

ct

Flood zone

de
Marta Barceló

traducción de / translated by
H.J. Gardner

(fragmento en inglés)

Translated from the Catalan play *Zona inundable* © 2023 by Marta Barceló Femenías. English translation © 2024 by H.J. Gardner. Available at www.catalandrama.cat. Translation funded by the Institut Ramon Llull.

CHARACTERS:

(3 men, 3 women)

OLDER WOMAN: 60-65 years old (also plays MAGDALENA)

MAN: 40-55 years old (also plays MANU)

WOMAN: 40-45 years old (also plays OLÍVIA)

YOUNG MAN: 16 years old (also plays TONI)

FEMALE CAST MEMBER: 30-50 years old (also plays ANCHORWOMAN, ARCHIVIST, GEOLOGIST)

MALE CAST MEMBER: 30-50 years old (also plays ANCHORMAN, PRESIDENT, MAYOR, SEBASTIÀ)

SETTING:

This play was inspired by the flash flooding that occurred on October 9, 2018 in the town of Sant Llorenç des Cardassar in Mallorca, and its devastating aftermath. It is set in the fictional town of Sant Llis.

MAGDALENA

MAGDALENA

I was home when the rain began. At first, I didn't pay much attention to it. Then the downpour came. Before I knew it, brown water was streaming in under my front door. It's going to flood again, I thought. The last big one was in 1985, but it wasn't nearly as bad as this. When I went to open the door to the little courtyard where I keep the cleaning items, the force of the water ripped the bolt and the latch off the hinges. A wave of water rushed in and hurled me against the wall. I wasn't knocked out, but I did get a bit dizzy from the blow. Then I realized the water was knee-deep already, and I went to stand in a corner of my kitchen, near the window. Everything started falling over—the fridge, the big clock, the dishwasher, the sideboard, even the stove. In a matter of seconds, the water was up to my waist and rising.

Seemed like it was never going to stop. When my old brazier table floated past, the water was chest-high already, so I got on top, best I could. Like climbing onto a raft. And then...

MALE CAST MEMBER

And then.

MAGDALENA

I read once that words are like the surface layer of deep waters. That's how it feels when I try to explain what happened that night. I've had to tell the story so many times. To my friends, the police, the TV crews, the newspapers, my therapist, my doctor... And yet I've never really been able to come close to describing... Exactly what... Just can't, you know? The words fail me. They fail me.

RADIO BROADCAST (off)

That was the moving testimony shared to us by Magdalena, a resident of Sant Llis who came close to losing her life in the catastrophic flooding that struck the town two months ago today. Now, live from Town Hall Square, we join the memorial gathering for the eleven lives lost in the worst natural disaster to have hit the Islands in recent memory.

(The radio is switched off.)

THE BACKSTORY

FEMALE CAST MEMBER

Sant Llis is a small town of about two thousand residents in the north of Mallorca.

MALE CAST MEMBER

A regular town with the usual facilities: a school, a sports center, a medical clinic...

YOUNG MAN

A Municipal Archives. In the Magistrates' Court.

MAN

For the most part, the town is built along a ravine called Torrent de les Dames, which channels three main tributaries.

WOMAN

All three tributaries run through town. One travels directly down Carrer Major, or Main Street.

MALE CAST MEMBER

Obviously, it's a flood zone.

FEMALE CAST MEMBER

A flood zone. Meaning, flood-able. Prone to inundation, deluge, washout...

WOMAN

Some years ago, because of previous floods, the ravine was widened.

MALE CAST MEMBER

Our work here is done. Residents are safe. Yaw, yaw, yaw.

YOUNG MAN

October 14. Eighteen past three in the afternoon. It begins to drizzle. For the first few hours, there's this low-key, normal rain, nothing unusual. Gradually, it starts raining harder, faster. At nine in the morning, the forecasters at AEMET, the State Meteorological Agency, issue a yellow alert.

FEMALE CAST MEMBER

"Yellow alert." Meaning— Likely no risk, although care may be called for in certain weather-dependent activities. Recommendation: Be aware and stay informed.

WOMAN

Manu and Nick, his assistant, are at work, repairing a wall in Magdalena's courtyard. Manu checks the sky.

MANU

Senyora, that's it for us today. Nothing more we can do in the rain. Nick, you take Fortuna. Park her on the road down by the water.

MAGDALENA

Will you finish tomorrow?

MANU

We'll finish tomorrow. I know I promised the job would take three days, not four, but with the rain...

MAGDALENA

That's how it goes. Nick, have some cake. Freshly made. *Coca dolça*.

MANU

Don't spoil the boy.

MAGDALENA: You have some, too, then.

MANU

I'm full, thanks. Had a big lunch.

MAGDALENA: Save room tomorrow, then.

MANU

If I know Nick, he'll finish it off first. Got to get going.

MAGDALENA

What about an umbrella? Take mine.

MANU

No need. Just headed down the road to Olívia's for a haircut.

MALE CAST MEMBER

Half past four in the afternoon. The sky has turned steel gray and the first bolts of lightning have begun to flash, but the weather alert stays yellow. The forecasters at AEMET never saw it coming either.

FEMALE CAST MEMBER

Here's Olívia, on the phone with her son Toni.

OLÍVIA

What is it, Toni?

TONI

Are you still at the salon, Olívia?

OLÍVIA

Where else would I be?

TONI

Well, I'm in Manacor with my friend Kike, but it's started to rain.

OLÍVIA

You're where?

TONI

In Manacor.

OLÍVIA

Did you ride your motorbike there?

TONI

Yes. So could you come pick me up?

OLÍVIA

No, Toni, I can not. I'm working.

TONI

I know. I mean when you finish.

OLÍVIA

When I finish work, I'm lying on the sofa, having a beer and maybe some pizza. Not getting in my tin can of a car and driving through the pouring rain to pick up my son. My son, who I never hear from, except when he needs transportation.

TONI

Fine, Olívia. You don't have to nag. I'll figure out something.

OLÍVIA

Stay the night at Kike's, why don't you?

TONI

Can't. I'm meeting a friend tonight in Sant Llis.

OLÍVIA

Which friend?

TONI

It doesn't matter. I'll figure out a way back.

OLÍVIA

But not on your bike. Toni! Do you hear me? *(Toni hangs up.)*

OLÍVIA

(Still on the phone.) Toni! Toni! *(She hangs up.)* To hell with it. *(To her customer.)* Sorry. Just my son asking if I could come pick him up, but I don't like driving in the rain.

MALE CAST MEMBER

Olivia and Toni have always had a stormy relationship.

OLÍVIA

You can't just do nothing! If you don't want to stay in school, then don't. But get a job.

TONI

I can't find one. It's not my fault.

OLÍVIA

Then try looking for one!

TONI

What do you think I've been doing?

OLÍVIA

I think that when I get up at eight to go to work, you're asleep. And when I come home to sleep, you're out. And I have no idea where you go, what you do, or who you're with!