



A LOOK
by Paul Smith

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CHARACTERS

NED– mid 20s

PAM – mid 20s

A bench in a park overlooking a town. Secluded.

PAM enters slowly. Looks around and stares at the view. PAM is around 24yo. She is dressed unconventionally. She has noticeable piercings and tattoos. She is holding a small bunch of flowers.

At length, NED enters. He is around 25yo and is dressed similarly to PAM. He wears a hat pulled down over his head. He moves straight to the bench and sits.

There is a complete awkwardness between the two. Though they know each other, they don't communicate well. As will become obvious later in the play the uncomfortable nature of their chat has a reason behind it. So it is absolutely fine if the dialogue is very stilted.

NED I'm here.

PAM You're always here.

NED For you I am.

PAM Always here for me. Whatever.

NED Always.

PAM In the good times and the bad.

NED We've had quite a few of each.

PAM I prefer to think of the good times.

NED Oh me too.

PAM That day I saw you in the supermarket. Wow I said to myself. Just Wow!

NED Hehe. Yes, I thought the same.

PAM Your look. So me. Was like staring into the mirror.

NED Still is.

PAM Still is.

Pause

I just love it up here. The air is clearer, cleaner. Love it when, on cool mornings, the mist just hangs over the town – you feel you are up in the clouds. Floating. Alone. Untroubled. Unaffected by life. Living, but not living. Alive, but not. Sounds silly.

NED Not really.

PAM Wrote my first poem up here.

NED And many more since.

PAM On blades of grass
On broken leaves
On petals of rainbow hues
A drop of rain
A gift of life
A drink so very sweet
To creatures all
To big and small
The nectar of all living souls
The reason for life
The planets blood
This man destroys
This harsh future
This world, it withers

May sense be sought,
Nirvana found.

Pause

NED Wonderful.

PAM I was pleased with it. A bit naff now. More refined now. Fine-tuned. Better for it. Started to work harder.

PAM moves to the bench and sits; she places the flowers beside NED

NED What's this?

PAM I bought you flowers.

NED Oh.

PAM I know, it's a bit silly.

NED It's great. No one has bought me flowers before. They're great. Thank you.

PAM I just thought. Well, you know.... You're the little present giver. I thought... well... hope you like them.

NED ***(picking up the flowers and smelling them, he places them down on the bench again)*** They smell so good. Thank you Pammy.

PAM I could so do with a cuddle.

NED People about. Maybe not the right time.

PAM Used to be so quiet here. Think people have found our secret place.

NED No secrets are secret for long.

PAM We've had plenty of secrets from each other.

NED And gradually they have been revealed.

PAM And we ended up with just the one.

NED The biggest.

PAM I just wish you'd said something.

NED I couldn't.

PAM Always the silent one. Silent Ned.

NED Quite like that nickname.

PAM Not always silent though.

NED I've had my moments.

PAM That trip to London. You jumped in the lake in Hyde Park. Screamed at the top of your voice. Everyone turned to look. You. Silent Ned. Shy. Timid. Jumping around fully clothed. Splashing uncontrollably. People thought you were a right pisshead. But no...

NED Just joy. Got my first commission. 18 and a commission. £500.

PAM A celebration of your art. That painting was just awesome. Strange to think that it's still hanging on a wall somewhere six or so years later. There's a bit of you in that stranger's house. So love to see it again.

NED Should have made a print of it. Still. It was a springboard. Got me my next commission.

PAM So proud of you that day, though it was a little embarrassing. At least it was a hot day and you dried off. But you looked a right state. My parents weren't impressed – we had to go to the theatre that night and you hadn't brought much in the way of clean clothes with you. Slob.

NED You're Mum almost turned me to stone with her look! I had to apologise. Not sure I've done that very much.

PAM Always a mess. Except for your hair. Hours in front of the mirror. More passion spent on your hair than on any other part of you.

NED Don't diss a good head of hair. Years of cultivation and care. Like a garden, you need to water it regularly, keep it free of weeds, fertilise it and groom it regularly and then you reap the rewards. Makes an impression. An impact. Show off really. Despite the shyness.

PAM And all those hats.

NED Came in handy more recently. Trade-mark.

PAM I hated them all.

NED I know you did.

PAM I never told you.

NED No, but you made some fairly sharp comments about them.

PAM I tried to ignore them.

NED Bit tricky.

PAM But you had your reasons. Trivial to make a fuss about hats.

NED You were ok with this one though. This one you liked. This one you bought for me. So you can't have hated them so very much.

PAM gets up and looks out at the view and sits on the grass maybe.

NED You look so beautiful today. The sun is just picking out your hair so well. Like threads of gold. You're radiant. The sun is good for you. But then you look good in the pouring rain or in the thunder and lightning. A glimpse of you in any weather is to feed my soul. Providing me with inspiration. My muse.

PAM You always said I was your muse. It was me that helped you create your art.

NED And so you did.

PAM And all those sketches you made of me, the full-length portrait, that massive canvas. No wall in the house big enough. But my parents loved it. It's still there. In the stairwell. I am always in their house. So are you. You are in that portrait as much as I am.

NED And always will be. Unless your parents decide to get rid of the painting. But I don't think they will. In fact, I know they won't. You won't either. It is yours after all.

During the start of the following NED rises, looks at PAM and then slowly walks off; as he does so, he removes his hat to show he has no hair on his head – if this is not feasible, then the suggestion may be ignored.

PAM It will always remind me of you, as if I don't have hundreds of photos from everywhere we ever went, to the parties and celebrations. In all those weathers. In all our outfits. To the exhibitions of your paintings and the poetry evenings at which I performed. To our quiet times here – you, me and nature. Communing. Loving. In love. So loved. The gifts we gave each other. The laughs we had together. To the fun I used to have with all that hair of yours. The shapes and styles I would create with it. Until, until you told me the secret. That your hair would disappear. That you would have your treatment but that it wasn't going to work. The day you decided time was so precious that you wanted to spend it with me. And you chose all those hats.

You didn't want to catch a cold. Ned, you were so perfect to me; not to everyone of course, but you were to me. You still are. A year today. Your look stays in my mind's eye. You will always be seen. You will be everywhere I look.

I hold you in my eyes
A stolen moment
A split second
A snapshot.
Life defeated
Spirit triumphant
Soothe all pain
Agony thwarted
Look into mine
Eyes that hold you.
Look. A look,
That look.
Just look.

PAM goes to the bench. Takes some ribbon from her pocket. Ties the flowers to the side of the bench. She quietly leaves. As the lights fade.