

The Visit Of The Old Lady

By Friedrich Duerenmatt

Play no. 167

Opening show: 17/10/1959

Hebrew by: Chaim Guri

Directed by: Avraham Ninio

Decor by: Theo Otto

The Cast

The Visitors:

Claire Zachanassian

Multimillionaire : Elisheva Michaeli

Her Husbands No. 7 and 8: Raphael Klatzkin

Toby: Benjamin Ben Nissim

Rody: Nissim Shimoy

Koby:) Blind Yossi Banai

Loby:) Blind Avraham Ninio

The Visitors Ones:

Ill: Aharon Meskin

His Wife: Nura Shine

His Daughter: Dalia Friedland

His Son: Yehuda Ephroni

The Mayor: Shmuel Rodensky

The Priest: Yehoshua Bertonov

Public School Headmastaer: Nahum Buchman

The Physician: Misha Asherov

Chief of Police: Avner Hizkiyau

First Citizen: Shraga Friedman

Second Citizen: Haim Amitai

Third Citizen: Shmuel Segal

First Woman: Pnina Perach

Second Woman: Ada Tal

Girl: Ihoseva Yodkees

The Troublesome Ones:

Reporter A: Itzhak Bareket

Reporter B: Shlomo Brook

Broadcast Announcer: Shlomo Bar-Shavit

Camera men : Israel Rubentchik

Other Ones:

Station Master: Yehuda Rubinstein

Railway Guard A: Shlomo Bar-Shavit

Railway Guard B: Itzhak Bareket

Executor: Shlomo Brook

Act I

In Guellen, a small poverty-stricken town. The industrial enterprises, once flourishing, are now idle. The citizens are suffering from hunger and need. The entire town is waiting for a miracle to redeem them from their misery. And indeed, it seems, a miracle will soon occur, with the arrival of Claire Zachanassian, an old lady, born in this town, who left it in her youth, made her way and became a multimillionaire. Claire arrives, with her seventh husband, and is welcomed by the citizens with demonstration of greatest honour.

Among the people waiting for her is Ill, decades ago her lover, now owner of a small grocery shop. The population of Guellen hope that Ill, now married and a pater familias, will succeed to influence Claire to help them all.

Claire and Ill take a walk and exchange memories. At a feast in the inn she promises to donate one milliard to the town, provided a condition is complied with: it appears that, many years ago, she gave birth to a son by Ill, but the latter, supported by false witnesses, denied his paternity; thus bringing shame and disaster upon her. Now she is willing to make the donation, if – if the people of Guellen take revenge on Ill for her mishap, and kill him.

The citizens, deeply shocked, refuse to offend the basic principles of Moral and Civilization, and unanimously reject Claire's offer. But she is not in a hurry. She can afford to wait. And wait she does.

Act II

Ill's shop. Citizens enter the grocery and buy on credit various expensive goods, they never used to purchase. They all gradually raise their living standard, of course, on tick. Ill sees in this corrupting development a jeopardy to his very life and requests the help of the police, the municipality, and the priest who advises him to escape from the town. Ill tries to quit the place, at dawn. All his fellow-citizens come to bid him farewell. But he – erroneously – feels sure that they came for his life. Despite their effort to persuade him not to hesitate any longer and to leave, Ill, excited and at the end his tethers, eventually misses his train.

Act III

The honourables of the town try to influence Claire to abstain from the huge donation and instead to finance, the re-activation of the industrial enterprises, on a purely commercial basis. Yet, to their utmost amazement, they learn that all the undertakings, plants, as well as the entire town, are already owned by Claire. It was she who intentionally had caused the town to sink into poverty.

The marriage of Claire and the eighth husband is celebrated. The citizens meet in Ill's shop. His wife sells them many commodities, without cash payment, while Ill has shut himself in his room. Reporters who came to report on the wedding, enter Ill's shop. The citizens – in particular Ill's wife – fear that Ill might turn up at any moment and reveal to the pressmen the offer of the millionaire lady. All of a sudden the schoolteacher rises and, conscious ridden, tries to disclose the entire situation to the reporters. The citizens try to

prevent him from talking. Enters Ill. He succeeds to silence the teacher and thus the reporters don't learn anything about the matter.

The mayor arrives. He endeavours to induce Ill to commit suicide. Ill refuses. He is ready to stand trial before his co-citizens, but insists that his execution be carried out by those who will pronounce his death-sentence. A meeting of all the citizens is convened and Claire's offer put to vote, in a camouflaged form. The reporters leave the meeting-hall deeply moved by the Lady's high moral standard. The citizens kill ill and receive the coveted cheque.