

MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

by Athol Fugard

Camdeboo, South Africa - 1985 - Thami (16-18) - Isabel (16-18)

Thami - A young man caught up in the struggle against apartheid
Isabel - Thami's white friend, fighting to understand the system
that governs them both

Thami and Isabel are brought together at a school debate and
their ensuing friendship seems capable of transcending the
tragedy of apartheid until Thami's involvement in a violent
student boycott indirectly leads to the murder of their favorite
teacher, Mr. M. Here, Thami and Isabel say their good byes.

(THAMI waiting. ISABEL arrives.)

THAMI: Isabel.

ISABEL: *(It takes her a few seconds to respond.)* Hello, Thami.

THAMI: Thank you for coming.

ISABEL: *(SHE is tense. Talking to him is not easy.)* I wasn't going
to. Let me tell you straight out that there is nothing in this world...
nothing!...that I want to see less at this moment than anything or
anybody from the location. But you said in your note that it was
urgent, so here I am. If you've got something to say, I'll listen.

THAMI: Are you in a hurry?

ISABEL: I haven't got to be somewhere else, if that's what you mean.
But if you're asking because it looks as if I would like to run away
from here, from you!...very fast, then the answer is yes. But don't
worry, I'll be able to control that urge for as long as you need to say
what you want to.

THAMI: *(Awkward in the face of Isabel's severe and unyielding
attitude.)* I just wanted to say goodbye.

ISABEL: Again?

THAMI: What do you mean?

ISABEL: You've already done that, Thami. Maybe you didn't use that
word, but you turned your back on me and walked out of my life that
last afternoon the three of us... *(SHE can't finish.)* How long ago was
that?

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THAMI: Three weeks I think.

ISABEL: So why do you want to do it again? Aren't you happy with
the last time? It was so dramatic, Thami.

THAMI: *(Patiently.)* I wanted to see you because I'm leaving the
town, I'm going away for good.

ISABEL: Oh, I see. This is meant to be a "sad" goodbye is it? *(SHE
is on the edge.)* I'm sorry if I'm hurting your feelings but I thought
you wanted to see me because you had something to say about recent
events in our little community... *(Out of a pocket a crumpled little
piece of newspaper which SHE opens with unsteady hands.)* ...a certain
unrest related... I think that is the phrase they use...yes...here is is...

(Reading.) "...unrest related incident in which according to witnesses
the defenseless teacher was attacked by a group of blacks who struck
him over the head with an iron rod before setting him on fire."

THAMI: Stop it, Isabel.

ISABEL: *(Fighting hard for self-control.)* Oh, Thami I wish I could!
I've tried everything, but nothing helps. It just keeps going around and
around inside my head. I've tried crying. I've tried praying! I've
even tried confrontation. Ja, the day after it happened I tried to get into
the location. I wanted to find the witnesses who reported it so
accurately and ask them: ...why didn't you stop it! There was a police
roadblock at the entrance and they wouldn't let me in. They thought I
was crazy or something and "escorted" me back into the safekeeping of
two now very frightened parents.

There is nothing wrong with me! All I need is someone to tell
me why he was killed. What madness drove those people to kill a man
who had devoted his whole life to helping them. He was such a good
man, Thami! He was one of the most beautiful human beings I have
ever known and his death is the ugliest thing I have ever known.

THAMI: *(Gives her a few seconds to calm down. Gently.)* He was an
informer, Isabel. Somehow or the other somebody discovered that Mr.
M was an informer.

ISABEL: You mean that list of pupils taking part in the boycott? You
call that informing?

THAMI: No. It was worse than that. He went to the police and gave

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them the names and addresses of our political action committee. All of them were arrested after his visit. They are now in detention.

ISABEL: Mr. M did that?

THAMI: Yes.

ISABEL: I don't believe it.

THAMI: It's true, Isabel.

ISABEL: No! What proof do you have?

THAMI: His own words. He told me so himself. I didn't believe it either when he was first accused, but the last time I saw him, he said it was true, that he had been to the police.

ISABEL: (Stunned disbelief.) Mr. M? A police spy? For how long?

THAMI: No. It wasn't like that. He wasn't paid or anything. He went to the police just that one time. He said he felt it was his duty.

ISABEL: What do you mean?

THAMI: Operation Qhumisa...the boycotts and strikes, the arson... you know he didn't agree with any of that. But he was also very confused about it all. I think he wished he had never done it.

ISABEL: So he went to the police just once.

THAMI: Yes.

ISABEL: As a matter of conscience.

THAMI: Yes.

ISABEL: That doesn't make him an "informer," Thami!

THAMI: Then what do you call somebody who gives information to the police?

ISABEL: No! You know what that word really means, the sort of person it suggests. Was Mr. M one of those? He was acting out of concern for his people...you said so yourself. He though he was doing the right thing! You don't murder a man for that!

THAMI: (Near the end of his patience.) Be careful, Isabel.

ISABEL: Of what?

THAMI: The words you use.

ISABEL: Oh? Which one don't you like? Murder? What do you want me to call it... "an unrest related incident?" If you are going to call him an informer, then I am going to call his death murder!

THAMI: It was an act of self-defense.

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ISABEL: By who?

THAMI: The People.

ISABEL: (Almost speechless with outrage.) What? A mad mob attacks one unarmed defenseless man and you want me to call it...

THAMI: (Abandoning all attempts at patience. HE speaks with the full authority of the anger inside him.) Stop it, Isabel! You just keep quiet now and listen to me. You're always saying you want to understand us and what it means to be black...well if you do, listen to me carefully now. I don't call it murder, and I don't call the people who did it a mad mob and yes, I do expect you to see it as an act of self-defense... listen to me!...blind and stupid but still self-defense.

He betrayed us and our fight for freedom. Five men are in detention because of Mr. M's visit to the police station. There have been other arrests and there will be more. Why do you think I'm running away?

How were those people to know he wasn't a paid informer who had been doing it for a long time and would do it again? They were defending themselves against what they thought was a terrible danger to themselves. What Anela Myalatyia did to them and their cause is what your laws define as treason when it is done to you and threatens the safety and security of your comfortable white world. Anybody accused of it is put on trial in your courts and if found guilty they get hanged. Many of my people have been found guilty and have been hanged. Those hangings we call murder!

Try to understand, Isabel. Try to imagine what it is like to be a black person, choking inside with rage and frustration, bitterness, and then to discover that one of your own kind is a traitor, has betrayed you to those responsible for the suffering and misery of your family, of your people. What would you do? Remember there is no magistrate or court you can drag him to and demand that he be tried for that crime. There is no justice for black people in this country other than what we make for ourselves. When you judge us for what happened in front of the school four days ago just remember that you carry a share of the responsibility for it. It is your laws that have made simple, decent black people so desperate that they turn into "mad mobs."

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(ISABEL has been listening and watching intently. It looks as if SHE is going to say something but SHE stops herself.)

THAMI: Say it, Isabel.

ISABEL: No.

THAMI: This is your last chance. You once challenged me to be honest with you. I'm challenging you now.

ISABEL: (SHE faces him.) Where were you when it happened, Thami? (Pause.) And if you were, did you try to stop them?

THAMI: Isn't there a third question, Isabel? Was I one of the mob that killed him?

ISABEL: Yes. Forgive me, Thami...please forgive me! ...But there is that question as well. Only once! Believe me, only once...late at night when I couldn't sleep. I couldn't believe it was there in my head, but I heard the words... "Was Thami one of the ones who did it?"

THAMI: If the police catch me, that's the question they will ask.

ISABEL: I'm asking you because... (An open, helpless gesture.)

...I'm lost! I don't know what to think or feel anymore. Help me. Please. You're the only one who can. Nobody else seems to understand that I loved him. (This final confrontation is steady and unflinching on both sides.)

THAMI: Yes, I was there. Yes, I did try to stop it. (THAMI gives Isabel the time to deal with his answer.) I knew how angry the people were. I went to warn him. If he had listened to me he would still be alive, but he wouldn't. It was almost as if he wanted it to happen. I think he hated himself very much for what he had done, Isabel. He kept saying to me that it was all over. He was right. There was nothing left for him. That visit to the police station had finished everything. Nobody would have ever spoken to him again or let him teach their children.

ISABEL: Oh, Thami, it is all so wrong! So stupid! That's what I can't take...the terrible stupidity of it. We needed him. All of us.

THAMI: I know.

ISABEL: Then why is he dead?

THAMI: You must stop asking these questions, Isabel. You know the answers.

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THAMI: They don't make any sense, Thami. I know what you are feeling. (Pause.) I also loved him. I know how much to say it now, I know, but I did. Because he made me so impatient with his "old-fashioned" ideas, I didn't want to do what he wanted. Even if I had, it wouldn't have stopped me from doing what I did. Boycott and everything, but I should have tried harder to understand why I was doing it. You were right to ask about it. (A helpless gesture.) You know the most terrible words I ever heard? (A helpless gesture.) You know the most terrible words I ever heard, Isabel? Too late.

ISABEL: I'll never forgive myself for not trying harder with him and I know...my true feelings for him. Right until the end I tried to tell him, to myself.

THAMI: I'm sorry I...

ISABEL: That's all right.

THAMI: Are the police really looking for you?

ISABEL: Yes. Some of my friends have already been detained.

THAMI: They're pulling in anybody they can get their hands on.

ISABEL: Where are you going? Cape Town?

THAMI: No. That's the first place they'll look. I've written to my friends telling them about everything. I'm heading north.

ISABEL: To where?

THAMI: Far, Isabel. I'm leaving the country.

ISABEL: Does that mean what I think it does?

THAMI: (Nods.) I'm going to join the movement. I want to be a part of it. I know it's the right thing to do. I don't want to end up being one of the mob that killed him.

ISABEL: I've been thinking about it for a long time.

THAMI: I know it's the right thing to do. I don't want to end up being one of the mob that killed him.

ISABEL: I know it's the right thing to do. I don't want to end up being one of the mob that killed him.

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thing is that there's nowhere for me to go and...you know...just be near him. That's so awful. I got my father to phone the police but they said there wasn't enough left of him to justify a grave. What there was had been disposed of in a "Christian manner." So where do I go? The burnt-out ruins of the school? I couldn't face that.

THAMI: Get your father or somebody to drive you to the top of the Wapadsberg Pass. It's on the road to Craddock.

ISABEL: I know it.

THAMI: It was a very special place to him. He told me that it was there where it all started, where he knew what he wanted to do with his life...being a teacher, being the Mr. M we knew. You'll be near him up there. I must go now.

ISABEL: Do you need any money?

THAMI: No. Sala Kakuhle, Isabel. That's the Xhosa goodbye.

ISABEL: I know it. Asispumla taught me how to say it. Hamba Kakhule, Thami.

(THAMI leaves.)

THE PINK STUDIO

by Jane Anderson

France - Early 1900's - Henri (40-50) - Claudine (40's)

Henri Matisse - A famous artist

Claudine - Henri's strong-willed wife

Henri and Claudine are on holiday when Henri spots an old friend from their balcony and invites him up.

(We hear the ocean and laughing offstage. Claudine, in only a slip, runs to the balcony and stands there relishing the air.)

CLAUDINE: Henri, come out here! Oh, it's just magnificent! (Henri ENTERS in his shirt tails.) Come out on the balcony and feel the sun! Oh, isn't this lovely. I wish we could stay here all year.

(Henri joins her.)

HENRI: You're a magnificent woman.

CLAUDINE: Thank you.

HENRI: I want to see you naked against the sea.

CLAUDINE: I know, Love. Oh, Henri, do you know what I'd like to do? I'd like to take you down to the flower market. Shall we do that?

HENRI: Yes, I'd like to see you naked there.

CLAUDINE: Stop. Oh, I have to take you there. You won't believe how many flowers there are. Carnations are in season. I love carnations. Let's buy bunches of them and bring them back to the room.

HENRI: (bending over the balcony) Hallo! Derain! Hallo! How the hell are you! (back to Claudine) Claudine, Derain is here.

CLAUDINE: (not thrilled) Oh, good.

HENRI: (to Derain) What? We just arrived last night. I'm here with Claudine! We just finished making love!

CLAUDINE: Henri, are you mad?!

HENRI: What a woman! I love her, Derain!

CLAUDINE: (over this) Henri! For God's sake!

HENRI: (to Derain) Yes come up! Come up! Room number Twenty.

CLAUDINE: Do you think anyone on the beach missed that?