

*Marian Ilea*

# **MEDIO-MONTE's Socialisation Society (Project of the European Union)**

- A single act play -

## **Characters:**

**Lang** – elderly gentleman, former master mason, dressed in a suit.

**Liz** – elderly lady, dressed in a long dress.

**Henrietta** – elderly lady, dressed casually, as if going to the market.

The characters will come forth from the back of the stage: Lang and Liz from the left, and Henrietta from the right.

On a board, in the background, is written: "MEDIO-MONTE's Socialisation Society - Project of the European Union".

On the stage there are three couches, three nightstands, and three lamps. The lamps will light upon the characters and the stage; as for the rest, darkness. Only the board will have its own lighting system.

The three characters enter the stage, half-hearted, as if uneasy, formally saluting each other. They are sitting on the couches taking bulky notebooks from the nightstands.

In accordance with their curiosity or carelessness, they will talk or write.

We are at MEDIO-MONTE's socialising senior center.

## **Act One**

**Lang:** It thundered in the pharmacy. Yesterday towards nightfall. During the storm. First it broke loose, and then there were electric discharges. The investigation for the case has begun since...

**Liz:** Since the case can only be the fabrication of an exalted man's brain, one who doesn't want to give satisfaction to the truth in an altruistic way...

**Henrietta:** Since man doesn't serve the interests of this community, so any judgment on the case reported is suspended.

**Lang:** A blanket caught fire while left to dry, scattering a choking smoke in the room. Those inside the room were asphyxiated, dying afterwards. The pharmacist said that he couldn't abandon his pharmacy, but allowed his aid to leave it...

**Henrietta:** The dead silence of the northern neighbourhood was briskly interrupted. We know this already, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** By means of the wooden semantron that started to beat, Mrs. Henrietta.

**Liz:** Are you by any chance a fireman, Mr. Lang? And do you have a whistle that's quite like a siren?

**Lang:** I'm a master mason, as you already know, Mrs. Liz.

**Liz:** A man with physical defects cannot participate in the extinguishing of fires. But he can dream of what he can't do, Mr. Lang.

**Henrietta:** Mr. Lang walks by, Mrs. Liz.

**Liz:** By, by Mr. Lang walks, Henrietta.

**Lang:** Ladies, I had a little car with a little plug to perfume girls. I had a little green pouch made out of vinyl, in which I used to carry my food to kindergarten. In the light of a gas lamp I used to listen to a transistor radio.

**Liz:** Aha, Mr. Lang, I have graduated from finishing school, with education for ladies of high society, with piano lessons, with household administration lessons, and everything a young lady might need to become an important man's wife.

**Lang:** I don't remember perfuming you, Mrs. Liz. Ladies, my mother was an old woman, short of stature, proud of herself and her origins.

**Liz:** I had a grand piano in my room, I had massive, heavy furniture with the scent of old wood.

**Henrietta:** I recall that swing from the backyard, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** Neither do I remember perfuming you...

**Liz:** You couldn't have, Mr. Lang; we were perfumed by Mr. Stamboli; a tall, strong man with a baldness hid under a lock of hair that passed from one part of his head to the other.

**Henrietta:** With fiery eyes, Stamboli the city Baker's boy.

**Liz:** His father worked at a bakery. He took a barbershop in a joint venture.

**Lang:** Oh, good old Stamboli— the barber, of course, I remember that he didn't walk, he ran! Bent by age, looking downwards, he used to stop to catch his breath, wipe the sweat that was covering his baldness... Ladies, I wouldn't even have perfumed you. There wasn't even a way to do so, but even if there was, I still wouldn't have done it.

**Liz:** Stamboli, the wonderful and devout barber that looked at the sky.

**Henrietta:** He ate ginger bread bought from the city's deluxe store.

**Liz:** It sweetens me up; he used to say, munching with pleasure.

**Lang:** He cut hair in the light of a lamp that was fidgeting on the Barbershops' wall. He didn't need light. His hands knew everything. In the air hung the scent of sweat soaked into the walls. Ladies, new barbershops have appeared in the city. Mrs. Henrietta, Mrs. Liz, his work concerned a few loyal customers who remembered that he is still on this Earth. He respectfully addressed each customer: Good day, good day, God bless, I wish you good health, may God give you good health, thank you from the bottom of my heart, see? God is helping us. Whenever he finished his work. His customers were fewer by the day. They would depart to the graveyard, not in need of a barber anymore.

**Liz:** What is your full name, Mr. Lang?

**Lang:** My full name, Mrs. Liz?

**Liz:** Where are you from, Mr. Lang?

**Lang:** From my home, Mrs. Liz.

**Liz:** Exactly as I presumed, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** Where I am in need of nothing. I have everything I need, Mrs. Liz.

**Liz:** Exactly as I presumed, Mr. Lang.

**Henrietta:** I want to know everything... what do you need, mister?

**Lang:** Yes, Mrs. Henrietta, because I had a house, and since I've had it I always kept inquiring about all my needs. God bless, may you have a long and healthy life, Mrs. Henrietta.

**Henrietta:** Exactly as I presumed, Liz.

**Lang:** Ladies, since my boy had died, I was left only with my daughter-in-law.

**Henrietta:** Oh, sir, seniors these days.

**Lang:** Good day, good day, God bless, Mrs. Henrietta.

**Liz:** What wind brought you here, Mr Lang?

**Lang:** Madam, I had a very harsh youth. I earned my bread. For many years. I urged myself and made my house with these very hands. Because I was in full vigour, I did everything I could by means of labour. I was very satisfied, and I had a little car with a little plug for perfuming. It was a cologne bottle that looked like a little car. That's exactly what I had. When they ran empty, I went to buy a new one, since they were cheap. Stamboli would bring them to the barbershop, and sell them to me whenever it was necessary.

**Liz:** You mustn't go to Stamboli's barbershop anymore.

**Henrietta:** You have no reason to go there anymore.

**Liz:** Do you understand, Mr. Lang?

**Lang:** Ladies, good day, good day, God bless...

**Liz:** To almost be thrown out on the streets at the age of seventy-five.

**Henrietta:** Well, how could this be?

**Liz:** To have a house, a dead son, and a living daughter-in-law.

**Henrietta:** No big deal, Liz.

**Liz:** To hear that daughter-in-law telling you that she's selling the house, Henrietta.

**Henrietta:** On the contrary, Liz, to hear her say 'I sold you house, Lang'.

**Liz:** To hear her say 'It was your house and I sold it, Lang, you have no right to go there anymore'.

**Henrietta:** To get out, to leave, to cry...

**Liz:** To end up living on the sidewalk in this city, to say, near Stamboli's barbershop, wonderful mister Stamboli, because you have nowhere to go, that you have no home, you have absolutely no one, Henrietta.

**Henrietta:** To be frightened that you can only go in one place, in the ground, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** Ladies, good day, good day, God bless.

**Liz and Henrietta (together):** Oh, seniors these days...

**Lang:** In my mind I pray to God...

**Liz and Henrietta (together):** The dead man was a good man, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** Ladies, a man is like any other man. I am glad that I haven't perfumed you. I forgot. Now I forgot, Stamboli used to say 'Lang, don't listen to old women, 'cause they will say this and that; you mind of your own home and that daughter-in-law of yours. Ladies, good day, good day, God bless...

**Liz:** You stay there for food, cigarettes and clothing anyway, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** All these women over seventy-five are just bitter. Of course, this doesn't mean you can't engage in a conversation with them.

**Henrietta:** You count your pennies to make sure they are enough for you, mister.

**Lang:** I want to take off, but I will not. When you see a young daughter-in-law, your eyes will tear for her. Well-dressed, groomed, not like those fat ones from the finishing school, who don't give a damn about grooming, ladies, a young widowed daughter-in-law, sweet as a doll. I will not say a word more.

**Liz:** You've lost our trust, you were dumb, Mr. Lang. Greedy women are attracted to you like flies to honey.

**Lang:** Ladies, I'm packing my bags, I'm leaving, maybe I will not come back, no, I will come back, I'll come back again, how, may God help me... could I not I love this city.

**Henrietta:** Mr. Lang is a simple man with twisted thinking, Liz.

**Liz:** The ox that pulls this daughter-in-law's plough, Henrietta. A proper life is here, there aren't any ordeals the kind he has in that house, where he is sent to the 'doghouse' to sleep, eat, and relieve himself.

**Lang:** Ladies, I had stomach surgery five times. Only once did it tear apart. It didn't stick. I got cut again. Again. I got stitched. That was the sixth surgery.

**Liz:** And do you want yet another surgery, Mr. Lang?

**Lang:** I want to go there again, to go and see, either I'll get surgery done or I'll be given some medicine. One of these two!

**Liz:** You gave all you had so that she will take care of you, Mr. Lang.

**Henrietta:** You gave all you had so that she will bury you, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** From talk to talk I told my daughter-in-law that I need understanding, so that she will help me when I fall down. And God helps me day and night. She told me 'Let's get married at that big Church near the hospital, father-in-law. So that no other heirs may show up. A full-fledged marriage, with the cross, the Gospel, with a crown on our heads, with honey, exactly how it's done.

**Liz:** Have you had ribbons as well?

**Lang:** I've had ribbons too. And Father Nelu was our godfather.

**Henrietta:** Lang sits in a bed, in one room. The daughter-in-law sits in another bed, in another room.

**Lang:** In the morning we get up, wash, and make our beds. I bring her breakfast at bed. Coffee at bed. God take good care of her, so she will not die before I do.

**Liz:** And then, she goes for walks in the city.

**Henrietta:** While he is taking a round of medicine.

**Lang:** When night comes we each head to our rooms, to our beds. Ladies, it is very nice. I have a very nice life in that little house of mine. Those people that have those big houses with many floors are not so happy, Mrs. Henrietta, Mrs. Liz.

**Liz:** Mr. Lang does everything his daughter-in-law tells him.

**Henrietta:** That daughter-in-law of his ended up becoming his wife.

**Lang:** A legit wife, ladies.

**Liz:** The world is so tangled, Henrietta.

**Henrietta:** I untangled it at my home. I wash dishes, watch a movie, and then wash dishes again.

**Liz:** You occasionally drink an old brandy, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** Some vanilla liqueur, Mrs. Liz.

**Liz and Henrietta (together):** If you shove your hand in an empty pocket, you can't get anything from it, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** Ladies, I used to earn quite good when I had my own pay, twenty-five hundred lei.

**Liz and Henrietta (together):** You also had those tips from masonry, Mr. Lang.

**Lang:** I shall not mention that those were two times bigger than my pay.

**Liz and Henrietta (together):** In these times, the Church should be more deeply involved. The priests should be the ferment. Absolutely, Mr. Lang, like the Ursuline Sisters, which have filmstrips with religion and its wonderful role in day to day life.

**Lang:** Ladies, I am glad that I've never perfumed you with that bottle with a plug, shaped like a car, which I used to buy from Stamboli the barber.

*(Darkness)*

## **Curtains**