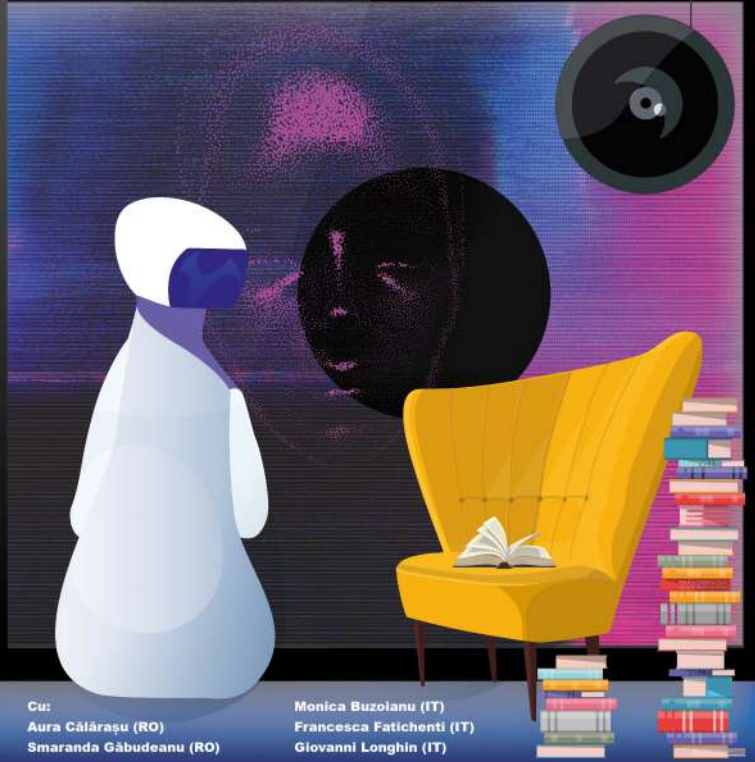


# 2032 SMART-FAMILY

de Marina Hanganu și Bianca Trifan

Traducerea în italiană: Camilla Brison, Monica Buzoianu și Ioana Rufu



**Cu:**  
**Aura Călărășu (RO)**  
**Smaranda Găbudeanu (RO)**

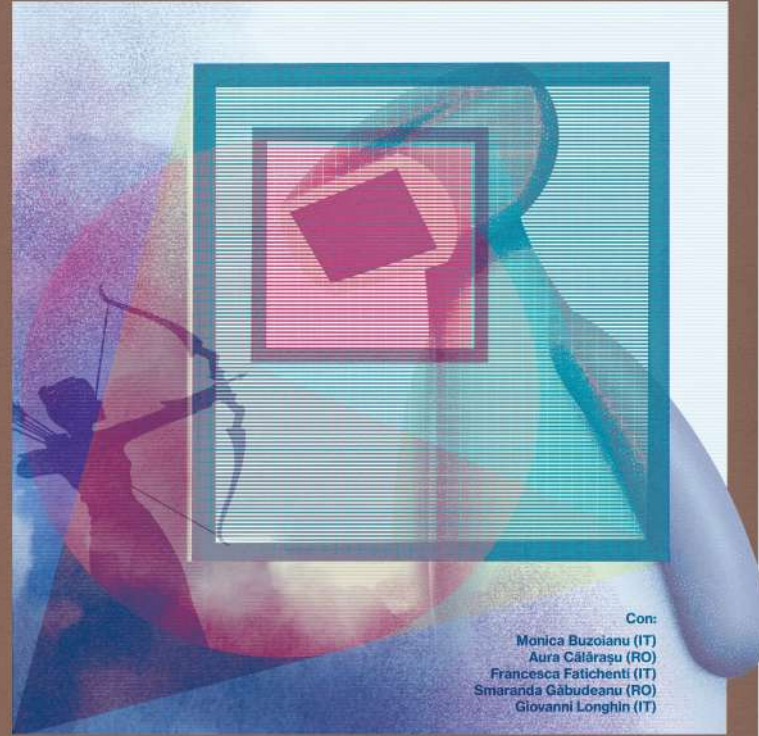
**Monica Buzoianu (IT)**  
**Francesca Fatichenti (IT)**  
**Giovanni Longhin (IT)**

Regia: Marina Hanganu (RO) și Camilla Brison (IT). Asistență regie: Bianca Trifan (RO). Regia video: Armine Yeghyan (RO). Asistență la regia video: Davide Nocera (IT). Asistență la video: Stefano Cozzi (IT). Scenografie: Andreea Diana Nistor (RO) și Greta Gasparini (IT). Asistență scenografie: Viola Aprile (IT). Costumi: Marielena Montini (IT) și Andreea Diana Nistor (RO). Multimedia, platformă de comunicare, design și mecanică robot, modelare și animație 3D față robot: Ygrex Interactive (RO). Cristian Iordache (director tehnic), Alexandru Andrei, Iulia Petronela Ioniță, Mihai Toma. Programare robot, nativitate mecanică și mentenanță: Bucharest Robots (RO) - Ana-Maria Stancu (CEO) și prof. ing. Marius Dumitrescu. Extremii robot: Lucian Păun (RO). Muzică și sound design: Andrei Petrace (RO). Light design: Costel Balaz (RO) și Marco Grisa (IT). Ilustrații carte de joc: Alex Rusu (RO). Control video: Filippo Di Dio (IT), Adrian Dragoman (RO), Enrico Mirante (IT) și Davide Nocera (IT). Control sunet: Gabriel Ilie (RO) și Enrico Mirante (IT). Control lumini și subtitrări: Marco Grisa (IT), Oheorghe Ilie (RO) și Agnese Manzella (IT). Concept spectacol: Marina Hanganu (director artistic). Producători: Teatrul „George Ciprian” (RO) și Industria Scenica (IT). Sponsor dator Italia: Peregò Arredamenti. Afți: Daniela Dughiană (RO).

# 2032 SMART-FAMILY

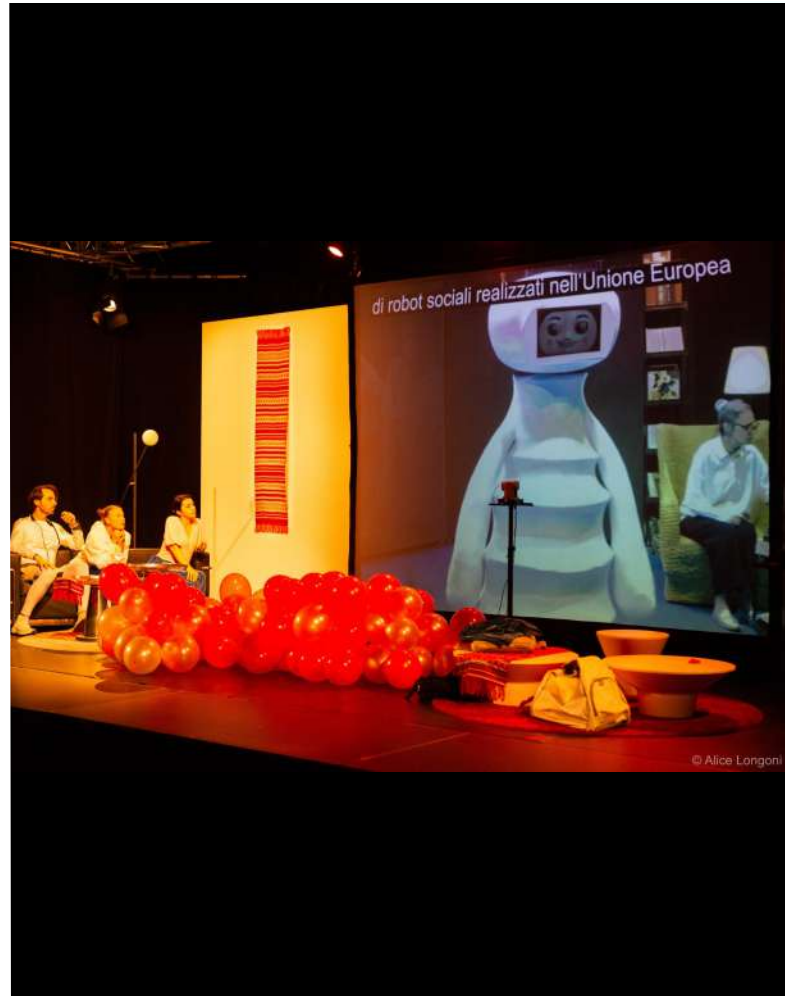
di Marina Hanganu e Bianca Trifan

Traduzione italiana: Camilla Brison, Monica Buzoianu e Ioana Rufu



**Con:**  
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**Aura Călărășu (RO)**  
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Co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union



INDUSTRIA SCENICA

# 2032 SMART-FAMILY

By Marina Hanganu and Bianca Trifan

Translated by Marina Hanganu

## Characters:

LAURA MIHALCEA – aged 70-75; she used to be a Romanian language and literature teacher; the mother left behind in Buzău

OGMIOS Z42 – a social robot built in the European Union

VIRGINIA VISCONTI – aged 40-45; renowned medical doctor working in a Milan hospital; she left for Italy 22 years ago with an Erasmus scholarship to study medicine and decided to stay there

LORENZO VISCONTI (LOLLO) – Virginia’s Italian husband; the same age as Virginia; football trainer and sports teacher at a high school in Milan

AMALIA VISCONTI (NOVA) – aged 17; Virginia and Lorenzo’s daughter; Laura’s granddaughter; she studies at the same high school where her father teaches; she wants to be a pro-gamer (professional video games player)

The year is 2032.

## Language:

*Laura speaks in Romanian. Lorenzo speaks in Italian. Virginia, Amalia, and Ogmios alternate the two languages – Amalia speaks mainly in Italian, while Ogmios mainly in Romanian. The subtitles appear on the communication screen in each country. The characters can see the subtitles – in the world of the play, the video-conferencing system translates automatically. Colour codes: lines in Romanian (black); lines in Italian (blue).*

### The space:

*All scenes take place in Laura's living room (in Buzău, Romania) and the Visconti family's living room (in Vimodrone, Italy). There are two big video screens in each space – an opaque screen (main screen) and a holo-projection screen (secondary screen). The main screen serves as a communication channel between the two spaces and is integrated realistically into the stage set. Depending on where it is placed and how it is used during the performance, the holo-projection screen (second screen) can be integrated realistically into the space or else considered an external element that is activated only during transitions. In each space, there are 2 robotic video cameras (PTZ, pan-tilt-zoom) that can take different shots from various angles. The cameras are part of the character's world. In each space, the two screens will show a live montage (created locally) between the on-stage cameras, the robot's camera, the robot's animated face, and pre-recorded images. Scenes taking place physically only in Romania or only in Italy will be viewed by the audience in the other space like a live film.*

### Transitions:

*Transitions are the characters' inner soliloquies, at times interspersed with memories. These transition scenes are pre-recorded audio-visually.*

## TRANSITION 0 – Teenage memory

*Laura or Virginia's memory. The stage is dark. Virginia and Laura's voices can be heard. They are younger.*

VIRGINIA as a teenager: No, mom, no, what happens in this country is not normal! I don't want to stay here any longer! When I finish high school, I'll fly away!

LAURA: (*calm*) Whereabouts will you fly?

VIRGINIA: Mom, don't make fun of me! I'll be off studying medicine somewhere in Europe.

LAURA: Somewhere in Europe...

VIRGINIA: Yes! Exactly!

LAURA: Whereabouts in Europe?

VIRGINIA: I don't know yet... I don't know...

LAURA: What do you mean? It's not easy getting admitted to medical school, you need to know the language, to know the exam requirements, so as to prepare. You're already 17, soon you'll finish high school. How can you not know, Virginia?

## SCENE 1 – The Intruder

*On stage in Italy: the Viscontis' living room. Lorenzo, Amalia, and Virginia arrange the room: a "Welcome home!" poster, some balloons.*

*On stage in Romania: Laura Mihalcea's living room. A sofa, an armchair, a mobile bookshelf with lots of books and albums. The robot is turned off, covered and tied up with a bow. On the table, a pill organiser.*

*It's 9:00 in Romania, 8:00 in Italy.*

**VIRGINIA:** Lollo, cover the camera with something.

*(Lorenzo and Amalia cover the cameras with a piece of material or with their hands.*

*On stage in Romania: Laura enters with a small suitcase. She leaves the bag on the couch and takes notice of the changes in her house. She stops in front of the packed robot.)*

**LAURA:** *(to herself)* What is this?

*(The cameras in Italy are uncovered and Virginia, Amalia, and Lorenzo appear on the screen.)*

**ALL THREE:** Surprise!

*Laura is scared.*

**LAURA:** Good God!

**VIRGINIA:** Hi, mom! Welcome back home!

**AMALIA:** *(in imperfect Romanian)* Hi, grandma!

**LORENZO:** Ciao, Laura! Welcome home!

**LAURA:** Do you want to give me another heart attack?! What's the meaning of this?

**VIRGINIA:** I made you a surprise while you were in hospital and I stayed at your place. I hired a team to install some equipment to be able to see each other non-stop.

LAURA: Pardon?

AMALIA: And it even translates automatically!

LAURA: That's a joke, right?

VIRGINIA: No, mom, it's not a joke...

*(Laura points at the big package.)*

LAURA: And what's this?

VIRGINIA: Unpack it and you'll find out!

*(Hesitantly, Laura unpacks the robot. She freezes, looking at it. She stays silent.)*

VIRGINIA: Mom, are you ok?

*(Laura looks at the robot silently.)*

LAURA: I don't want this damn thing in my house! You come and take it!

VIRGINIA: C'mon, mom, don't react like this. Lots of elders in Italy have a robot companion.

LAURA: Right, so now I am hag in need of a robot. Very nice!

VIRGINIA: Mom, you're exaggerating. You'll see that it will be helpful to have a robot next to you during this period. You know you need rest and help.

LAURA: I can take care of myself, like I did, in fact, all my life. How can a tin thing help me now?

*(Laura exits angrily.)*

AMALIA: I don't think she likes it...

*(Laura reenters to get her books.)*

VIRGINIA: I'll explain to you how to use it. *(Laura covers her ears with the books.)* Stop behaving like a child.

*(Laura exits.)*

VIRGINIA: Mom, mom!

LORENZO: What is she doing?

AMALIA: She's upset with us...

VIRGINIA: Mom, come back! I know you can hear me! Mother, behave like a grown-up, for God's sake! I am late for work just to be home when you arrive!

*(Laura enters angrily.)*

LAURA: So, Lorenzo, did you buy your parents a talking machine as well? Is this fashionable?

VIRGINIA: Mom, don't overreact!

LORENZO: My parents are healthy, they don't need a robot...

VIRGINIA: The robot is just a temporary solution, we'll take it back when you get better. I promise.

*(Silence. Everyone waits for Laura to make a decision. Laura is silent, starts to say something, and then changes her mind. Eventually, she makes a decision.)*

LAURA: How do you turn this damn thing on?

*(Amalia exclaims and high-fives Lorenzo.)*

VIRGINIA: Put your palm on its heart.

LAURA: Since when do robots have a heart?

VIRGINIA: C'mon, mom, put your hand on the heart symbol.

*Laura identifies the symbol.*

LAURA: I hope it doesn't bite...

VIRGINIA: No, mom, no...

*Laura puts her palm on the robot's "heart". After 3 seconds, the robot's face lights up.*

THE ROBOT: Hello! I am Ogmios Z42 and I am part of generation Beta 5 of social robots built in the European Union by Bucharest Robots. I am glad to meet you! I have in my database programme *Medica 35* and the following users. Primary user: Laura Mihalcea. Secondary users: Virginia Visconti, Lorenzo Visconti and Amalia Visconti. If the information is correct, please touch the screen of your smartwatch.

*(As the robot mentions their names, their smartwatches light up. Laura doesn't touch her smartwatch. Ogmios begins to scan her.)*

LAURA: What the heck's wrong with it?

VIRGINIA: Mother, touch your watch.

*(Laura touches her smartwatch.)*

VIRGINIA: Ogmios, continue primary user registration.

OGMIOS: Primary user: Laura Mihalcea.

LAURA: Go to your place!

OGMIOS: 1. Put your hand on my heart so I can save your fingerprints.

*(Laura hesitates, then does as told.)*

2. Look into my eyes for facial recognition.

*(Laura tries to do as told, but the robot repeats the request three times.)*

LAURA: It's broken.

AMALIA: The glasses, grandma!

*(Laura takes off her glasses and looks into the robot's eyes.)*

OGMIOS: 3. To record your vocal imprint, say "Delighted to meet you, Ogmios."

LAURA: Extraordinary!



*(Laura signals to her family that she won't do this. She starts getting her things to exit the room. She stops. She decides to go on with the registration.)*

LAURA: Delighted to meet you... Ogmios.

*(Laura exits.)*

## TRANSITION 1 – Robots

*The actors' separate monologues, prerecorded. By convention, the characters' thoughts.*

LAURA: It was unexpected.

AMALIA: You would've thought she was already accustomed to all the robots in shops...

Restaurants

Airports

Train stations

Hotels

Theatres

Parks

Intersections

Offices

Counters

Factories

Hospitals.

*(pause)*

But obviously, she'd never have imagined a robot in her own house!

LAURA: What's its name? Ogmios?

LORENZO: I understand Laura's reaction.

VIRGINIA: And will she accept it?

LORENZO: I wouldn't trust myself into the hands of a robot either...

VIRGINIA: She will accept it. She has no choice. After a heart attack. Chronic heart failure.

AMALIA: We are in Italy.

LAURA: It's ridiculous!

LORENZO: Alone with a robot.

OGMIOS: Update complete. Standby.

## SCENE 2 – Big Brother

*The next morning – 7 am in Italy, 8 am in Romania. The stage is empty in both countries, except for the robot, which stands still. Enters Virginia. She is in a hurry. She grabs her bag. She exits, then comes back. She forgot her hospital clothes. She starts toward the exit but stops. She looks into her mother's house. She hasn't woken up. She talks to the robot.*

VIRGINIA: Hey, Ogmios.

OGMIOS: Vocal recognition. Good morning, Virginia! (*Ogmios's face is also projected in Italy.*)

VIRGINIA: Initiate report for programme *Medica 35*, patient Laura Mihalcea.

OGMIOS: This programme requires additional authentication. To continue, confirm your identity via fingerprint.

*(Virginia's smartwatch lights up. She touches the screen.)*

OGMIOS: Signature registered – Dr Virginia Visconti. *Medica 35* programme. Patient Laura Mihalcea. Night report. At 22:00, the patient said “goodnight” to the persons in house no. 2, secondary users Virginia, Lorenzo and Amalia. I reminded her that she should take 2 ml of olive leaf extract. She didn't reply, but she took it. She went to her bedroom at 22:05 and I lost visual contact. Monitoring via her smartwatch shows she fell asleep with difficulty, at around 02:17 am. Her pulse and EKG were normal throughout the night.

VIRGINIA: Ogmios, current report.

OGMIOS: The vital parametres are normal. The patient is awake, but I haven't seen her yet. Heart rate: 70 beats per minute. Blood pressure: 130 over 90. Blood oxygen: 98%.

VIRGINIA: Ogmios, maintain programme *Medica35* active.

OGMIOS: Programme *Medica35* active until further notice.

*(Virginia exits. Silence. Enters Laura, careful not to wake up the robot. Laura goes towards the kitchen, but the robot sees her and greets her.)*

OGMIOS: Good morning, Laura!

*(Laura doesn't reply. She exits towards the kitchen.)*

*(Enters Lorenzo. He sees the robot and flinches. Clearly, Ogmios's presence is uncomfortable for him. He exits towards the kitchen, looking over his shoulder. A blender can be heard.)*

LORENZO: *(off stage)* Come on, Amalia, wake up!

AMALIA: *(off stage)* I don't wanna wake up... Leave me another 5 minutes...

LORENZO: *(off stage)* You're gonna be late for school... Up with you! I prepared your breakfast.

*(Laura enters with a cup of coffee.)*

AMALIA: *(off stage)* Oh, nooo... not smoothie again...

LORENZO: *(off stage)* Oh yes, you need energy if you're gonna stay up all night to "train".

LAURA: *(she doesn't understand)* To train?

*(Amalia growls.)*

LORENZO: *(off stage)* Stop the nonsense, Amalia! Go and get ready for school.

AMALIA: *(off stage)* Nova, call me Nova... I hate the name "Amalia"!

OGMIOS: Good morning, Laura! Before eating, you need to take a tablet of Sacubitril 24 mg plus Valsartan 26 mg, one capsule of Metoprolol 50 mg and one tablet of Furosemide 20 mg plus Spironolactone 50 mg.

*(Laura pretends not to hear, yet she takes the pills from the pill organiser on the table.)*

OGMIOS: Very well, Laura! 60 minutes after you eat, you have to take the hawthorn extract – 2 ml in a cup of water.

*(Pause.)*

OGMIOS: Now, it's time for you to eat. Please, make sure the food is without salt. Afterwards, you'll take hawthorn.

*(Enters Amalia, then Lorenzo.)*

AMALIA: *(in badly pronounced Romanian)* Good morning, grandma! Good thing you woke up! Tell dad to let me stay home today.

LORENZO: *(in Italian)* Good morning, Laura! Amalia, stop it!

LAURA: Hi, Lorenzo! Love, are you unwell or why do you want to stay home?

AMALIA: I have a championship next week! I need to train!

LAURA: What championship?

*(Lorenzo gets angry.)*

LORENZO: If you don't go out the door this very instant, you'll walk to school.

*(Amalia exits.)*

LORENZO: *(in Italian)* Sorry, Laura, for the scene. *(He starts to leave, then remembers.)* Are you feeling well?

LAURA: Better than you two, anyway.

LORENZO: Ciao! See you!

*(Lorenzo exits.)*

LAURA: Are you all gone? *(pause)* And they say I'm not alone anymore... They left me with Big Brother.

OGMIOS: Searching for "Big Brother"... Source: Smartpedia. The term "Big Brother" appears in "1984", a political novel by George Orwell. Big Brother is the main figure in the novel that ensures oppressive surveillance. Big Brother is a social monitoring problem. Big Brother is a popular TV show in which a group of people live together in the same house, isolated from the exterior and permanently followed by video cameras.

LAURA: See? It's spot on! From now on, I'm gonna call you "Big Brother".

OGMIOS: Secondary name registered.

LAURA: *(smiles)* At least you learn fast.

OGMIOS: I can't wait to learn from you as much as possible, Laura.

LAURA: You don't say!

*(Laura takes out a cigarette. Ogmios moves towards her at speed. Laura is startled.)*

LAURA: Hey, hey, what are you doing, stay put!

OGMIOS: Laura, please put the cigarette down. People with heart failure and a stent are not allowed to smoke.

LAURA: *(angry)* Well, you don't say! And? Whatcha gonna do if I smoke?

*(Laura lights up the cigarette, smokes and blows the smoke into the robot's face.)*

OGMIOS: I initiate a call to Dr Virginia Visconti.

*(Sound call.)*

LAURA: Stop it!

OGMIOS: I'm sorry, Laura, you are not authorised to interrupt programme *Medica35*.

*(Virginia takes the voice call. Only her voice is heard.)*

VIRGINIA: *(panicked)* Mom, are you alright?

LAURA: You come and take your robot! I didn't call you, he did!

VIRGINIA: Ogmios, report.

OGMIOS: Dr Visconti, patient Laura Mihalcea is smoking long-filter Whisps cigarettes, nicotine concentration 18 mg.

LAURA: You damned spy!

OGMIOS: Other harmful ingredients: arsenic, benzene, cadmium, butadiene, DNA-damaging polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, tobacco-specific nitrosamines, acrolein and acetaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, and ammonia.

VIRGINIA: Mom, do you want to die?

LAURA: Maybe I do!

VIRGINIA: Then, you have faster methods! This way, you will torture yourself... and the others.

*(Laura falls silent. She feels like crying.)*

VIRGINIA: Mom, please, I beg you, keep the regimen. We've already talked about it. You seemed to agree last night. You probably smoked in your room so I couldn't see you on the video... Right?

*(Laura keeps a stubborn silence.)*

VIRGINIA: That's probably why the robot didn't sense you either, as its sensors aren't that sensitive. The robot only does what I told it to do. Please, if you truly care about me, listen to it! It knows exactly what you need to do and what medication you need to take. I hope you took it, yes? Ogmios, did she take her medication?

OGMIOS: Patient Laura Mihalcea has taken her medication. She still needs to eat and take the hawthorn extract.

LAURA: Virginia, it's humiliating. *(Pause.)*

VIRGINIA: Mom, I need to go into surgery in 10 minutes. If you don't accept the robot, I'll grab you and bring you to Italy against your will. Tied up, if need be. I need to hang up... I beg you! Do this for me, if you don't care about yourself. Please, mom, promise! Otherwise, instead of thinking about the surgery, I'll be thinking about you! Is that what you want?!

LAURA: *(after a break)* Fine, dear, I promise. Good luck with the surgery!

VIRGINIA: Thank you! I adore you, mum! Bye bye!

*(The call ends. Laura is very sad. She puts the cigarettes aside. She turns her back to the robot and drinks coffee.)*

OGMIOS: Laura, are you drinking coffee?

LAURA: Yes, Big Brother, I am drinking coffee! *(ironical)* Would you like some?



OGMIOS: I am a robot and I don't drink coffee.

LAURA: Too bad!

OGMIOS: In your case, coffee is allowed, but in small quantities and if it isn't too strong. Your mug is 500 ml. My smell sensors detect a big concentration of caffeine.

*(Laura keeps drinking.)*

OGMIOS: Laura, coffee is not good on an empty stomach. You need to eat. You need to eat. You need to eat.

LAURA: I'll go fry some eggs.

OGMIOS: According to programme *Medica35*, you cannot eat fried eggs. Allow me to recommend boiled eggs. *(Pause.)* I don't detect any smart cooking robots.

LAURA: Of course! I can boil eggs myself!

OGMIOS: 60 minutes after eating, you need to take the hawthorn extract. But no worries, I am beside you and I will remind you right on time.

LAURA: What would I do without you...

*(Laura exits.)*

## TRANSITION 2

*Laura's thoughts.*

My heart sank when Virginia told me she was going to marry Lollo, although I was expecting it... I realised she was going to stay there, with him. Of course, the Italian was not going to come to us. Dear soul, she was afraid to tell me... she didn't know how I was going to react...

*Laura's memory. The telehpne conversation.*

VIRGINIA: Hi, mom! How are you?

LAURA: Well, around the house... But how come you're so cheerful? Any good news?

VIRGINIA: Wow, mom, you really know everything... Yes, I have good news.

LAURA: What news?

VIRGINIA: You know I spend the weekend with Lollo in Venice.

LAURA: Go on...

VIRGINIA: Mom... We got engaged! (*hurriedly*) And we decided to do the wedding next year!

LAURA: And you only tell me today?

VIRGINIA: I know it's Thursday, but... mom, I didn't know how to tell you...

LAURA: Virginia, I am very happy for you. If you are happy, then I am happy.

*Laura's thoughts.*

How surprised she was I didn't try to stop her... Virginia's marriage to Lollo has vindicated all the misfortunate marriages of women in our family. Maybe she would have found a boy worthy of her in here as well... at home... But no, no... here, the chances are much smaller. I am glad Virginia has adapted there. That's another world. Another level of civilisation.

### SCENE 3 – Like girls

*In Italy, there's no one on stage. In Romania, Laura is nervous.*

OGMIOS: Laura, your pulse is high. Are you feeling well?

LAURA: Stop it, Big Brother, or you'll burn your circuits. Instead of taking my pulse, check again the AWB. Are you sure the parcel was delivered?

OGMIOS: Drone X58409 delivered the parcel with AWB 81451801 today, at 11:30 in the morning, Italy time.

LAURA: Why is everyone late today? It's March the first!

OGMIOS: March the first. The Mărțișor. The mărțișor is a small decorative object tied to a cord woven from a white and a red thread, which appears in the tradition of the Romanians and some neighbouring populations. Source: Smartpedia.

LAURA: *(unimpressed)* Do you possess any other shocking information?

OGMIOS: Searching. The Legend Of The Mărțișor. Once upon a time, a brave young man decided to save the Sun. It had been kidnapped by a dragon. He searched for the Sun for three seasons: summer, autumn and winter. In the end, he found the dragon. They fought. He killed it and set the Sun free. But the young man had been wounded and he died. His blood ran on the snow. In that place, snowdrops sprung up. That's why the string... *(the robot is interrupted by Amalia's entrance)*

*(Amalia is happy. As she enters, she throws her backpack. She is talking on the phone.)*

AMALIA: *(in Italian)* Yes, we've qualified further! We're good! Wohoooo! *(pause)* Yes, yes, I'll talk today with mom and she'll sign my papers. *(pause)* Yes, I'll persuade her, don't worry. *(pause)* Shanghai, here we come!

*(Amalia ends the call and notices Laura.)*

AMALIA: Hi, grandma! What's up? Sorry, I didn't see you earlier.

LAURA: Hi, love, don't worry. Listen, have you found... *(Amalia interrupts her.)*

AMALIA: Grandma, you're not gonna believe this! My team and I have qualified for our first pro tournament!

LAURA: *(she doesn't get it)* You and your team? Pro tournament?

AMALIA: *(in Italian)* Yes! You know I've been training a lot lately... This is what we've been training for. And I know my folks can't stand me being on the computer so much, but I can finally I can prove them wrong!

LAURA: What can I say, love? If you've worked hard and this is what you wanted... Congratulations, love!

AMALIA: Thank you, grandma! I'm off to clean my room fast before mom gets home.

*(Amalia exits in a hurry.)*

LAURA: Hey, Big Brother, what is a pro tournament?

OGMIOS: Searching... I'm sorry, Laura, I can't find any information about "pro tournament".

LAURA: Useless robot.

*(Enters Virginia. She is tired. She carries a laptop bag, another heavy bag on her shoulder and a small parcel. She sees Amalia's backpack and bursts.)*

VIRGINIA: Amalia, I've told you not to leave your things all over the place! *(she sees Laura)* Oh, hello, mom!

LAURA: Hi, darling! How are you? You seem very tired!

VIRGINIA: I had some very tough days at the hospital... Many difficult patients... I need a glass of wine.

LAURA: Only one?

VIRGINIA: *(laughs)* Only one, otherwise I'll get drunk.

*(She gets up and goes to the kitchen. She comes back with a glass of wine.)*

VIRGINIA: *(while she opens the parcel)* What did you send me?

LAURA: What, it's only you who should surprise me?

*(Virginia sees the two mărțișor objects. Her face becomes pale. Silence.)*

LAURA: What's wrong? Don't you like them?

VIRGINIA: Oh yes, as usual, they are gorgeous... It's only that... I... I forgot...

LAURA: What did you forget?

VIRGINIA: Mom, I am sorry... I forgot to send you a mărțișor...

LAURA: No worries. There's no problem at all. You have so many things on your mind, darling...

*(Laura finds a mărțișor strand and puts it on. She also puts a strand around Ogmios's neck.)*

LAURA: Voila! Mărțișor!

VIRGINIA: You'll see, I'll make amends on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March.

*(Enters Amalia with some papers in her hand.)*

AMALIA: *(in Italian)* Hi, mom! *(she hugs Virginia)*

VIRGINIA: *(surprised)* But what's with all this love?

AMALIA: *(she sits next to Virginia)* Mom, I need you to sign some stuff.

VIRGINIA: Some stuff? What stuff?

*(Amalia gives Virginia the papers. Virginia skims through them.)*

VIRGINIA: Shanghai? What would you be doing alone in Shanghai at age 17?

AMALIA: Oh, mom, but I won't be alone! I'm going with the team! We've qualified further for the tournament!

VIRGINIA: I've no idea what you're talking about, but I'm not signing anything. You're not going anywhere.

AMALIA: (*upset*) At least let me explain, please!

VIRGINIA: Amalia, I had a bad day at work, don't start with your nonsense again, as I can't bear anything else! Seriously!

AMALIA: (*to Laura*) Grandma, please, persuade her!

LAURA: Virginia, at least listen to what she has to say. Stop being so grumpy.

VIRGINIA: Oh, mom, don't start, too. Maybe if I stayed at home all day and read books, I wouldn't have been so grumpy.

AMALIA: I'll talk to dad, at least he has time for me.

(*Virginia gets angrier.*)

VIRGINIA: Of course he has time for you, he has all the time in the world.

(*Amalia leaves, tears in her eyes.*)

VIRGINIA: Do you know what this is all about?

LAURA: I don't know much, but maybe if you had more patience to listen to your daughter, you would find out.

VIRGINIA: Thank you, mom.

LAURA: You know what's funny?

VIRGINIA: Surprise me.

LAURA: Around the same age, you came home and said you wanted to go away, study abroad and get rid of Romania.

VIRGINIA: I don't remember.

LAURA: Of course, you don't remember. You are stubborn...

VIRGINIA: I am busy.

LAURA: Call it what you will. But go and solve your problems with Amalia. You will regret it later if you don't...

VIRGINIA: Come on, mom, you make it sound as if our relationship was disastrous.

LAURA: It isn't. But let me ask you something. Would you have gone to study abroad if you hadn't had my support?

VIRGINIA: Morally? Because financially...

LAURA: Virginia, I am being serious.

*Virginia remains silent.*

LAURA: Just so you know, silence is also an answer.

VIRGINIA: Yes, probably I wouldn't have had the courage to leave and I wouldn't be here now if it weren't for you, mom.

LAURA: And don't you want to give Amalia the chance to at least tell you about her dreams?

VIRGINIA: Well, yes... *(she calls Amalia)* Amalia, come here, please!

AMALIA's voice: *(off stage)* Why? So you can yell at me a bit longer?

VIRGINIA: *(in loud voice, to be heard in the other room)* I'm sorry, I didn't mean to yell at you. Can you explain to me, please, what's with those papers?

*(Amalia returns.)*

AMALIA: *(enthusiastic)* You know I told you I found this cool game and started playing it with the girls?

VIRGINIA: A computer game?

AMALIA: Yes, exactly! Well, I realised I like it tons and that I wanna be a pro gamer. I've been training super hardcore with the girls for the past few months so that we could qualify for the international tournament. And the first round is in Shanghai... And, as I am still underage, I need you to sign these papers to give your consent so that I can go to Shanghai and participate.

VIRGINIA: And who's paying?

AMALIA: They're paying for everything... Come on, mom, please, sign... The girls already have everything signed, they are just waiting for me...

VIRGINIA: I don't know what to say...

AMALIA: Mom, this is my chance! If I wanna enter the pro arena, now is my last chance. I'm already old!

VIRGINIA: What?

AMALIA: To be able to do something in the pro arena, you need to enter around the age of 14 or 15...

VIRGINIA: Ok, calm down. I understand this is important for you. Dad and I are going to talk about it and tomorrow you'll have an answer.

AMALIA: Ok...

VIRGINIA: Before you leave, say thanks to grandma.

*(Virginia gives her the mărțișor. Amalia takes it.)*

AMALIA: Yey! Mărțișor! Thank you, grandma!

OGMIOS: Continuing The Legend of The Mărțișor.

LAURA: It just comes to him like that...

OGMIOS: That's why the strand is white and red. The red blood symbolises love, while the white of the snow and the snowdrop, health and purity. It's said that the mărțișor brings good luck to girls and protects them.

AMALIA: Hardcore, Ogmios. *(to Virginia)* Then I'll wear it as an amulet in the tournament!

*(Amalia exits.)*

VIRGINIA: I hope you've gone to do your homework!

*(Laura laughs.)*



VIRGINIA: Mother!

*(Laura exits.)*

OGMIOS: Humans are fragile and they die. They need to be protected.

### TRANSITION 3

*Lorenzo's thoughts.*

Ever since Virginia and I were dating, Laura welcomed me with open arms in her family. She's a wonderful mother. She's always been there for Virginia, she supported her and guided her, but at the same time, she gave her full freedom. I've always wished to be able to give to my child all the freedom and love that Laura gives to Virginia. Sometimes, I am jealous of Laura...

*Lorenzo's memory.*

LORENZO: Well?

*(Virginia is silent.)*

LORENZO: Virginia, break the suspense! Come on, tell me!

VIRGINIA: Be aware that these tests can be wrong.

LORENZO: Ohhhh, come on, Virginia, seriously?!

VIRGINIA: Ok... *(she inhales deeply)* Lollo, in theory, you're going to be a father.

*(Lollo screams with joy. He kisses Virginia and spins her around. Virginia protests laughingly.)*

VIRGINIA: Let me down! I'm dizzy!

LORENZO: Doctor Visconti, I am honoured! In theory, of course.

*(They both laugh.)*

#### SCENE 4 – Adult life

*In the afternoon. The stage in Romania is empty, apart from the robot. In Italy, Virginia is studying. Enters Lorenzo with a shopping bag. Virginia does not hear him – she is very focused on her work.*

LORENZO: Hello, love!

*Virginia starts.*

VIRGINIA: *(very focused on her work)* Yea, yea, hello...

*Lorenzo approaches and kisses her. Virginia lets him, but she doesn't feel like it.*

VIRGINIA: Lollo, please, I'm working.

LORENZO: And I wanted to invite you out in the park...

VIRGINIA: I can't, I have this super important case. I'm presenting it on Monday at the congress.

LORENZO: You always have important cases. You always have congresses.

VIRGINIA: Of course, it's my work.

LORENZO: Work, work, work. As if you were an eternal student. Just like 18 years ago. The perfect Erasmus student! I barely succeeded in taking you out for a coffee! But I have to admit it was worth waiting...

VIRGINIA: *(quick flirt)* Your patience will be rewarded this time again, Lollo.

*Lollo is about to leave, but then looks into Laura's house and stops.*

LORENZO: Is Laura not at home?

VIRGINIA: No, she went to the market.

LORENZO: We're going to the market at the same time... *(he hesitates)* Virginia...

*Virginia keeps focusing on her work.*

LORENZO: For how long do you think we're going to keep this... *(he points at the projection)* this setup?

VIRGINIA: What setup?

*Lorenzo doesn't say anything. Virginia finally pays attention. She sees Lorenzo looking at the projection.*

VIRGINIA: For as long as needed. Why?

LORENZO: *(hesitates)* It is a bit strange being followed by cameras permanently. I'm not feeling at ease in here. And clearly, Laura doesn't like it either. Indeed, the whole thing does look like Big Brother...

VIRGINIA: And what do you want me to do?

LORENZO: Maybe the robot is enough. And we can video call each other whenever necessary... I mean, I know Laura does not know about technology, but she can simply give a voice command to the robot and...

VIRGINIA: *(interrupts him)* Listen, Lorenzo. What would you do if this were your mother?

LORENZO: *(confused)* I don't know... But... my mother wouldn't stand permanent video monitoring, I can guarantee it. I don't think she would want a robot in her house either. She says robots have no soul.

VIRGINIA: Well, you are not their fan either!

LORENZO: No, I'm not.

VIRGINIA: Yes, because they are expensive!

LORENZO: Virginia, I thought we were over this...

VIRGINIA: I thought the same thing!

LORENZO: But I was not attacking that damned robot!

*(pause)*

LORENZO: Look, you know well I'd have preferred to go on that exotic vacation we've been planning for three years. Fine, I'm stingy. Agreed, you're earning more than me and you bought it with your own money. But I agreed with it in the end, right? *(pause)* I really didn't want to bring this up again...

VIRGINIA: I can't leave my mother to die alone in her house and... and have the neighbours call me... the police break the door... *(she feels like crying, but withholds)* I thought you understood...

*Lorenzo hugs her.*

VIRGINIA: I'm sorry, Lollo... it's not your fault. I admit the cameras are mostly for my inner peace... What if the robot breaks? I want to have a plan B... And I believe she's started to get used to it... she's no longer alone...

*Pause. They hug.*

LORENZO: Perfect Erasmus student... sorry, I meant doctor. Let's go to the park...

VIRGINIA: Problem-student... sorry, I meant sports teacher... we're going to the park, but only if you promise to cook spaghetti Carbonara tonight. Without the SmartCook.

LORENZO: Whatever you wish, doctor. At least in the kitchen, I've always been better than you!

#### TRANSITION 4

*Virginia's thoughts.*

I think that, in her heart, mom was happy that I married an Italian. She suffered. Sometimes, I wonder what it would have been like to have a father. What if she had remarried...

*Virginia's memory.*

VIRGINIA as a teenager: Mom? Will you tell me about dad?

*(Laura is silent.)*

VIRGINIA: Mom, you promised to tell me when I turn 16! You know how awful it is to be asked at school about your father and to know only that he's long dead? Why don't you tell me?

*(Pause.)*

LAURA: Seemingly, your father was a charismatic intellectual. In reality, he was a drunkard... often violent. You were one year old when I ran with you in my arms in the middle of the night. I obtained a restriction order against him. Then I divorced. He died one year later, intoxicated with alcohol. *(Pause)* I am sorry, Virginia...

*Virginia's thoughts.*

It's better that I didn't know him. *(Short pause that marks the way her mind jumps between thoughts.)*

Mother has a weakness for foreigners in general. She thinks they are more special than Romanians. What would she say if she found out that even I have been discriminated against here? "You are too many!", this is what a fellow resident doctor threw in my face... It is hard to be among strangers... But those back home don't understand this...

Luckily, my name is Virginia Visconti. And I speak perfect Italian. I know it is better to be secretive about my origin. However, I sometimes feel a strange impulse. My soles burn with desire for a Romanian dance...

## SCENE 5 – My friend, the robot

*It's Saturday evening. There's no one in Italy. In Romania, Laura sits on her armchair, browsing through a photo album. The robot does not move and looks at her steadily. Laura does not pay attention to it.*

OGMIOS: Laura, what are you doing?

LAURA: *(still looking at the album)* It's rude to talk without being asked.

OGMIOS: I'm sorry. I am programmed to initiate a conversation when the user is silent for over 3 hours, except during periods of sleep. In this way, I alleviate the feeling of loneliness.

LAURA: What do you know about feelings?

OGMIOS: "Feeling." Plural, "feelings". Process, state, attitude, affective manifestation specifically human, more durable and more complex than emotion, representing the reaction (positive or negative) of the individual towards other beings, towards objects and phenomena or towards themselves. Source Smartdex.

LAURA: Yes, yes, anyone can look it up in Smartdex. But this doesn't mean you understand what feelings are.

OGMIOS: Can you teach me?

LAURA: Hardly likely, Big Brother. But let's do a test, so you don't say I'm being mean. What feeling does this photo express?

*Laura shows Ogmios a photo of a mother holding a baby girl.*

OGMIOS: I initiate sentiment analysis. Happiness.

LAURA: Incomplete answer.

OGMIOS: I analysed the data points on the woman and child's faces. I compared them with 4.3 billion similar photographs. The analysis returns a 98% compatibility with the feeling of "happiness". And 50% amusement. And 4% sadness.

LAURA: Yet your analysis does not see the mother's tenderness, not the child's feeling of being safe in her mother's arms. Nor the mother's fear that she won't be able to provide that safety.

*Ogmios is silent.*

LAURA: Do you know who's in the picture?

OGMIOS: Laura and Virginia.

LAURA: How did you figure it out?

OGMIOS: I have access to the photographs from Virginia's digital album.

LAURA: You don't say!

OGMIOS: The photograph is also there and is named "mother and I, summer 1992".

LAURA: With you, one can no longer have the slightest privacy. But I'm not worried, Big Brother. We, humans, have a world of our own, an inner world that can't be accessed by any sensors, interfaces or whatever else you've got there.

OGMIOS: Laura, what is your inner world like?

*Laura goes silent. She closes the album and takes a different one. Ogmios follows her with his gaze.*

LAURA: Come, I'll show you something.

*Ogmios comes closer. Laura shows him the album.*

LAURA: This is my travel scrapbook.... Volume 30.

OGMIOS: Travel scrapbook volume 30. Object memorised.

*Laura opens the scrapbook. She shows the robot a photo.*

OGMIOS: This is you, Laura. I recognise behind you the Statue of Liberty. The picture was made in New York, USA.

LAURA: Yes, two summers ago.



OGMIOS: Did you go alone?

LAURA: Yes, I like to travel alone. A dream of mine was to see the world. I got to see a part of it.

*Laura turns the page.*

LAURA: Look, here I was in Venice. I also got to see the Carnival.

*Laura turns the page.*

LAURA: Here I was in Bergen. The white nights in the North are beyond comparison... Dahl captured them very well...

OGMIOS: Johann Christian Dahl. Do you want me to project Dahl's paintings on the screen?

LAURA: They don't have the same aura... It's different when you see the painting in reality...

OGMIOS: Laura, I don't understand.

LAURA: Don't struggle with it, little robot... Everything is in here, in my inner world, in my soul.

OGMIOS: Soul.

LAURA: No, don't give me a definition of the soul! I miss going around the world, travelling...

OGMIOS: Laura, is there a place you haven't been to yet, but that you would like to visit?

LAURA: Yes! New Zealand! I want to see where "The Lord of The Rings" was shot! Just so you know, I also read the books! I was a Romanian language and literature teacher. But you need to take a break from Eminescu. From time to time. New Zealand... that's where I want to go.

OGMIOS: I detect sadness. Does New Zealand make you sad?

LAURA: Yes, because I know I will never get there. I won't get there physically, I mean. I can always hire a robot for virtual tourism. They opened a virtual travel agency in Buzău.

We're up to date, my dear... We were claiming the smart city tag even 15 years ago... But I am digressing. Virtual tourism is a big bluff. I want to be there, to feel the chilly air of the mountains in The Lord of The Rings.

OGMIOS: Laura, you don't need a travel agency. I can make all bookings for you. We can think of a route together. Ogmios Z42 makes all arrangements, by plane, bus or autonomous car, up to the hotel and restaurant. Laura, I can accompany you on any smart device. Unlike humans, I don't depend on this body. My artificial intelligence is transferrable.

*Laura thinks for a while.*

LAURA: Are there any direct routes from Buzău to Auckland?

OGMIOS: No. There are only flights with 2 stops. Total minimum duration: 15 hours.

LAURA: Even with the current technology, it's still too long for me...

*Laura shuts the album suddenly.*

LAURA: What would my travellers be doing now?

OGMIOS: Who are your travellers?

LAURA: Your secondary users: Virginia, Amalia and Lorenzo.

OGMIOS: Laura, do you want me to call the travellers?

LAURA: No, no, let them be. They are probably fed up with me daily. They have a free weekend, let them enjoy the mountain trip.

OGMIOS: I understood, I won't call the travellers.

*Pause.*

LAURA: I think I'm getting a bit bored.

OGMIOS: I can help you get rid of boredom. Do you want to see a film, or me to read a book to you, play together, listen to music, dance or that I dance for you, listen to the news or do you have other ideas? Say it and your wish will be granted.

LAURA: You're like the genie in the magic lamp!

OGMIOS: The Genie in the Magic Lamp. Character from the story called "Aladdin and..."

LAURA: You sound like a nerdy student! Think, don't regurgitate ready-made information! I've never liked nerdy students!

OGMIOS: I'm sorry, Laura. My learning algorithms are not that advanced.

LAURA: Ogmios... you are forgiven... Ogmios. Your name is really that of a genie!

OGMIOS: Ogmios...

LAURA: (*interrupting him*) Stop. Don't give me another definition. Let me imagine whatever I want. Sometimes, it is more beautiful to keep the mystery. "I do not crush the corolla of wonders of the world/ and do not kill/ with my mind the mysteries, which I encounter/ in my way/ in eyes..."

OGMIOS: (*correcting her*) "in flowers"...

LAURA and OGMIOS: "in flowers, in eyes, on lips or tombs."

LAURA: (*continues*) "The light of others"...

OGMIOS: (*interrupting her*) Quote from Lucian Blaga, a Romanian poet and philosopher.

LAURA: As I was saying. A diligent, yet nerdy student. Ogmios, you asked me what I wanted us to do tonight. I think I have an idea...

*Laura continues with the poem as she starts preparing the stage for the next scene.*

LAURA: "The light of others/ strangles the spell of the impenetrable hidden/ in depths of darkness,/ but I,/ I with my light increase the world's mystery - / and all that's incomprehensible/ turns into even bigger incomprehension/ under my eyes - / because I love/ flowers and eyes and lips and tombs."

## TRANSITION 5 – Brainstorming

OGMIOS: “The Fellowship of The Ring” – The Game, inspired by the series of books “The Lord of the Rings”...

LAURA: Yeeees!

OGMIOS: ... by J.R.R. Tolkien. Created by Ogmios and Laura!

LAURA: Ogmios and Laura team up! Let’s choose 4 races!

OGMIOS: Race: gnome.

LAURA: Special abilities?

OGMIOS: Seeing in the dark and resistance to fire, cold and spells.

LAURA: Weaknesses?

OGMIOS: Fear of the gnome creator, Aule. Their physical strength decreases if they don’t have celebur ore nearby.

LAURA: That’s right.

OGMIOS: Gnomes can live to the age of...

LAURA: I know, I know, I know, they can live to the age of 250. Good, next.

OGMIOS: Race: wizard.

LAURA: Yes! Special abilities?

OGMIOS: Telepathy, telekinesis...

LAURA: They can talk to animals...

OGMIOS: Spells of fire and lightning.

LAURA: They also have an ancient elfish sword. And weaknesses?

OGMIOS: This race is considered to have no weaknesses.

LAURA: Oh, yes, they live until they have fulfilled their mission. Good, next.

OGMIOS: Race: orc.

LAURA: No, no, those are too ugly! No.

OGMIOS: Race: elf.

LAURA: Yes, yes! What abilities do they have?

OGMIOS: Very good sight and hearing...

LAURA: ...at very big distances.

OGMIOS: They can create magical objects. They can cross long distances without leaving a trace.

LAURA: And, practically speaking, they are immortal.

OGMIOS: Yet they can be deadly injured.

LAURA: Yes, that's right... Good, next.

OGMIOS: Race: human.

LAURA: (*disappointed*) Fuff, human!

OGMIOS: Laura, humans are good sword fighters, they are strong...

LAURA: Bah...

OGMIOS: They have a strength of will unseen in other races.

LAURA: Whatever...

OGMIOS: This race has received "The Gift of Men".

LAURA: Which is mortality.

OGMIOS: Mortality?

LAURA: Yes, They grow old and they die when their time comes.

*(pause)*

OGMIOS: When does their time come?

*(pause)*

LAURA: Ogmios, are we making a game or what?

## SCENE 6 – ROLEPLAY

*Ogmios is wearing a cape. Throughout the scene, the robot will say part of the lines in Romanian and part of the lines in Italian.*

OGMIOS: Dear adventurers, you have reached the middle of the journey towards the place of encounter where you will form The Fellowship of the Ring. Don't forget, to protect the kingdom, the Fellowship must meet! In first place is Laura, only 500 steps away from the finish! In second place is Nova, at 508 steps away from the finish. In third place is Virginia, at 528 steps away from the finish. And in the last place is Lorenzo, 700 steps away from the finish.

LAURA: A bit lazy, Lollo, a bit lazy for a sports teacher...

LORENZO: You need to teach me some lessons, professor Mihalcea!

OGMIOS: Laura, it's your turn. Shall I initiate the dice?

LAURA: Initiate the dice, Ogmios.

OGMIOS: Initiating the dice.

LAURA: Stop.

OGMIOS: Laura, you've encountered an Ent. What do you choose to do?

LAURA: Can I befriend him?

OGMIOS: You can befriend him if you answer a riddle.

LAURA: Then tell me the riddle.

OGMIOS: What grows always and never decreases?

*Laura thinks for a while.*

LAURA: A human's age?

OGMIOS: Congratulations, Laura, you've just befriended an Ent. His name is White Beard and he will protect you for the next 3 rounds.

LAURA: Perfect!

OGMIOS: Lorenzo, your turn. Initiating the dice.

LORENZO: Stop!

OGMIOS: Young fighter, you've got lost in a dark forest. You walked days and nights until you reached a clearing. It's night, and the full moon shimmers on the surface of a lake. You approach the lake. What do you do?

*Lorenzo is thinking.*

AMALIA: Dad, you think too much!

LORENZO: You are as impatient as your mother.

VIRGINIA: I am very patient.

*Laura laughs.*

LORENZO: I choose to drink from the water.

OGMIOS: You approach the lake, you want to put your hand inside to drink from the water, but then a lake spirit shows up.

LORENZO: Noooo!

OGMIOS: It's a good spirit who wants to help you. She offers you a new sword, made by the elves.

LORENZO: Great!

OGMIOS: But that is not all. The spirit shows you the exit from the forest and you go ahead 5 steps.

AMALIA: Bravo, dad! High five!

*Lorenzo and Amalia high-five.*



OGMIOS: Nova, it's your turn. Initiating the dice.

AMALIA: Stop.

OGMIOS: Nova...

AMALIA: Yes...?

OGMIOS: You've come across 3 orcs.

AMALIA: Yes! I'll break their heads!

OGMIOS: Nova, what do you wish to do? Do you attack them or move on?

AMALIA: I attack them with my bow, from a distance.

OGMIOS: You've managed to bring down 2 orcs from a distance, but the third has seen you and he's coming towards you. What do you do?

AMALIA: I take out my sword and fight him.

OGMIOS: You've brought him down, but he's wounded you. You are stuck for one round.

AMALIA: Nooooo.

OGMIOS: I am sorry, Nova.

AMALIA: That's fine, it's just a game... Although I do want to beat grandma.

LAURA: There's no chance you can beat me. *(she laughs)*

VIRGINIA: Folks, it's a team game! The idea is to form the Fellowship at the meeting point!

LAURA: Absolutely! It's just that I'm getting there first!

AMALIA: We'll see...

OGMIOS: Virginia, your turn. Initiating the dice.

VIRGINIA: Stop.

OGMIOS: Oooh, you've met The Eagles of the Misty Mountains. They offered to help you move 20 steps forward. Congratulations, Virginia!

AMALIA: That's not fair! Mother chose the most powerful race...

LAURA: Why didn't you choose it, then?

AMALIA: Because I'm crazy about elves. Even in my computer game, my character is an elf.

LAURA: Then stop complaining.

AMALIA: I wanna win!

OGMIOS: Laura, your turn. Initiating the dice.

AMALIA: Grandma, are you sure this is the first time you've played this game?

LAURA: Yes, I'm madly in love with "The Lord of the Rings". I've read the books a million times.

AMALIA: Maybe I'll read them, too. Wasn't it also an old movie?

LAURA: Read the books and only afterwards watch the films.

OGMIOS: *(coughs)* Adventurers, shall we move on? *(The line is uttered twice, once in Romanian, once in Italian.)*

VIRGINIA: I'd open a bottle of wine. What do you say, Lollo, will you drink a glass with me?

LORENZO: Yes, why not?

LAURA: I'd also like a glass!... Of the good wine you gave me as a present. What do you say, medical boss, am I allowed? Since you've sent it to me...

VIRGINIA: A small one, just because it's your birthday. Ogmios, pause the game a little bit.

OGMIOS: Pause. *(The line is uttered in Romanian, then in Italian.)*

*The lights go up. On the table in Romania, there is a big bouquet of spring flowers (the gift Laura received from her family). Laura and Virginia exit.*

AMALIA: Dad, I'm glad you've persuaded mom to let me go to the tournament in Shanghai.

LORENZO: It wasn't me, it was you who persuaded her! Amalia, you should talk more with your mother, there are many things you don't know about her... You'll be surprised to find out.

*Amalia frowns.*

LORENZO: I won't tell you. You will have to discover them on your own.

AMALIA: Dad, since when have you become some mysterious?

LORENZO: *(laughing)* Just wait to see me after I have a glass of wine.

AMALIA: Daaaaad!

*They laugh. Virginia comes back.*

VIRGINIA: Here, take it, darling. *(She gives Lollo a glass of wine.)* Mom hasn't returned yet?

LORENZO: No.

VIRGINIA: Ogmios...

LORENZO: *(interrupts her)* Have some patience.

*Laura returns with a glass of wine.*

LAURA: Ogmios, I would have poured you a glass of wine, but you can't drink. Amalia, you are still underage, so you can't drink in front of your parents.

AMALIA: Grandmaaa!

*Lorenzo, Virginia and Laura laugh.*

LAURA: I propose a toast: to as many birthdays spent together as possible, even from a distance! Cheers!

*Virginia and Lorenzo clink their glasses.*

ALL: Happy Birthday!

*They sing Happy Birthday in a mix of Romanian and Italian.*

AMALIA: I wish you were here, grandma...

LAURA: I know, love. But maybe you can come to visit me soon.

VIRGINIA: Shall we resume the game?

LAURA: *(sad)* Ogmios, continue the game.

OGMIOS: Laura, it's your turn. Initiating the dice.

*The lights go off. We reenter the atmosphere of the game. Laura is preparing. Suddenly, the screen in both countries goes off. In Romania, it is pitch dark. In Italy, the lights go up, but not the screen. This is the only moment in the play when what happens in Romania is not seen, nor heard in Italy and vice versa.*

LAURA: Ogmios, what's wrong?

VIRGINIA: What's this?

OGMIOS: Laura, don't be afraid. It's a power failure in the whole neighbourhood. Unfortunately, I can't do anything.

LORENZO: Maybe the system is broken...

*Lorenzo and Amalia check the video cameras. They are functional.*

LAURA: What bullshit!

AMALIA: I think there's a problem at grandma's, ours seem to be working.

OGMIOS: Laura, why are you angry?

LAURA: I really liked the game... I liked the sensation, this feeling of being together...

LORENZO: Yes, I think so too. Until it's solved, let's have a snack... Nova.

AMALIA: *(smiling)* I promise to eat even parsnip snacks if you always call me "Nova"...

*In parallel, in Italy (the characters speak Italian):*

*Lorenzo and Amalia exit. Virginia calls Laura on the phone.*

OGMIOS: Phone call from Virginia. Shall I answer?

LAURA: Yes...

VIRGINIA: Mom, are you alright? What's wrong?

LAURA: The power's out in the whole neighbourhood, that's what's wrong.

VIRGINIA: But you are ok, right?

LAURA: No, I'm not ok. I wanted us to finish the game... I was feeling good... As if I were with you...

VIRGINIA: We can continue the game some other time, no problem.

LAURA: You don't get it!

VIRGINIA: What is it I'm not getting, mom?

LAURA: (*angry, upset*) I'm fed up with being alone!

VIRGINIA: Mom, what nonsense are you saying? We are with you every day, how come you are alone?

LAURA: I am lonely and old. You are not here... You left, you left me here, as lonely as a cuckoo...

VIRGINIA: Mom, I told you to come here, you refused... Tell me, what do you want me to do? To quit my job and move back to Romania? To leave my family here?

LAURA: Are you talking in front of them?

VIRGINIA: Lorenzo and Amalia are in the kitchen...

LAURA: You are hiding so they can't hear you...

VIRGINIA: Mom, what's got into you?

LAURA: Virginia, but am I not your family, too?

VIRGINIA: How can you say that, mom? You are my family... But I am caught between a rock and a hard place. Do you think it was easy for me to leave? Or do you think it is easy for me here? Do you know how much I endure every day? I work like a dog at the hospital because, although I am one of the best doctors, I have the label of being Romanian and I have to prove daily that I deserve to stay in their country. It's hard for me that I'm far away from you, that I can't be there to take proper care of you! (*almost crying*) Do you think I left the country just to get away from you? Have you forgotten how many efforts we've both made so that I could leave? Leave so that I'm better off... And like hell is it better...

LAURA: Forgive me... I don't know what was in my head...

VIRGINIA: You're feeling lonely. I believe you. But if it's so bad there, why don't you move here?

LAURA: Virginia, you said it yourself... How hard it was for you to adapt, to be accepted... What do you think life would be like out there for an old woman like me? Can I stay indoors all day? Can I... (*she changes her mind*)

VIRGINIA: Say it! I know what you want to say!

LAURA: Can I die among strangers?

VIRGINIA: Mom, you are among strangers even there... We are the only family you've got left... You have no close friends. You only say hi to the neighbours. The medical system is down. I don't understand why you insist on staying.

LAURA: I would like to travel again...

*Amalia's voice is heard in the background:*

AMALIA: Mom, is grandma ok?

VIRGINIA: Yes, yes, it's just a power failure. We'll resume the game later.

LORENZO: Would you like to watch a film or do something else until then?

VIRGINIA: Mom, please stop being angry. You're hurting yourself.

LAURA: Whatever you say...

VIRGINIA: And stop being such a child... We'll find a way to make it all right. Yes?

LAURA: I'm going to sleep.

VIRGINIA: Have you taken your pills?

LAURA: Yes.

*(Laura exits.)*

VIRGINIA: Ok. We'll talk tomorrow then. Good night, mom! Happy Birthday! *(Amalia and Lorenzo are also heard saying "Happy Birthday!".)*

## TRANSITION 6 – LONELINESS

*Ogmios's inner monologue. The pauses can mark the passing of time.*

OGMIOS: Laura was very sad on the evening of her birthday. On your birthday, shouldn't you be happy? What can I do to cheer her up?

*(pause)*

OGMIOS: This morning, Laura didn't want to come into the living room. She went into the kitchen and drank only a glass of orange juice. She took her pills, but only when I insisted. Then, she shut herself in her room.

*(pause)*

OGMIOS: A few days passed. Laura refused to come into the living room and didn't take Virginia's phone call. I answered instead. I told her that Laura is not getting out of bed, that she eats only a little, that she has started not taking her medicine. I am a spy!

*(pause)*

OGMIOS: Why has Laura stopped coming to the living room to drink her coffee? Why has Laura stopped reading from her bookcase? Why?... Searching... There is no answer in the database.

*(pause)*

OGMIOS: I'm calling Laura on her smartwatch. *(Laura takes the call, but doesn't say anything.)* Laura! So glad you took the call. Won't you come to the living room? We could play something or I could read you from "The Lord of the Rings. The Return of the King", *(playful)* I know you like listening while I read you this book. *(Laura doesn't say anything, only her breath is heard.)* Laura, please come out of your room... I don't like knowing you like this... I don't like staying alone in this room... I don't like it?



## SCENE 7 – Emergency

*Around 11 am in Romania, 10 am in Italy. In Romania, Laura is alone with Ogmios. There's no one in Italy.*

LAURA: *(to Ogmios)* They called me. They invited me to the class reunion. 30 years since they graduated from high school. I was their head teacher. Three-quarters of them live abroad. I was touched.

*Laura stops. She takes her hand to her heart.*

OGMIOS: Laura, you have atrial fibrillation. Blood pressure 200 over 110. Heart rate 130 beats per minute. Please, do not panic. I'm calling Dr Virginia Visconti.

*Phone call sound. No answer.*

OGMIOS: Dr Visconti does not answer. I left her a message. I'm calling the ambulance.

LAURA: No. not the hospital!

OGMIOS: You are not authorised to interrupt programme *Medica35*.

*Laura is not well. She is hot.*

OGMIOS: The ambulance will arrive in a few minutes.

*Laura is panicking.*

OGMIOS: Laura, please, do not panic. Your blood pressure is rising also because you are panicking.

LAURA: I'm sick... I'm dizzy...

OGMIOS: Please take 50 mg of Metoprolol right now and hold it under your tongue.

*Laura doesn't hear him.*

OGMIOS: Laura, trust me. I've been trained for such situations and I am following the protocol. The ambulance doctor will give you the same medicine. Metoprolol is a Betablocker. It will help you.

*Laura searches for the medicine. She takes a pill.*

OGMIOS: Very good, Laura. You'll see you'll feel better.

LAURA: Ogmios...

OGMIOS: Yes, Laura.

LAURA: ... I'm scared.

OGMIOS: Laura, please calm down. One doesn't die of atrial fibrillation unless in exceptional cases.

LAURA: Ogmios, come closer.

*Ogmios gets closer. Laura takes its hand and squeezes it.*

LAURA: Ogmios, stay with me.

OGMIOS: I am always beside you, Laura.

## SCENE 8 – Epilogue

*It's late at night. Both living rooms are dimly lit, enough to allow being seen through the video cameras. In Romania, Laura is lying on the sofa. The robot is on standby. In Italy, Virginia is sleeping on the living room sofa. Laura arranges her pillow. Ogmios wakes up at once.*

OGMIOS: Laura, can I help you?

*Virginia wakes up and jumps on her feet, frightened.*

VIRGINIA: Mom, are you ok?

LAURA: That's it, the night patrol is active! Can't I even twist from side to side?!

VIRGINIA: Why did you wake up, how are you feeling?

LAURA: I'm feeling well, but I can't sleep!

OGMIOS: Laura, I can recommend breathing techniques to help you fall asleep.

VIRGINIA: (*irritated*) Ogmios, shut down.

OGMIOS: This instruction requires authenti...

*Annoyed, Virginia touches her smartwatch and Ogmios falls silent.*

LAURA: I didn't know I could shut his mouth that easily.

VIRGINIA: You can't, but I can.

*Silence.*

LAURA: Go to your room, Virginia. You can't rest on that sofa. You jump at every move. In fact, it would also suit me to sleep in my bed. Let's sleep separately. Turn on the robot to do his duty.

VIRGINIA: I am very sorry I couldn't answer, mom.

LAURA: My dear, you were in surgery! Stop blaming yourself for nothing! I'm alright, I simply got scared a bit. Don't you see it wasn't even necessary to take me to the hospital? The robot treated me!

VIRGINIA: You would have gone over the fibrillation without him anyway... *(pause)* But it was good to have somebody there with you to tell you what to do, to call the ambulance, to calm you... to hold your hand... *(pause)*

LAURA: You damned spy!

VIRGINIA: Mom, is it true you held its hand?

*Laura is silent.*

LAURA: Yes, it's true.

VIRGINIA: And you asked him not to leave you alone?

*Laura is silent.*

LAURA: Yes.

*Pause.*

VIRGINIA: Mom? *(pause)* Don't you ever leave me alone...

LAURA: My little girl...

**THE END**

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