor creatures! I know so many of them who deserve to be pitied.

POET
You are right. Women really deserve to be pitied. Almost all of them lack the protection they need and are like frail craft with no harbour to shelter them from the storm. For most of them do not receive the education that would teach them to protect themselves.
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SHE
That is true. Besides, even in the strongest of women, there is a deep need for affection and protection, for an all-powerful strength that leans over her and enfolds her in comforting sweetness. This is what she seeks in love, and when she has the good fortune to find it, it gives her confidence in life and opens up for her the door to every hope. Without that, life for her is like a barren desert that burns and shrivels up the heart.

POET
Oh, how well you say these things! You say them like one who has experienced them very deeply. I shall make a note of them for my next book, which will deal with the education of women. Well then, I shall start my work.

SHE
That’s right; I am going. Goodbye, work well. (She takes a book and goes out.)

POET (sitting down at his desk and seeing everything ready for his work)
Always the same kind and affectionate attentions. She never fails in her care and her sweetness. When I look at her, it is like seeing a light: her intelligence and kindness shine so brightly around her, spreading to all who are near her, whom she guides towards nobler horizons. I admire her, I feel a deep respect for her... But all that is not love... Love! What a dream! Will it ever become a reality? (A melody sung by a magnificent voice is heard. The poet jumps to his feet and goes to the open window.) What a wonderful voice! (He listens in silence until the melody dies away. Sighing, he is about to return to his table when there is a knock at the door.) Hello, who’s there? (He opens the door. The Painter enters.)

POET
It’s you! Hello, old friend, what good wind brings you here?
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PAINTER
I had something to tell you. I met your wife and she told me you were in your “sanctum”. So I am here.

POET
You did the right thing... So come into the “sanctum” as you call it, and speak. Don’t keep me in suspense. Is it about painting?

PAINTER
No, my painting is going well. But I shall tell you about that another time. It is about music. (The Poet shows interest.) Yesterday evening, when visiting some friends, I heard a true singer who, I am told, is your neighbour. (The Poet makes a gesture of surprise and interest.) Do you know her?

POET
No, but I often hear her singing from here. She has a superb voice, a voice that stirs all the fibres of my being. The very first time it struck my ears, it sounded familiar to me, like an echo from very ancient times. For nearly six months I have been hearing this voice, which forms a kind of pleasant accompaniment to my work. I have very often wished to become acquainted with the owner of such a beautiful voice.

PAINTER
What a wonderful coincidence! Yesterday evening I was introduced to this young lady and she seems to be very charming indeed. We had a long chat together and in the course of the conversation she expressed her admiration for your poetry, which she seems to read with enthusiasm. She also told me that she is all alone in life, that she has to fend for herself and that sometimes she finds it difficult to pull through, and so on. She dreams of becoming a concert-singer. I immediately thought of you and all your connections. Everyone knows how obliging you are. So I volunteered to speak to you about her and to ask
you if you could introduce her to a few well-known musicians or composers. That is why I have come.

**POET**
You did just the right thing. It will be a great pleasure for me to do something for her. So what did the two of you decide?

**PAINTER**
It was arranged that, if you agreed, I would go and fetch her immediately — it is not very far — and bring her to you so that you may get to know each other.

**POET**
Perfect. Go and fetch her. I shall wait for you. (*The Painter goes out.*)

**POET (striding restlessly back and forth)**
How strange, how strange... There is no such thing as chance; everything is the effect of causes that are simply beyond our control. The power of affinity — who knows? I am curious to know whether the singer is as beautiful as her voice. Here they are. (*The door which was only pulled to is pushed open from outside.*) Oh, how pretty she is! (*The Clairvoyant enters, smiling, followed by the Painter.*)

**PAINTER**
Mademoiselle, may I introduce my friend, the well-known poet whom you admire so much.

**POET**
I am very happy to meet you, mademoiselle, and to be able to tell you how much I admire your beautiful voice, which you use with such artistry.

**CLAIRVOYANT**
You are very kind, monsieur, and I thank you. You will excuse me, won’t you, for coming with so little ceremony. But we are
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such near neighbours. I knew you even before I was introduced to you. I noticed that you often came to your window to listen to me singing and even, at first, I was not very pleased when you applauded me. I thought you were making fun of me.

POET
How wrong you were! I simply wanted to express my admiration and to thank you for all the aesthetic pleasure you give me.

PAINTER
Now that I have done my duty, I shall leave you. I have an appointment with my art-dealer. Ah, the blackguard! He wants to make me paint absurdities because, he says, it is the current taste. But I am resisting...

POET
Yes, resist, resist valiantly. Do not encourage this degeneracy of modern taste, this lapse into falsehood which seems to have seeped into the consciousness of all our contemporaries, in every field of human creativity.

PAINTER
Very well, my friend, I go, fired with a new courage, to do battle for the truth. Goodbye.

POET AND CLAIRVOYANT
Goodbye.

POET (indicating the sofa)
Please sit down, mademoiselle.

CLAIRVOYANT (sitting)
So you are willing to introduce me to a few people and let them hear me?
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POET
Certainly. One of our foremost conductors is a friend of mine and with a talent like yours all doors will easily open to you.

CLAIRVOYANT
It will be a great help to me. Thank you so much.

POET
No, no, do not thank me. (He sits by her side.) If you knew all the joy you have given me... If you knew what a pleasant accompaniment the harmony of your rich voice has been to my daily work. I owe you many good and happy hours; yes, it is I who should be grateful to you.

CLAIRVOYANT
It is very kind of you to tell me all this. (She looks around her, then turns to the Poet with a smile.) It is strange how familiar everything seems to me here, perhaps not so much the objects themselves as the air, the atmosphere which envelops them. Excuse my boldness, but I feel as if I were at home, I feel as if I had been coming here always. And I have the feeling that all sorts of wonderful things are going to happen to me now.

POET
I shall be the first person to be glad of it.

CLAIRVOYANT (after a short silence)
I must tell you a strange thing. When I came to settle in this town about six months ago, after my mother’s death, in the hope of earning my living, I had a choice of several small apartments, each one with its advantages and inconveniences. The one that I rented here in this house is no better than any other, but I was impelled to take it by a kind of intuition that I would be happy here, that good things were in store for me here... It is strange, isn’t it?
POET (thoughtfully)
Strange, yes, very strange... (Aside) Is this affinity? Who knows?
(To the Clairvoyant) You know, this is strange too, I have felt much calmer and more contented since I have been hearing your voice each day, and I had a very great desire to know you.

CLAIRVOYANT
And I knew you only as a writer whose talent I greatly admired and whom I hardly dared to hope to meet one day. There are such extraordinary and mysterious things in life... mysterious perhaps only because we do not know their causes, otherwise everything would be very simple and natural. And look, at this moment, I too feel a sensation of calm and well-being, and it gives me great strength. If only you knew how much I need strength and encouragement... Life is hard for a helpless and unprotected orphan who is forced to earn her living all alone and who knows nobody to support her in her struggle. But now that I have met you, I feel that all my difficulties will melt away.

POET
Rest assured that I shall do everything in my power to help you. It is a duty and a very great pleasure to be of use to an artist and a woman like you.

CLAIRVOYANT (taking his hand in a spontaneous movement)
Thank you. I feel as if we have always been sitting like this, side by side, and that we are friends, old friends... We are friends, aren’t we?

POET (solemnly)
Yes, from the depths of our hearts.

CLAIRVOYANT
I feel so much at ease here, that I am forgetting all conventions. And now to crown my impoliteness, I am overcome by an
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imperative need to sleep. I have been sleeping so badly at home for such a long time. I feel uneasy, spied on by invisible enemies who wish me harm. I am unable to achieve the calm which would give me a much-needed rest. Whereas here, I have the feeling that something warm and strong enfolds me like a living cloak and little by little I am being overwhelmed by sleep.

POET (looking at her tenderly)
Lie down here, on these cushions. Make yourself comfortable; don’t let anything bother you. And above all do not think even for a moment of customs and conventions; they are fetters of no real value which seem to have been forged by man for his own misery.

CLAIRVOYANT
I am in great need of sleep. I have a persistent pain in my head which makes me suffer a great deal. I have worked so hard to achieve a result as quickly as possible and my brain is terribly tired.

POET (eagerly)
Will you allow me?... I think I can easily give you some relief. (He passes his hand several times across her forehead, then lays it on her head for a moment. The Clairvoyant, who is lying on the cushions, falls asleep with an expression of joy and well-being.)

CLAIRVOYANT (half asleep)
It is all right now, there is no more pain... And I feel so happy.

POET (arranging the cushions so that she may lie comfortably and sitting by her side, holding her hand in his; to himself)
Poor child, so pretty and yet so lonely.

CLAIRVOYANT (speaking in her sleep)
Oh, how beautiful!
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POET (softly)
What is beautiful?

CLAIRVOYANT (still asleep)
There, all around you, that violet light... It is like a living and luminous amethyst. It is all around me too, it is giving me strength. It is a protection, a sure protection... Nothing harmful can come near me now. (Enraptured) How beautiful is the violet light around you!

POET
Since you are comfortable, sleep quietly now, without seeing anything.

CLAIRVOYANT (in a far-away voice)
I am falling asleep, falling asleep. Oh, what calm, what ease.

POET (looking at her tenderly)
Yes, sleep, child — a healing sleep. Life has been hard for you and you have great need of rest. (After a moment’s silence) What is the use of trying to deceive myself? I have to admit it: just as her voice thrilled my whole being, so too her presence fills me with a calm and profound happiness. And now she has fallen asleep, under my protection, her first conscious sleep. Her very trust gives me a responsibility, a responsibility which would be very sweet to me. But my wife! I know that she is strong and brave, I know that long ago she realised that what I feel for her is nothing more than friendly affection. She herself cannot be satisfied with that; the depths of her love remain untouched. Yet I have responsibilities towards her too. How can I tell her that my whole being is concentrated upon another? And yet I cannot conceal my feelings; falsehood is the only evil. Besides, it would be quite useless: a woman like her cannot be deceived. Oh, life is often so cruel!
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CLAIRVOYANT (still sleeping, turning round and laying her hand on his)
I am happy... happy... (She rests her head on the Poet’s lap in a movement of childlike confidence.)

POET
Dear child! What can I do? (He gazes at her, deep in his thoughts. The Clairvoyant sighs, stretches, and wakes.)

CLAIRVOYANT (looking around her with some surprise)
I have slept... How well I have slept, never in my life have I slept so well.

POET
I am so glad.

CLAIRVOYANT (looking at him affectionately)
You see, the light that encircled you and covered me too was at once a nourishment and a protection; it was so beautiful, so comforting. Even now that I am awake I can feel it around me.

POET
Yes, it is still around you. Is this the first time you have seen coloured lights like this?

CLAIRVOYANT
I remember having seen lights or a coloured mist around certain people. But I have never seen any as beautiful as yours or any to which I have felt so close. Often, around others, it is like a turbid, unwholesome fog. What is it?

POET
It would take rather long to give a clear reply. But I shall try to explain it to you as best I can in a few words. Stop me if I bore you. We are made up of different states which can be compared to earth, water, air and fire. Do you follow?
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CLAIRVOYANT
Yes, it is most interesting.

POET
A less dense state penetrates and flows through a denser one, as water evaporates through a porous vessel, with the difference that no loss follows. In the same way, what is more subtle in us forms a kind of sheath around our bodies and we call this subtle sheath the aura.

CLAIRVOYANT
I understand, it is very clear. So then it can be very useful to see auras in this way?

POET
You are right, it is most useful. You can easily understand that the aura is the exact reflection of what is within us, of our feelings and our thoughts. If the thoughts and feelings are calm and harmonious, the aura too will be calm and harmonious; if the feelings are tumultuous and the thoughts disturbed, the aura will express this tumult and disturbance. It will be like the mist which you say you have seen around certain people.

CLAIRVOYANT
Yes, I understand. So these auras are very revealing.

POET
Yes, for those who see auras, deception can no longer exist. For example, however much a man of bad will may try to look like an angel of light, it will be in vain. His aura will reveal that his thoughts and motives are dark.

CLAIRVOYANT (admiringly)
Magnificent! What effects this knowledge might have in the world! But where did you learn such beautiful things? For I do not think that many people are aware of them.

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POET  
No, especially in modern times, in an age like ours in which success and the material satisfactions it brings are the only things that matter. And yet an ever-growing number of dissatisfied people are trying to find the purpose and goal of life. On the other hand, there are those who know and strive to help suffering humanity; they are guardians of the supreme knowledge which has been handed down from generation to generation and which serves as the basis of a method of self-development whose aim is to awaken man to the consciousness of what he truly is and what he can do.

CLAIRVOYANT  
How beautiful this teaching must be! You will reveal it to me little by little, won't you? For we are going to see each other often, aren't we? I wish we never had to part again.... While I was asleep I felt that you were everything for me and that I belong to you for ever. And I felt that from now on your protection will always enfold me. And I who was so full of fear, who felt exposed to so many enemies, I am now quiet, calm, confident, for I can tell all who want to harm me: “I fear you no longer, I am effectively protected, by a protection that will never fail me.” I am right, am I not?

POET  
Yes, yes, you are right.

CLAIRVOYANT  
I am so happy to have met you at last. I have waited for you so long! And you, are you happy?

POET  
Yes... Just now, while you were asleep, I felt a calm and a quiet happiness which I had never experienced before. (Thoughtfully) Yes, this is the true love, which is a force; it is the union that enables new possibilities to be realised... But...
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CLAIRVOYANT
But what? Since we are so happy together, what could prevent us...?

POET (rising suddenly)
Oh, you do not know! (He stops short at the sight of She, who has been standing behind the screen for some time already.) Oh! (She comes forward smiling and very calm.)

CLAIRVOYANT (amazed)
I did not know that you were married!

SHE (to the Clairvoyant)
Do not be upset. (Turning to the Poet) Nor you. Yes, I heard the end of your conversation. I returned just as Mademoiselle was waking up. I did not want to disturb you and was about to withdraw, but I thought it would be more useful for all of us if I heard. So I stayed. For I was sure, my dear, that you would find yourself in a cruel predicament. I know your straightforwardness, your loyalty, and I knew that you would be painfully divided between two opposite paths. You know what is said in the teaching which for us is the truth: love is the only legitimate bond of union. The absence of love is enough to invalidate any union. Certainly, there are unions without love, based on esteem and mutual concessions, which can be quite tolerable, but I consider that when love comes, everything else should give way to it. My friend, you remember our pact: we promised each other full freedom the moment love would awaken in either of us. That is why I listened, and now I have come to tell you: you are free, be happy.

POET (deeply moved)
But you, you? I know you always live at the summit of your consciousness, in a pure and serene light. But solitude
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is sometimes hard and the hours can be monotonous and sad.

**SHE**

Oh, I shall not be alone, for I shall go and join those through whom we have found the path, those who possess the eternal wisdom and who have, from a distance, guided our steps until now. Surely they will shelter me. *(She turns towards the Clairvoyant and takes her by the hand.)* Come, do not be upset. Women who are sensitive and sincere have the right to freely choose the person who will be their protector and guide in life. You have acted according to the natural law and all is well. Our way of looking at things and our behaviour may surprise you; they are new to you and you do not know the reasons for them. *(Pointing to the Poet)* He will explain them to you. I am going away, but before I go let me join your hands. *(She places the hand of the Clairvoyant in the hand of the Poet.)* No blessing can ever be equal to the blessing of love. And yet I shall give you mine, knowing that it will be dear to you. And if you permit, I shall add some advice which is almost a request. Do not allow your union to serve as an excuse for the satisfaction of animal appetites or sensual desires. On the contrary, make it a means of mutual support so that you may transcend yourselves in a constant aspiration and an effort for progress towards the growing perfection of your being. May your association be both noble and generous, noble in quality, generous in action. Be an example to the world and show all men of goodwill the true aim of human life.

**CLAIRVOYANT (deeply moved)**

You can be sure that we shall do our utmost to deserve the trust you have shown us and be worthy of your esteem. But I would like to hear from your own lips that my coming to this house and the event that has followed do not mean an irreparable misfortune to you.

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SHE
Have no fear. I now know for certain that only one love can satisfy my being: it is the love for the Divine, the divine love, for that alone never fails. Perhaps one day I shall find the favourable conditions and the necessary help for the achievement of the supreme realisation, the transformation and divinisation of the physical being which will change the world into a blessed place full of harmony and light, peace and beauty.

(The Clairvoyant, more and more deeply moved, remains silent, her hands clasped as if in prayer. The Poet bows respectfully to Her, takes her hand and lays his forehead on it as the curtain falls.)