

101 FM

Radio version of drama script Our Little Centenary

Original script developed in residency programs Drama 5 at Creative and Experimental Reactor in Cluj

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CHARACTERS:

Child TOMA ,aged12

Adult TOMA, around 30 – his thoughts arise from an unspecified future, a moment when he fully grasps the world around him and his family's past.(All his cues are actually his own thoughts, written in red).

IOANA, his Mother, 37

TUDOR, his Father, 37

VICTOR, Ioana's uncle, 63

ANUȚA, Ioana's Grandmother and Victor's, Mother, aged100

2018 National Centennial Celebration, Romania.

/ marks the moments when lines start to be (partly) superposed

Inside an old shabby two-storey house,where Anuța lives. It's a former merchant house, rather tall and narrow, and its front looks like a retro radio set. It's as if everything happened in an old radio set and we could see the rooms and walls through its front.

SCENE 1. THE RADIO

The Family are inside great grandmother's house

SFX: thumps on the radio wooden carcass, change of radio frequencies
fragments of folklore and patriotic music, political speeches of different
types and times are mingling. News, interviews, talk shows on religious
topics etc.

Voice of Adult TOMA: *Back when I was a child, what I loved the most here, in
great granny's house, was this old radio, complete with buttons, which
looked so much like the whole place itself. They had the same shape, the
same kind of wood, as if somehow the radio was the house's baby. There was
this smell of must and vanilla sugar and the set used to work, even if it gave
a crackling sound every now and then...*

TUDOR: I'd like to try and fix that old radio...

IOANA: Some things can simply no longer be fixed.

Voice of TOMA A : *Mom was not talking about her relationship with Dad. She
believed there were other things that were past mending.*

VICTOR: Almost anything can be mended one way or another.

Voice of TOMA A: *Mom said uncle Victor went through Medical school to keep
his own mother - great granny to me - alive forever*

IOANA (to Tudor): That's also why Mom trained as a nurse. So she could have
two children who would always take care of her. But Mom chose the elderly
people in Venice over her. She thought they and their musty houses deserved
a better chance of being eternal, so...Granny was left with Victor alone.
What do you make of my theory?

TUDOR (to Ioana, bent over the radio: Hmmm....

Voice of TOMA A: *Mom's a very bright woman who is always right.*

TUDOR (to Ioana): Uncle Victor happens to be a gynecologist, so I just don't see
how he could manage to keep Granny alive.

Voice of TOMA A: *An irrelevant detail, that's what I think. Even if he had been a cardiologist, he couldn't have kept her forever alive. Nobody can do that. Still, great granny is immortal, through her own powers.*

ANUȚA (*painfully gets up using her stick, while rejecting Victor's gesture of intended help*): Through one's own powers, as our great Nicolae Bălcescu would put it.

SFX: Toma's monologue is a voice over sounds of radio crackling, short signal fading and retrieving the right frequencies. He seems to be tracking a frequency to help him connect to the past, to that moment in childhood when they all celebrated great granny's centennial.

Voice of TOMA A: *Whenever we were visiting, I used to be glued to this radio set. They would sometimes broadcast old recordings of radio dramas or tales from the time when my folks were kids. The old tales, they were my personal favourites. Music was ok, too, I didn't mind it. But what I loved most of all was to switch the buttons and change frequencies while the others were speaking. News, special reports, interviews, religious talk shows, it didn't matter at all...The radio made me discover that people do broadcast and live on parallel channels. But whenever things matched, when two channels seemed to cross paths and the unfamiliar voices sort of communicated with one another for a few moments, I felt as if I had managed – bang! - to create my own small Universe, improbably beautiful and intelligible.*

Inside the house, Ioana is talking to Tudor, Anuța is talking to Victor on different channels that seem to intersect and involuntarily communicate with each other. The lines followed by / are overlapping.

TUDOR (*staring at the radio*): I could try to fix it, even if it's old and...

IOANA: Why should you fix it? Help her tune in to all those programs that confuse her and make her question her judgement...and make us wish we had better be some...

VICTOR (*speaking enthusiastically over the phone*): successful abortions, yes, Mom. My success rate of medical abortions is 100%. As for the birth rate...

IOANA: ...less. Toma should eat less

ANUȚA: Bread. I just want to sit down and peacefully enjoy a fresh loaf of bread, and if those guys give me a 10 lei raise in the pension I draw, then that's why I will go there, to do what my mind is telling me, /as long as it's still clear, alone in/

. Eu vreau doar să mănânc liniștită o pâine proaspătă, și dacă ăștia-mi dau 10 lei în plus la pensie, atunci pentru asta o să mă duc, după cum îmi spune mintea mea, /cât mai e întreagă, singură în /

TUDOR (*closing the bathroom door*): / the place where even the king goes all by himself! Will you, please, leave me alone/

ANUȚA: /In the vote cabine.

Voice of TOMA A: *That's how everything started, with this very button. With my love for all things radio.(he suddenly turns the radio off)*

The channel mix stops abruptly. Inside the house everybody is minding his/her own business.

Voice of Child TOMA: *My name is Toma, I am 12, and I want to start my own podcast. I want to record voices on a tape recorder like the ones people had back in Granny's days.*

I will be named the Non Believer. It's just that Mom won't let me do it, she says I'm too young and I don't have the proper powers of discerning yet. That I could go saying things I might regret later, much as I would regret eating too much bread and too little of anything else.

IOANA (*in the kitchen, to Victor*): The kid practically lives on bread. Who could live on bread alone? And for how long?

VICTOR: I don't know. I'm a gynecologist. And don't forget Mom lives on bread alone and she's in perfect shape at 100.

Voice of TOMA C: *So I'm doing research work for the time being. I record all sorts of stuff that I'm going to use later on. When Mom thinks I have enough discerning powers. I record conversations, ideas, sounds...anything... Maybe*

I'm feeding my body through my ears. This morning I recorded Granny's breath. I'm wondering...the less discerning powers you have, the more you are capable of feeling nostalgia?

He pushes the play button on his recorder. Sound of someone's wheezing breath.

TOMA (*happy and excited about his surescitat, încântat his catch*): Listen to that, Dad! It's Great Granny's wheezing.

TUDOR: Oh my God, maybe there's something wrong with her lungs. Shouldn't we take her to see a doctor, Ioana?

VICTOR: I took her to the hospital last month. We did all possible tests, the nurses pushed her wheel chair along every corridor, she was treated like a queen. There's nothing wrong with her, she's just old, what do you expect?

Great Granny's crackling breath is even louder now.

IOANA: It's the dust. Mark my words, it's the dirt and the mold. And the pigeon poop. She should go away from this ramshackle cellar.

VICTOR: I told her to come stay at my place, I've got five empty rooms.

(**to Anuța**) I mean it, Mom, you're going to love it...

ANUȚA (*wheezing*): So you think you're going to make me do your housework?

IOANA (*blowing fugitive dust around her*): Nobody's expecting you to do any work, Granny... But maybe living in uncle Victor's house will do you good.

ANUȚA: Well, then where would the pigeon go, my cute little friend, when he wants to play with his favourite radio? This house my old man built with his own hands will be left to him, won't it.

SFX: The house creaks, pigeons are cooing outside the window,...

TUDOR: We could take the radio too, the pigeon will play with it all day long.

IOANA: We could clean it.

TUDOR: Mend it.

IOANA: Ge it recondit.../

ANUȚA (*surprisingly vehement and menacing*): Over my dead body!

SFX: The crackling in her breath intensifies and it mingles with the sound of static coming from the radio Toma has just turned on.

VICTOR: Which means never.

Anuța keeps wheezing

SCENE 2. THE GIFT

Voice of TOMA A: *Dad has tried to fix the radio and has actually broken it, so I think that's when his crackling moved away and settled into great granny's chest. Everything is linked here –the radio, the house and great granny. Oh, let's not forget to add what is the most important of all – Romania! My great granny was born in 1918, just like Greater Romania, I mean precisely during the year that witnessed (he recites as if he were in a school pageant) the unification in thought and heart of historical Romanian provinces and of all the territories inhabited by them into one quite large country – as they used to teach us back in school. And anyone who hasn't been to school has surely found out via TV, buses, advertising, public contests, speeches, concerts, supermarkets and all sort of festivals and public celebrations dedicated to the Centennial of the Great Union. That very year we were about to celebrate great granny's 100 years, so we went to visit her.*

SFX: Out in the courtyard, preparing to hit the road. Toma's in the car headphones on, listening to music, but he can still hear his parents' voices.

IOANA (*utterly annoyed to her husband, while she is distributing suitcases in the car trunk*): It's for the last time, I swear!

TUDOR: Come on, Ioana, uncle Victor has already arrived there by now. Great granny's anniversary is the family's ritual.

The next scene takes place in the car, on the way to Anuța. Sound of bags and suitcases being placed in the trunk. Great granny's thoughts can be heard in Toma's headphones.

IOANA: I do hope she's not going to die tonight, at 100!

TUDOR: Come now, admit! Are you worried that you don't have a gift for her?

IOANA: She doesn't like gifts, you know it.

TUDOR: Maybe she doesn't like gifts from you.

IOANA: When I took her to Venice, to my mother's place, she didn't even say as much as a thank you.

TUDOR: That was because she never got to properly meet your mother. Who went to some funeral with the old geezer she's looking after. That was some visit indeed...

IOANA: We could have gone to that island where the funeral took place. I did offer ...

TUDOR: ...A memento mori, true?

IOANA: What about the rest of the trip? The ice cream? San Marco Square? The vaporetto tour?

TUDOR(smiling): She told me our pigeons are more civilized. They don't plunge their sharp claws into the hand that's feeding them and keep a polite distance from their benefactors.

***Voice of TOMA:** Great granny loves pigeons. That's why she calls me „my pigeon”. Because she loves me almost as much as she loves those birds. She shares her fresh bread with them every day. The crumbs are always there, on the window sill.*

TUDOR: What else can I say...As long as she didn't even enjoy the pigeons, maybe she simply doesn't know how to take things that come her way.

.

IOANA: You really think so? She told me about ten times what a wonderful gift uncle Victor gave her last year. A Rexona spray.

TUDOR: Shall I stop and go buy a Rexona spray?

IOANA: She still has the one Victor gave her. She's saving on it.

Pause.

TUDOR: Admit that it *hurts* you.

IOANA: It does not *hurt* me.

Voice of TOMA: *Mom reads psychology books, she goes to therapy and knows everything that is going on inside her. She believes that's why I, too, have so good an „emotional intelligence”, because I take after her. My Mom always says my thinking is mature. I just lack the power of discerning. But she has the power and, when she says something doesn't hurt her, then it doesn't.*

IOANA: Ok, it does *hurt* me. It hurts that I have never been good enough for her. That she doesn't know and doesn't care what I do for a living or what I believe in, and every time I say something clever, the only question she asks is:

ANUȚA' Voice (*loud, on the phone*): *Did you eat anything? What shall I cook for you?*

IOANA: And this very question hurts me since she doesn't even cook any longer, as a matter of fact. (NT Sau **since there's nothing whatever to eat in her own house – cum e in inregistrare**) But if I say it out loud, then she goes on to ask:

ANUȚA's Voice (*loud, on the phone*): *And the pigeon, sweet thing, did he eat? Dar porumbelul, drăgălașul, a mâncat?*

IOANA: Yes, he did. He ate bread, he likes bread. Just like you, Granny... (to Tudor). It *hurts* me I have always been a good-for-nothing in her eyes, I have never done anything right, never been able to feed my family or myself for that matter and I have always been a softie. I've never had

TUDOR (*amused*): Balls?

IOANA: No, she doesn't like that, can't you see what she did to Victor's? She thinks I've never had

TUDOR: The intellect to do full medical studies, so you could take care of her forever?

IOANA: No. I've never had...never had...

TOMA: Discerning powers?

IOANA:(to Toma) Are we too loud, Toma?

TOMA: In can hear you through my headphones, anyway.

IOANA (*to Tudor*): That I've never had the tact to lie to her. If I had lied to her and she'd seen I was lying, then she would be proud of me. I'd be a strong and clever woman. She really does think along those lines. And what hurts me most is that...it all hurts me.

TUDOR: And you're willing to do it?

IOANA: Do what?

TUDOR: Lie to her?

IOANA: And what kind of lies should I tell her? That you haven't eaten at all?

TUDOR: I would be a good start. She would feel useful.

IOANA: So she wants to feel useful.

TUDOR: It's a possible. Lie to her, tell her she's useful.

IOANA: So, that should be my gift to her?

TUDOR(*sighs*) : .. I have a feeling it's not enough.

IOANA(*in a sarcastic voice*) : Should I add a Rexona spray? A lie about her being useful plus a Rexona?

TUDOR: Do you believe she'd like to hear she's useful? Maybe she wants to hear she's beautiful. (

IOANA: I could try that, too. One way or another. She's very well dressed, anyway. By the standards of 40 years ago. So, she really puts up a nice appearance, yes!

TUDOR: Strong? Hard-working? Fertile?

IOANA: Should I say all of the above? Don't you think it's too much?

TUDOR: No. I think there's room for more.

TOMA (*taking headphones off, he joins the conversation*): Say that she has discerning powers.

TUDOR: That she is one of a kind.

TOMA: That she's good and generous.

TUDOR : Eh...

TOMA: What now?... She really is. To pigeons.

TUDOR: The best Mom. The best ... granny?

Ioana doesn't say a word. Toma and Tudor start a game of rhyme in time. They can even improvise a little song. Or you can have a Romanian song being played in the background, on the radio.

TOMA (both end up by saying their lines to the rhythm of rap) : Say that she's the best great granny.

TUDOR: That she's charming

TOMA: That she's wellcoming.

TUDOR: That's she's full of candour ...and ...colour?

TOMA: That she's as wise as a good...

IOANA: witch

TUDOR: That she's also patient.

TOMA: a real benefactor. That she is...

TUDOR: Immortal!

IOANA: It sounds good. Almost like an ode.

(she can go on playing with the word to the rhythm of rap: /Oh, dear...O...de...All day...! Etc) NT (Partea asta un apare in inregistrare)

TOMA: Ode. Oh, dear. ...All day! ...Though it's hard to write down...

IOANA: Do you know any kind of ode? You could recite it to your great granny, for her anniversary.

TOMA: „Ode In Antique Metre” by Mihai Eminescu. (he starts reciting) I little thought that I would learn to die...

IOANA: Don't you know a more cheerful one? I'm listening!...

TUDOR: ... Yes, definitely...one that should talk about immortality and about all the best qualities we want to falsely pile on great granny, so your mother could feel comfortable about going to the anniversary and not bringing a gift. Actually, your Mom is just as obsessed about appearances as great granny and she wants

TOMA: To lie?

TUDOR: Nooo... not to lie. Just to lie to herself. To feel she has utterly done her best. In case great granny dies. I mean not in case she dies, but the moment she dies.

IOANA (she cuts in on Tudor): Do you know any other ode, Toma?

TOMA: No...

TUDOR: Then another poem. A nice one, about great granny's personal qualities.

IOANA: Like an ode...

TUDOR: I know! An homage. Like an homage. Any idea, Toma?

TOMA: Yes, I do, just stop the car

They stop. And listen to him.

TOMA: We're going to the gas station to buy a Rexona spray.

IOANA: Very funny, what can I say!?

TUDOR: I'd say he's very smart.

IOANA: And talented. *(to Tudor)* He wants to start his own podcast, doesn't he?

TUDOR: Come now. He's got good ears and he's a good talker. He has a gift for literature. I think he could start a cool podcast, he just needs to begin practising a little.

TOMA: But I am practising. I record things. And ideas.

TUDOR: You could practise more, and include style. Writing...

IOANA: Odes?

TUDOR: Or homages.

TOMA:... wouldn't I better chose my own subjects? I mean, if I write something I don't really believe, if I lie on command, wouldn't those lies damage my soul and my talent? That's what you told me happened in communist times.

IOANA: I don't know. Think for yourself, you do have the power to discern.

TUDOR: But you don't have to lie. You just have to tell the truth about great granny.

IOANA: About how wonderful great granny is.

TUDOR: It would be nice to have something till tomorrow morning. Wake her up to the sound of the ode, instead of „Happy Anniversary!“

TOMA: The Homage.

IOANA: As you say.

TOMA: Why do we absolutely have to go? As long as none of us wants to... and we don't have a gift...why are we going at all?

TUDOR: It's great granny's anniversary, Toma dear. We have to go!

IOANA: And you've been constantly pestering me with that radio. So we're doing it for you, too. We're doing it mostly for you. Didn't you say that... So, as long as you have discerning powers, you have an homage. And if you have an homage, you have the podcast!

SCENE 3. DOCUMENTATION

Sounds of voices in Toma's head, jammed radio frequencies, interfering with each other.

Scene set in great granny's house, the day before the anniversary.

Voice of TOMA A : *So I started on the homage. My first impulse was to write down great granny's best qualities.*

SFX: Static crackling, jammed, interfering frequencies.

Voice of TOMA A : *I just couldn't concentrate properly. The moment we reached great granny's house, everything around me was buzzing and I was tuned to everybody else's frequencies, even if I didn't want to. Let's say I was in search of a rhyme for... (writes down, thinks aloud)*

Voice of Child TOMA: *Loving.../loving.../loving...*

Everyone else is minding their own business while saying out loud just one word. Fragments of lines seem to come out of the crackling radio set...

IOANA's Voice: *...feeding!//*

ANUȚA's Voice: *.. voting!//*

Voice of TOMA C: *Or, let's say I was in search of a rhyme for „beloved mom and... wife, a beauty”//*

IOANA's Voice: */guilty!//*

VICTOR's Voice: */wealthy!//*

TUDOR's Voice: /stealthy?!

Voice of TOMA A: *They were not at all good rhymes, by the way. Most of the time, they used the same part of speech, which should be avoided, that's what great granny herself taught me, since she used to teach music classes, so you can't come to her with two-pennies-worth stuff.*

ANUȚA's Voice: *Or I'll penalise you so fast you won't even know what hit you – uuu (the final vowel is sung in a shrill voice). Laaaa.... (then she starts a singing warm-up, her voices mingles with radio jamming)*

Voice of TOMA A: *Well, since I didn't have a chance to concentrate with all those voices, and my head seemed to be full of stereotypes like hard-working and welcoming, beloved mother ...*

IOANA's voice: /Castrating woman!

SFX The superposed voices intensify radio jamming, then everything is focused on one frequency till the end of the following line.

Voice of TOMA A: *Eversince we were in the car, on the road, I have decided to let the channels work. To do what I know the best: to listen...*

TOMA : *...and to record..*

IOANA's Voice: *... he hasn't eaten anything on the road, so he wouldn't throw up. When it comes to not eating, Toma actually takes after my grandma...*

Voice of TOMA A: *To listen to my father and my mother's voices, to uncle Victor's voice and great granny's voice..*

ANUȚA's Voice: *I've lately ate well. In hospital. It was last month...*

Voice of TOMA A: *To listen to them intently, better then they have ever listened to themselves, to listen to their thoughts and wishes, too...*

VICTOR's Voice: *I've been working in the best hospital in town for over 30 years. Where else was I to go? I didn't want to leave my...*

ANUȚA's Voice(over Victor's) : /Mother!!

VICTOR: /Hospital!

***Voice of TOMA A** ... and to everything they are usually hiding, to listen to them when they separate and when – bang – they cross each other's path by accident,...*

***IOANA'a Voice:** However, there are things you cannot possibly chose. Such as which of your grandparents you take after. And Toma takes after my grandma. Especially when it comes to hearing and not eating...*

***Voice of TOMA A:** ...for my hearing was exceptionally fine, because I used to eat few things, quite few*

***Voice of TUDOR:**... after 50 years of famine, you can't possibly ignore who and what the communists really are..*

***Voice of TOMA A** ...and on that day, since I hadn't eaten anything at all, for fear of throwing up, my hearing was better than ever...*

***ANUȚA's Voice:** Two days before going to the hospital I didn't eat anything at all...*

***TOMA** ...Be careful! Everything is being recorded.*

XXX SFX: Engine sound inside the car and jammed interfering voices in Toma's headphones.

***ANUȚA's Voice:** I can resist even longer than that, I have great strength,...*

***TUDOR's Voice:** 50 years, that's how long she resisted, maybe she wants to break her own record,/through voting*

(Superposed voices for the next lines)

***ANUȚA's Voice (on the radio):** / through herself!,*

***IOANA's Voice:** / through her grand child who carries on the non eating*

***VICTOR's Voice:** You go on and eat, Mom told me.*

ANUȚA's Voice: I do whatever it takes so things turn out right.

TUDOR's Voice: Election results can't/ turn out right if

ANUȚA's Voice: /Turn out right...

IOANA's Voice: A kid's future can't turn out right when his genes are...

ANUȚA's Voice (loud, over everybody else's): /So test results should turn out right! That's why I didn't eat anything at all.

VICTOR' Voice: And the test results were excellent. Mom is doing very well, she's in good health.

ANUȚA's Voice: ...And hungry. I felt very hungry. And I only had...

TUDOR's Voice:two possible choices.

IOANA's Voice: A communist grandma or a legionary grandma.

ANUȚA's Voice: unsalted bread! Victor, those jerks in your hospital gave me unsalted bread, Victor?

TOMA's Voice (low, writing down rhymes): Salty...Tumoury... And what if great granny goes bump and dies?...

SFX: Car engine sound stops.

IOANA: (marked lack of enthusiasm) Come on, here is granny's house...!

SCENE 4. TOGETHER

Inside great granny's house, in real plan. AnuȚa and her family are laying the table.

ANUȚA: I'm happy we are together again. You should stick together, even after

VICTOR: After what, Mom?

TUDOR: Tomorrow, after the anniversary.

IOANA: After leaving her house. Definitely. We'll talk to each other. On the phone.

TOMA: I think great granny means after her death.

VICTOR: Toma....

ANUȚA: Come and live here, in this house, and be as one!

Pause.

ANUȚA: Promise me you'll do it. Now!

TUDOR: But we have our own house, our friends, our own life, Granny!

IOANA: ...And this house needs refurbishing, it's quite dangerous for a child to walk about it.

ANUȚA: Then you should refurbish it! I took it back from the capitalists.

TUDOR: Communists.

ANUȚA: I took it back after the Revolution.

TUDOR: Yes, but it was the communists who took it.

ANUȚA (*she snaps, angry voice*): But I took it back from the capitalists. They had no business taking it, did they?

TOMA: Maybe they took it just to give it back to you?

ANUȚA: I was able to take it back all by myself, so you can very well refurbish it. I'm leaving it to you. It's my father's work, just fix it and start living in it, all together!

IOANA: Bu we live in our own house. So does uncle Victor. What should... Wouldn't you like to sell it and...travel for a while? See ...the world? Maybe get to know some... Western democracies at work?

ANUȚA: Sell it... sell it... there's a word I can't even contemplate, it makes me sick...only over my dead body!

VICTOR: Which means never!

ANUȚA: And if you don't want to live here, it's perfectly fine.

IOANA (*stands up, relieved*): So it's fine.

ANUȚA: Then you could do something out of it, together. Something...profitable.

TOMA: A radio station?

IOANA: Good thinking, Toma. A radio station. Or maybe a spa

VICTOR: A... bar? ...a hotel maybe...?

TUDOR: ...An escape room.

VICTOR: ...A museum?

ANUȚA: A museum would be all right. But what I really had in mind was a maternity ward. Let's fill this house with cute babies. We already have an expert...

IOANA: ...in C-sections and abortions, aren't you? No, I don't agree! (*to Victor*)
Tell me, how many medically unnecessary C sections have you performed?

VICTOR: Gynecologists save lives for your information. They surgically remove fibroids, polyps, ovarian cysts...

IOANA(over his voice): /Everything you do is abortion or childbirth.

VICTOR: Come, come, now!

IOANA (standing her ground) : I have the proof, Toma recorded everything!

VICTOR (către Toma) :You don't say!

Pause. Silence.

SFX: *Tudor turns on Tv set, zaps through different channels broadcasting political talk shows. Sound of different voices in the background.*

TUDOR: Let's see what's new on Tv...

TOMA: Well... I have to do some documentation, to write an homage to great granny, for her anniversary.

IOANA: That was a surprise!

TOMA: And my recordings were confidential!

VICTOR: An homage? Why didn't you say so?! I only bought a Rexona spray.

IOANA: Did you?

ANUȚA: Oh, darling, thank you so much! But you shouldn't spend your money on me...

IOANA (*to Toma*): There it is, Toma, you are out of the woods. No more homage!

ANUȚA: On the contrary. I'd like to hear it. Especially since the pigeon wrote it.

TOMA: Aa.. I have only written the beginning. Just a few words.

ANUȚA: Let's hear the beginning!

TUDOR: But it's for tomorrow, it was your anniversary surprise!

ANUȚA: What if I die till tomorrow? It can happen, you know...technically speaking.

VICTOR: Which means never!

ANUȚA (*to Toma, in a ferm voice*): I'm all ears!

TOMA: It's just the beginning, and I'm not even convinced ...

IOANA: ...Toma, if great granny wants to hear it ...

TOMA: I only wrote two lines:

Beloved mother, granny and great granny/To me you're not at all... that scary!

That's it. I didn't get to write more.

SFX: *In the background, voices of street protesters come from the Tv set*

(TUDOR (an idea coming to mind) : Or, we could set up a theatre company in here! Or a library. Or a music school, since granny used to be...

ANUȚA (*to Toma*): I'm not sure I caught the second verse. Your diction is a little faulty, young man.

TOMA (*even more frightened*) : Beloved mother, granny and great granny/To me you're not at all...(underlined) that scary!)

SFX: TV in the background.

TUDOR (*whispers to Ioana*): Help him, Ioana!

ANUȚA: Anyway, we will sit down and talk about what you are going to do with father's house, don't worry, we'll meet again till you get to see me dead. Now, go and buy some appetizers for tomorrow.

IOANA: Won't you let me try and prepare something that you would maybe enjoy tasting?

ANUȚA: Buy some cold cuts and anything else you fancy. Just go together, that's the main thing.

VICTOR: Wine.

TUDOR: Olives.

TOMA: Bread.

IOANA: A Rexona spray.

SFX: *Tudor, Ioana and Victor* can be heard leaving, door slammed, pigeons outside the window, silence in the house.

SCENE 5

AnuȚa has dozed off. Toma is left all by himself.

SFX: *Toma checks the recordings he made for his podcast, fragments of the thoughts we have already heard, over great granny's crackling snoring.*

Voice TOMA A: *I realized I had been recording only those things they never intended to say, ideas in their heads that I had...*

IOANA's Voice (fast forward play): *Emotional intelligence*

TUDOR's Voice (fast forward play): *Potential*

VICTOR's Voice(fast forward play): *Talent*

ANUȚA's Voice (fast forward play): *Inherited abilities*

Voice of TOMA A: *A complete, relevant and honest documentation should include things they wanted to say. I'm thinking mainly of her. My great granny. So I held my head up and went to her. I recorded a bit of her wheezing snoring, just in case.*

ANUȚA (waking up): What are you doing, my pigeon?

TOMA (to AnuȚa, who is half dozing): Tell me a story, great granny.

ANUȚA: Don't you think your're past story telling? You're a big boy by now.

TOMA: You have never told any story.

ANUȚA: And what kind of stories do you like?

TOMA: I don't know. Mom has told me several fables and other educational things.

ANUȚA: I see.... Well, if you don't know how to cook,...you don't know how to tell stories either. Do you enjoy tales about princes?

TOMA: They're OK, I guess.

ANUȚA: Once upon a time there was a handsome and proud prince, who had green blood ...

TOMA: Blue blood.

ANUȚA: No. It was green. He had grren blood.

TOMA: Was he sick?

ANUȚA: No. God forbid! Why would you say he was sick?

TOMA: Because his blood was green!

ANUȚA: No. He was in perfect health. He was the only one in perfect health. And the prince had a white horse, like something out of a dream. And the prince was so good looking that, whenever girls saw him, the most beautiful songs came out of their mouth. And the most delightful voice was

TOMA: Yours.

ANUȚA: Precisely. I'm telling you I once set eyes on the prince and his glow outshone the saint sun in the sky. And then my voice opened up and I started to sing (she warms up her voice, settles into her chair, clears her crackling throat and starts to sing) Hhooly yo-ung Le-gio...

Holy young Legionary/With a ironclad chest and the soul of a lily/Unbridled he rushes into spring/With a forehead like a Carpathian river/With arms going up to the sun/ Oh, Holy young Legionary;

Ioana, Tudor and Victor step in. Ioana and Tudor are flabbergasted.

IOANA: The shop is closed. This wretched pla...

(We build it from rocks, fire and sea/And we stoutly daube it with Dacian blood... Nt Partea asta nu exista in inregistrare)...

IOANA: Granny, what sort of nonsense are you teaching him?

TOMA: Great granny was telling me a tale, Mom.

ANUȚA: Leave the boy alone, he came to see me, who knows when exactly...

IOANA: But I don't want you to tell him this kind of tales? Don't you know any others?

ANUȚA: That's the only kind I know. Look here, I'll teach you how to cook and you teach me how to tell stories.

IOANA: To cook what exactly?

ANUȚA and TOMA: Bread!

SCENE 7

SFX: *(Ioana and Tudor bustle around the kitchen, place the teapot on the stove. The teapot whistles at a certain point)*

ANUȚA *(resumes her tale telling)*: So, where were we?

TOMA: The prince...

ANUȚA: Yes, yes... And the beautiful prince who shone like the saint sun in the sky had a name. Zelea Codreanu. Keep it in mind! Zelea from the word „zel” (NT Romanian rather outdated noun, same root as English word *zealous*), since he was really working fervently, alongside with his men, like a good team of builders.

IOANA *(voice coming from plan 2)*: I can hear you, Mother!

TUDOR*(still in the kitchen)*: Legionaries used to hate Masons.

SFX: *dialogues are parallel, great granny ignores every commentary.*

(VICTOR: Instead of arguing, let’s hear cheerful singing ...on the radio. – NT
Replica asta un apare in inregistrare)

ANUȚA: Like a team of builders...

TUDOR: Of innocent bodies inside walls looted.

ANUȚA: Like people who nurtured our Romanian soul...

IOANA: With naked Jews, captured and locked up in the slaughterhouse, on whose walls they wrote „kosher”.

VICTOR: The kid can hear you, Ioana.

IOANA: What if he hears me? Other kids, who lived back then, never heard anything, never saw anything, when it all happened, in 41.

ANUȚA: I was not a child, I was 23. I know exactly what happened. I know my father was not here, in Bucharest, during those days.

SFX: Teapot whistles.

IOANA: They wrote „kosher” on them.

TOMA:... I'd like to ask a question...

ANUȚA: ...You can't possibly know it,

IOANA (*lui Toma*): Ask away, Toma!

(**ANUȚA** (*over her voice*): ...not so many of those kikes (NT Derogatory term used to describe a Jew) all around us today, at least not so visible any longer,/ **NT** Nici replica asta nu e in inregistrare)

IOANA: Great granny is old, she's 100.

TUDOR: ...100 years to figure it out.

ANUȚA: ...you don't know how things were back then.

(**IOANA:** ...hers and her generation's problem is ignorance,... **NT Nu m auzit** replica in fisier sonor)

ANUȚA (*to Toma, in a teacher's patient voice*): So kosher means...

TOMA: I know what it means...There's another question I'd like to ask: why did they do all that? The Legionaries?

IOANA: Out of hate. Because they were fascists.They were cruel and stupid people and hated everybody who was not like them.

TOMA: Why?

IOANA: Simply because they were not like them.

TOMA: You mean...different?... Like great granny here?

ANUȚA (*to Ioana*): You are a lot like him, let me tell you.

IOANA: Like whom?

ANUȚA: Like father.

TOMA: Super. You finally found out which one of your grandparents you take after.

ANUȚA: Young and ardent, just like him.

IOANA: He used to be part of the National Legion, grandma!

ANUȚA: He was an ignorant person, maybe. But he was just as hot-blooded and convinced of his own cause as you are.

IOANA: He hated Jews simply because they were Jews.

ANUȚA: And don't you hate old people simply because they are old?

IOANA: No, I don't hate them. Just the ignorant ones. And the ones that are around us. Who ruined the future, for us and for him.

ANUȚA: Drop it. The National Legion is history.

IOANA: Well, then why did you vote for the communists?

ANUȚA: I didn't really have any choice. The bread was rationed, I had my kids...

IOANA: I'm not talking about the past. It's the present I'm talking about. Why did you vote for the communists of today, who confiscated your father's house for being a legionary and owning a bit of land? I can see why you did it back then. But what about now? Don't you know the people you voted for, the people you empowered, are the same? Do you know it or don't you?

ANUȚA: I did it for my pension! Because they promised a rise in the old age pension!

VICTOR: It was a lie, anyway.

IOANA (*to AnuȚa*): And what did you need the money for, tell me ? You are 100! Why didn't you come to us if you needed money?

ANUȚA: What I intend to do with my money is none of your business.

IOANA: Buy bread, for sure! What are you up to? You'd like to feed every pigeon in town?

ANUȚA: I want to refurbish the house. Step by step, it's a project for the future. And it's for my pigeon. Come and live here, together, in my father's house!

IOANA (*Looks at Victor and Tudor*): Do you, men, understand anything?

Nobody says a word. (NB In fisier sonor e altfel. Both men try to calm her down)

IOANA (*again addressing the two men*): Don't you really have any question at all?!

(**TOMA:** I have a question. I'd like to know...I mean I keep asking myself...if they were naked... If the Jews in the slaughterhouse were naked, how did they write „kosher” on them?)

SFX: Victor finally tunes in to the channel he wants. The National Radio choir is singing patriotic songs – “Trumpets sound” or “Unity is written on the Three coloured Flag”, “Lion Cubs” or any other patriotic tune – NT Toata partea asta lipseste din fisier sonor)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjMx985auo8>)

ANUȚA: The truth is... The truth is ever since I heard what had happened...I have never again talked to my father. I never went to see him when he got out of prison

VICTOR: I didn't know that. (abruptly turns off the radio).

ANUȚA: Because they did terrible, horrible things, yes they did, and then ever since ...that's why...(to Ioana)...I can understand you, I was young once and ardently set against my father. I even told him, and there were people present at the time, I told him „I don't think I'll ever be able to look you in the eyes again”. And I stopped talking to him. It was not easy to do it, he gave me a very dirty look, I used to see it in my dreams...Well, that's it. So you see, just like you, I... Then, let us leave the past aside, we are together now...

IOANA: Then why do you tell him stories about Zelea Codreanu? Why are you singing legionary songs?

VICTOR: That's enough. Let mother alone, she has recently been admitted to hospital, too...

IOANA: You said she's in perfect health!

VICTOR: Yes, but...

IOANA: But what? Is she or isn't she? (*to Anuța*) Tell me, why do you sing those songs?

TUDOR: Let her be, cool off. She sings out of nostalgia...

IOANA (*to Toma*): Come, find some rhymes for nostalgia, Toma! You have to practise...

TOMA: Hmmm... nostalgia... dahlia...neuralgia ... gala... hysteria... fuchsia... fuchsia... macadamia... shea...

TUDOR: Dementia

VICTOR: Dipsomania?

IOANA: Gu... I...

VICTOR: Wisteria?

IOANA: Gu... I...M

VICTOR: Guyana?

IOANA: Guilt mania. That's the word! The thing is great grandpa went to prison because he owned a bit of land (NT Communists used to label such a person as „chiabur”), not because he was a member of the National Legion. He stayed in for half a year, whereas the Pogrom ...you should know they incised the word Kosher on their naked skin,Toma. The poor men were dead by then, stark naked, hanging off the slaughterhouse hooks like cows, their bowels wrapped around their necks – the pogrom was back in 41. Pogrom – 41, prison – 52. It took you quite a while to get mad at your father.

ANUȚA: I no longer remember things very clearly... Let bygones be bygones, we are upsetting the child....

IOANA: Then I'll help you remember.

TUDOR: Leave her alone, she's old,

VICTOR: She went to hospital, ..

TOMA (writing): tomorrow's her birthday.

IOANA: I just want to remind her.

TUDOR: Drop it. They are only words by now!

TOMA(writing): Mom never shuts up and never lies.

VICTOR: Anybody wants some pies?

IOANA (*to Anuța*): I think you stopped talking to your father, whose songs you are now singing with devotion and nostalgia, but it was not because, 10 years later, you found out about the legionaries' crimes and horrors. It was because you realized his short-lived „green” adventure

TUDOR: Enough, please, stop taking it out on her!

TOMA (writing): Stop taking it out, you.

VICTOR: Does anybody know where's the barbecue?

IOANA: Will you put an end to this shitty rhyme game? (*pause*) You stopped talking to your dad because his green past ruined your CV! Your biography review!

VICTOR: You see? There's a rhyme for you! You – barbecue – review. OK, now let's find a rhyme for Happy anniversary...

IOANA: All those songs and the whole nostalgia will never wash out the fact that you have betrayed your father, but it was not because you didn't share his beliefs, but because his personal beliefs were a threat to the fulfilment of your own wishes. It's not a saint youth you wished for, but a quiet one. A good CV. A nice, spotless social status in the Socialist Republic of Romania.

You were dreaming of singing all the new regime's tunes at the top of your voice, but they sent you as far away as possible, to teach music as softly as possible, instead. On account of the green stain on your CV.

ANUȚA (*as if she hadn't heard anything at all*): I'm going to bed now, tomorrow's a... celebration day. (*lui Toma*) Come on, Toma, we don't want to upset our plans. Good night.

SCENE 8. BORDERS

The following lines come from inside the characters' mind and they criss cross Toma's recordings. Toma "steps" into great granny's dream

Voice of TOMA A's thought: *So everybody went to bed. I couldn't sleep. I felt angry and frustrated. When they all fell asleep, silence came and I was able to concentrate on the homage.*

SFX: *AnuȚa's crackling breath is louder and louder.*

Voice of TOMA A's thought: *That's when I finally managed to tune in to great granny's frequency alone. Everyone of her words was not spoken out loud, she only said them in her head. Or it may have been a dream? Or it may even have been something different from a dream? I recorded everything. I recorded everything great granny didn't say, didn't sing, didn't dream but that somehow reached me:*

ANUȚA's Voice: *I can't stand unpleasant noises, screeching, droning, I only tolerate melodious sounds. That's why I have never enjoyed travelling. Back in the day, but I've noticed it's the same today, travelling was mostly done by car, train or plane. Man-made machines which produce very disturbing noises to a practised and delicate hearing. Even buses sometimes make a racket ...*

SFX: Anuța's wheezing is masked by radio frequencies, channel jamming is attempting to muffle the sound of Legionary speeches. Anuța is trying to shout out the scrambling sounds in the background.

Voce ANUȚA: That was the kind of noise made by the first bus I can remember. A German made bus, with window netting screens. Outside the windows you could see movement, people going to and fro, you could vaguely hear something, you know, somewhat like..., and I thought there were cows in there, but how did they manage to spur cows and get them inside the bus? I listened intently – I was a student at the Music Conservatory back then and had come to Dad and Mom's place for the holidays – and after focusing on hearing better, I figured out they were humans. A bus fully loaded with people – and everything was well guarded by the Germans. And then I knew what was happening to them and, without hesitation or reflection, I ran into the house, grabbed a fresh bread, I can vividly remember its smell, I grabbed it and hurried to the bus. And my father came out of nowhere and, without a word, he slapped my face so hard that my ears started humming like a tuning fork. That was exactly the kind of noise the bus made.

SFX: Radio jamming melts into overloud tuning fork vibration which turns into heterodyne sound

So, father saved my life, you see. It's true however that I have avoided travelling on buses ever since, and I don't want to travel by plane either. All those machines make such a noise... Much better to stay home, thank you very much, I have plenty to do, I take care of my pigeons. I don't like airplanes screeching, I don't like foreign countries, I like it here in my country, inside my borders. Right here, where blood is as green as the grass or the fairies' hair. Our own beautiful and large country is 100 years old, just like me, and I can see no reason for going abroad. However... if I were to reach father, I would even board a plane... Well, that would be just one exception, since I badly want to tell him something... If I could at least see him in my dreams.

SFX: ANUȚA's breathing is crackling. The crackling turns into a plane engine noise. She imagines what she can see from above.

Look...What a beautiful view from up here, on the plane...houses like flowers charmingly set in a vast, green field.The border is also nice-looking, like a winding line.And apparently what lies beyond the border is nice too, isn't it? It looks a little like the image of our own land, but different.All my life I have believed that what we have here is the most beautiful place. That our green is the the greenest of them all and flowers have the best fragrance and people are nicer and more hard-working, and men are more manly than in other places. But now..., I somehow think it might be good to be abroad, too. They might have beautiful things over there, too... And songs...,I wonder what kind of songs they might be singing abroad?

SFX: *Plane engine noise turns into the crackling sound in her chest, which grows louder and louder, while she is dozing off.*

SCENA 9. ODE

SFX: *Inside the house, in the morning. Anuța is still sleeping, we can hear her crackling. The others come closer to her, carrying a big round bread with a 100 lit candles. The floor is creaking. They are approaching stealthily and pushing Toma to the fore*

TOMA: Shouldn't we wake her up before? What if we scare her?

IOANA: Will you wake her up, Victor? You know how to deal with her.

VICTOR: Mom...Mom? Happy... I don't know, she seems to be sleeping so peacefully.

TUDOR: Let me try.Granny...! Granny... I think... it's a bit too early, however. Let her sleep, it's her birthday.

VICTOR: She must be tired...

TUDOR: We'll come later. Toma can buy some time to rehearse his homage...

IOANA: Ok, let her get more sleep.

TOMA: I'll stay here, to rehearse.

SFX: *The others leave the room taking the bread and the candles with them.
Toma sits on the bed, by her side. He takes out a sheet of paper and
whispers, as if intending to rehearse. He reads:*

Beloved mother, granny and great granny,

To me you're not at all... that scary

Yes, truth does make me feel truly alive

So I am telling you the truth and choose to write:

He puts the paper aside and looks at her as he goes on:

I didn't think that I could dare to come through

And tell you things you never say, like I love you

You may be voting the wrong guys and quite annoying

You may be a castrating mother, mind my saying,

And even tough your ardent wish for unity

Did end up in truly angering your family -

Since unity by force cannot be tight.

Although to some extent you may be right,

And unity itself can help us by -

But only seeing it is not a lie.

And speaking of what's true, I'd like to add

The moment you are due to go ahead,

Before you wander off, confused and in distress:

I heard...a doctor say...your crackling breath means death.

ANUȚA (*opens her eyes and gazes at Toma*): Finally a person with balls in our family! I like you, Toma. You take after me, so I'm going to live on through you.

(**TOMA**: „me” and „you” are the same part of speech, granny. Your rhyme is flimsy!

She hugs Toma. The others come in surreptitiously with bread and lighted candles, they shout Happy Anniversary! Anuța eyes the candles on the loaf of bread.
NT *Partea asta toata lipsete din fisier sonor. Acolo, dupa vocea batranei, rezulta ca vorbeste din vis sau de dincolo de viata)*

ANUȚA: What a whole load of candles! Well, well, here I am a centenarian. Wich means I should make a wish! (*She makes her wish, shuts her eyes and blows out the candles*)

SFX: 2-3 second long sound of tuning fork. It fades away under Toma's monologue.

SCENE 9. END

Voice of TOMA A: *At great granny's funeral, I suddenly felt something neither me, nor Mom, nor anybody else had seen coming: a huge appetite. I was very hungry, I felt like eating anything and I gulped down stuffed cabbage rolls, stuffed vine leaves, I ate dough cake with walnut and pickles, koliva and olives. I didn't eat bread – I fed the pigeons with every slice I had. I even had a glass of wine. Uncle Victor gave it to me and he told me you should break the rules every now and then and be brave, just to be able to feel alive. I think I too was a bit of an inspiration to him, with my ode.*

We ate, we drank, with my parents and uncle Victor and then we went home. Our home, not great granny's house. We only went to her house to take the radio. Uncle Victor decided that I should have it. Dad didn't manage to fix it, he said he was going to keep trying and, all of a sudden, I realized I no longer caught any channels. I could no longer hear the others. I could no

longe hear my mother's and my father's thoughts. I believe it was because of all that food. So I tried to refrain from eating for 2 or 3 days, but that special power of hearing never came back to me.

Something else happened instead: since I no longer heard the others all day long, I started to hear myself. I read somewhere that some scientists or others have created an anechoic chamber, that's the name, a room whose walls are designed to absorb 99,99% of sound reflections, and since you cannot hear anything from outside, then you hear everything inside you. They say humans cannot bare it. Only 45 minutes in there and they go crazy and want to get out.

In my case it's not as radical as that.

I know, radical has no degree of comparison (NT In standard Romanian, it doesn't). Every time I make a mistake of this type I think about great granny. She used to teach music, but she was a stickler for grammar too. She had a soft spot for correct and smart phrasing.(sighs) But I'm not thinking about her because she was a teach, I'm thinking about her because I miss her a lot.

Well, so now I can hear myself perfectly.

I can hear my heart beats.

I can hear the noises in my belly when I'm digesting the food.

I can hear my breathing and the cracking of my smallest bones and the blood gurgling in my veins,

In can hear the mumbling in my ears from everything that I hear.

SFX: The sound of inner alive human body is insinuating itself, increasing up to the end and persisting firm and loud. It's just like the sound of life with loud heartbeat in the mix.

TOMA : I think that if I focus on myself,

If I take care of everythig that's going on inside the boundaries of my body,,

*With a lot of practice, a lot of work
And powers of discerning,
Then I'll somehow manage to make everyone of those sounds,
Everyone of my inner channels,
Everyone of the voices in me,
My parents and grandparents and great grandparents and everybody else
inside me blend in harmony.
And everything else:
My brain and my belly,
My heart and my arm movement.
I'll manage
To make everything inside me
Sound loud.
Sound beautiful.
Sound good
Together.*

THE END