**Vitaly Doudko**

**CENSUS LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**A play in two acts**

**Translated from Russian be Klimets Denis**

**Titre original :**

***РЕВИЗСКАЯ СКАЗКА***

**VITALY DOUDKO**

**CENSUS LIST**

**(PEOPLE FROM THE UNDERGROUND)**

Euro-Asian questionnaire

**I'm your brother.**

**N.V. Gogol, The Overcoat.**

*Illuminated auditorium.*

*The actors are seated on chairs by the ramp. A fragment of "Polonaise" by M.K. Oginsky sounds. The actors take away the chairs and take seats in the coach.*

*The train had no sooner pulled entirely into the tunnel than it was immediately stuck. The last compartment of the last coach is packed to capacity - rush hour.*

*The lines and questions uttered by passengers are rather rhetorical in nature. It is not quite clear: whether they are addressed to the interlocutor – a neighbour in the coach, or whether they sound in the passenger's imagination. The nature of the dialogue that ensues for a brief moment is also not entirely clear: whether the answer originates and is voiced in the questioner's mind, or whether some kind of dialogue is actually taking place. But the general impression is that no one expects an answer to their question.*

*Periodically music by S. Prokofiev, A. Schnittke is heard.*

*Or is it just the sound of it...?*

*At the left backstage there is a tall – in human height – hourglass with crumbled sand of time.*

*Quotations used: B.L. Pasternak, L. Carroll, N.M. Rubtsov, R. Gary, F. Kafka, A. de Saint-Exupéry, A.P. Chekhov.*

*The authors of the citations should preferably be listed in the programme.*

*There are no lines in the play: thoughtful, determined, pitiful, etc. To the author, they*

*seem self-evident. They reflect the fickle moods of the passengers. So, for example, when Rejoicing advertises the medical product "Mutaten," the most appropriate lines could be – inspirationally, with uplift.*

**Characters**

**Pregnant woman**

**Yes woman**

**Exalted woman**

**Angry woman**

**Narratress**

**Rejoicing**

**Nervous**

**Intruder**

**Committer**

**Single mums, Well-to-do family, Children, Waiter, Outsider, Tradesmen, Driver's voice, Voice of Madame Kikiriki, Life actors**

# Act One

**Driver's voice.** Due to technical reasons, the train's departure is delayed.

**Exalted woman.** Is it optimal for a man and a woman, completely exhausted, to fall asleep in each other's arms?

**Nervous**. Have you met Madame Kikiriki?

**Pregnant woman.** They were having ice cream in the rotunda, with a reticule in hand.

**Yes woman.** Did the distinguished guest see you off at the airport?

**Committer**. Imagine, we've moved.

**Pregnant woman.** But we're standing?

**Committer**. We're still standing. There's a good chance we'll move.

**Rejoicing**. Chance or hope?

**Angry woman.** A logical mix of them.

**Rejoicing**. Not moving yet?

**Committer**. Not yet, just imagine. The announcer heartily announces the stop. Everyone is comfortably ensconced, immersed in themselves, pondering. For example, a date with a sweetheart. The train gently, noiselessly touches down, picks up speed. A light breeze, fragrant with pine forests, wafts around the enthusiastic faces of male and female passengers. They are filled with friendship for those around them. Completely devoid of cruelty and cynicism. Anticipating arrival at the final destination.

**Intruder**. What is known about the final destination?

**Narratress**. At the final destination, the greeters wave handkerchiefs.

**Angry woman.** Or will it get into a dead end?

**Nervous**. Did you have a sit-down for the road?

**Pregnant woman.** Are you dreaming of the sublime?

**Yes woman.** Permanently!

**Intruder**. Who has a benchmark arrangement diagram?

**Rejoicing**. Do you keep your family jewellery under the mattress?

**Nervous**. We're not gonna lose it on the way?

**Exalted woman.** Announce a sexual boycott within the confines of the coach?

**Angry woman.** A tempting idea!

**Rejoicing**. Completely dilapidated! It seems to be washed-up.

**Nervous**. Can't go on and on about sex?

**Intruder**. Studied in primary school.

**Narratress**. The offer is fraught. There are princesses who are tempted by uninterrupted caresses.

**Pregnant woman.** But they're keeping quiet?

**Rejoicing**. Stock quote in the afternoon.

**Committer**. I suggest we line up, stand in a queue.

**Angry woman**. Shall we create a vacancy for a queue manager?

**Nervous**. With vast powers?

**Exalted woman.** When a man hugs you, cuddles you, does it feel good? Let's face it, I wasn't cuddled. Nor hugged.

**Intruder**. Got a haircut for ten roubles!

**Nervous**. Unbelievable!

**Pregnant woman.** Purchased an inexpensive faux pearl necklace, experienced a spectrum of positive emotions.

**Committer**. When shooting at the range, excellent accuracy, strictly in the bull's-eye.

**Yes woman.** Has the Lisbon summit come to an end?

**Nervous**. Has it really died down?

**Angry woman.** Completely and irrevocably!

**Pregnant woman.** Did it culminate in apotheosis?

**Exalted woman**. To no avail! As it was, so it will stay!

**Rejoicing**. Is "Lisbon" spelled with one "s" or two?

**Pregnant woman.** Are we at the start or have we run part of the distance?

**Nervous**. Do you enjoy jumping on a trampoline?

**Committer**. Do elementary prospects loom?

**Angry woman**. Is it time to organise a search for optimal development trends?

**Yes woman.** The agenda for the meeting is very intense, isn't it?

**Narratress**. Do you have a note counter?

**Intruder**. The weather forecast does not promise a tsunami, volcanic eruption, tornado, hail, heavy rain. It's a beautiful sunny day.

**Nervous**. Where do you go on a clear day with a spanner?

**Rejoicing**. In the polyclinic, there are posters: "Self-medication is harmful to health" and "Help yourself."

**Angry woman.** Castellucci's not coming! Can you believe it?!

**Committer**. The backwoods, the wilds. Alone in the whole world.

**Nervous**. The shepherd of the collective farm "Zavety Ilyicha" loudly declared: financing of the works put in doubt the implementation of ambitious projects and the achievement of exorbitant peaks.

**Pregnant woman**. He is rich: he has an older son, then a daughter, then a son again. Both brothers can't get enough of their little sister, blowing dust off her.

**Angry woman.** Does a partying socialite have the same gateway to inspiration as a homeless woman?

**Exalted woman**. Uncle and Auntie have an endless dialogue. For centuries. Everyone seeks to overpower his opponent. A draw is required. A discussion on equal footing.

**Intruder**. Stocked up on alloying additives for steels?

**Rejoicing**. And coking coal?

**Yes woman**. No consultation mechanism?

**Committer**. Are we at risk?

**Exalted woman**. Maid's code of behaviour in bed with a man has been unveiled.

**Committer**. And the Code of Conduct for the tomato line?

**Rejoicing**. Is gold dropping on the world market?

**Intruder**. Is the situation room being renovated?

**Pregnant woman**. A preg-nant cloudness hung over the city.

*Pause. Everyone fell silent.*

**Narratress**. Why pregnant?

**Pregnant woman**. That's what it says in the paper.

**Narratress**. Show me. (*Picks up newspaper, reads syllables.*) Va-ri-a-ble

cloudness hung over the city. An anticyclone struck and chased away the original cyclone. **Intruder**. Shall we co-operate with the neighbouring coaches?

**Rejoicing**. And trains?

**Angry woman.** Why are men fixated on women's underwear?

**Yes woman**. Unfortunately, the combinations are gone.

**Exalted woman.** An unknown patron donated a steel mill and a yacht in the Mediterranean Sea.

**Driver's voice**. Just a reminder, today is Tuesday, the fourth of April.

**Nervous**. What's the reminder for?

**Pregnant woman**. Have there been events outside?

**Intruder**. Without us?

**Yes woman**. A gentle rain is dropping.

**Angry woman**. It's not dropping, it's drizzling.

**Committer**. But when he reminded me, he meant ...

**Narratress**. Went to the cardiologist, had a heart attack. People came running from neighbouring offices, confused, not knowing how to help. No one had any medication. Called an ambulance. While we waited, the doctor was lying unconscious like a dead fish. Patients in the corridor were outraged, why isn't she taking?

**Committer**. Let's elect a spokesperson for the salon.

**Voices**. Come on, come on!

**Committer**. Who's in favour?

*A sea of hands.*

**Committer**. Opposed?

*A sea of hands.*

**Committer**. Abstain?

*A sea of hands.*

**Angry woman.** Woodman doesn't ride the underground and is quite prosperous.

**Nervous**. Will the stop teach you a lot?

**Exalted woman.** I'm unique! Don't be a worrywart!

**Nervous**. Should I bow to the train driver?

**Rejoicing**. Does he expect reciprocation?

**Pregnant woman**. What kind of reciprocation are you talking about?

**Rejoicing**. He's driving us, we're not driving him.

**Angry woman**. Shall we chip in for a substantial bottle?

**Nervous**. You can't get away with a bottle.

**Pregnant woman**. Are we authorised to access the information?

**Intruder**. What kind of information do you wish to acquire?

**Angry woman**. Where are we going? Why? Will we get there?

**Committer**. Forget and start over?

**Exalted woman**. Going with the flow. Collapsed in infancy when nurtured and pampered by my own daddy. He read bedtime stories, I couldn't sleep without them.

**Nervous**. Why does the apple still fall down?

**Angry woman**. I stopped by Malaya Bronnaya the other day. I was born nearby and spent my youth. An excess of outward beauty, luxury. I'm not jealous. A pang in my chest, tears came to my eyes. A young policeman came up and consoled me: "Don't cry, it can be worse."

**Narratress**. A friend of mine had an unpleasant experience. There's an old dying mother in her care. The servant usually brought the pension in the morning. It's not a great pension, but it's still a help. That day he brought it in towards evening. But her mother died at noon. For some reason he wanted to look at the old woman. When he saw her dead, he refused to give her a pension. Although he should have brought it in the early hours of the morning.

**Nervous**. Has the old woman got a pension?

**Narratress**. She has. But the old woman is gone.

**Committer**. Night, rain, the whole city outside in total uncertainty?

**Rejoicing**. Contacts need to be brought back into the mainstream of strategic endeavours?

**Intruder**. They whisper behind me, I'm old and frail, and I feel invigorated and young.

**Angry woman**. Living is full of vicissitudes?

**Exalted woman**. Yeah, I'm a stuffed fool! Take me as I am. We can't all be wise men!

**Pregnant woman**. As a little I was favoured. Especially by my grandma.

**Yes woman**. I'd play the violin and give vitality, but someone has to clean up the dirt. I admire the violin.

**Intruder**. Have they spotted a pike in the Moskva River?

**Angry woman**. In Serebryany Bor?

**Committer**. Shouldn't we set up an action team?

**Pregnant woman**. Did the previous one successfully fail?

**Rejoicing**. A group of initiatives - sounds appealing.

**Committer**. Shall we make appropriate demarches?

**Nervous**. Have railway sleepers gone up in price?

**Angry woman.** We're used to it.

**Nervous**. And cement?

**Intruder**. I'm burning with confusion!

**Yes woman.** We're not counting those confused, are we?

**Rejoicing.** Will the group grow into an autonomous committee?

**Nervous.** Autonomous committee - always prerogatives, leverage, perks?

**Pregnant woman.** What are the privileges of the remaining, non-members of the group?

**Committer.** Has an emergency action plan been agreed upon?

**Angry woman.** I'm underprivileged. But I won't do anything evil for the money.

**Yes woman.** When asked "How's it going?" my relative invariably replies: "Get lost, extra-super!"

**Intruder.** The framework agreement limps on both feet!

**Nervous.** There is a lack of a consent formula!

**Pregnant woman.** Are we gripped by conflicting feelings?

**Rejoicing.** Didn't have a chat with the wife's mum. She's in her eighties. She wants to tell the "most important thing." She has been intending to for years. No spare time in the evening.

**Intruder.** A sign appeared on the lift door that read "Please do not slam the door." The tenants slam harder, even the ones who had drawn the door silently.

**Yes woman.** Are we keeping up with the times?

**Exalted woman.** I despise vulgar language.

**Committer.** We worked honestly, raised our children, cared for our parents, socialised with friends.

**Nervous.** Is there a provision for exchanging toasts?

**Angry woman.** It's pitch black outside. It's clearly winter. We move the hand of the clock forwards and backwards. I can't see a thing.

**Yes woman.** What thing are you trying to see?

**Intruder.** We'll wait. Better medicine, better nutrition, a humane worldview will emerge. We have to wait it out.

**Committer.** We'll do without the best. Even if it's the most ordinary one.

**Rejoicing.** Got lost. It used to be said: if you keep company with this type, you step to the right; if you keep company with the antipode, you step to the left. Now became confused.

**Yes woman.** Is it not unreasonable to establish a point of reference?

**Committer.** The status quo?

**Angry woman.** And the point of no return?

**Intruder.** That's the thing, there's no co-ordinates.

**Nervous.** Let's take a step back from the details and remember strategy, shall we?

**Angry woman.** Shall we capture the vector of motion?

**Narratress.** He works as a loader in a shop, the owner of a beautiful male body: bulging, relief muscles, beautifully shimmering with physical exertion. No fat at all. The real Apollo of Belvedere. The canonically beautiful musculature was generously bestowed by nature. He didn't do any bodybuilding. Heavy drinker. One summer, the medics saw him. They admired him and suggested that they draw an anatomical atlas from him for textbooks. He refused. General practitioners have visited him more than once. They begged him, he refused flatly. Never got the chance to serve in the interests of medical science. It's weird, it's still so beautiful. The two-fisted drinker is guzzling like a fish. It's an outrage.

**Pregnant woman.** When will the moment of Truth come?

**Committer.** Are we not claiming the ultimate Truth?

**Yes woman.** Do we have all the proper know-hows?

**Rejoicing.** It was dawn when I broke in here. It still does?

**Angry woman.** Difference between a report and a memo?

**Exalted woman.** Suddenly felt the approach of inevitability and fatality. Beyond that, I don't remember anything. However, there was...

**Nervous.** I'm a generalist expert, I understand your exclusivity.

**Exalted woman.** It's a great honour to ride with you.

**Pregnant woman.** Passengers don't hold the doors. Hence the increase in the number of fractures.

**Intruder.** Started the party without establishing the rules of the game?

**Committer.** I never sign any papers! I only vise.

**Nervous.** Is it not easy to regain consciousness after a deep faint?

**Angry woman.** But the dough is shared, taxpayers' dough?

**Narratress.** Who is held responsible for the development of the situation?

**Committer.** Is everyone comfortable with compromising misinformation?

**Rejoicing.** We're keeping trade secrets to the grave?

**Intruder.** When did you notice the fallacy of the conclusions?

**Yes woman.** Will we manage to score a goal against history?

**Committer.** Or our own?

**Narratress.** The husband on the eve of divorce from his beloved wife decided to demonstrate courage and agility. When they got to the flat, it turned out they were keyless. The wife forgot hers and the husband left it at his mum's. They called a fitter. While waiting for the technician, they stopped by the neighbours' flat. The husband tried to move from the neighbours to his balcony. He fell off. The technician soon appeared.

**Angry woman.** Will it be possible to avoid the dangers that lie ahead?

**Nervous.** Everyday experiences are bitter and sad?

**Exalted woman.** Wouldn't it be nice to ratify a protocol of intentions?

**Rejoicing.** Intentions are pure?

**Pregnant woman.** Has the full potential of the negotiating mechanism been implemented?

**Narratress.** Underground it is necessary to observe asceticism of thoughts, to avoid promiscuity, immorality, to be focused and natural.

**Angry woman.** Discovered a lifesaving loophole from the trap?

**Yes woman.** Isn't it time to start a search consultation?

**Intruder.** Please don't comment on my thoughts!

**Narratress.** Got a lot of incidents to deal with?

**Exalted woman.** Did bold and deep necklines shine at the banquet?

**Yes woman.** Quite brave! And the deepest!

**Rejoicing.** Are we gonna get a winning lottery ticket?

**Committer.** How do you break the vicious cycle?

**Angry woman.** A rare chance to speak out!

**Narratress.** Fashion invented the paradoxical strappy design. It wriggles over a woman's body in a very extravagant way. Supports the nipple of the left breast, then the weight of the right breast and ends between the legs. The hapless man grooves, at a loss as to where to start undoing.

**Intruder.** Are events evolving in a favourable scenario?

**Yes woman.** Has the era of original savings come to an end?

**Committer.** The bankers are honest, untainted. Only here we can make a multi-billion dollar fortune in a tiny period of time. It's a good idea to hide it away, away from prying eyes.

**Nervous.** Are we on the cusp of an important change?

**Angry woman.** Does the average city dweller have a well-developed reflexivity?

**Yes woman.** Demand a certificate of quality and safety.

**Angry woman.** Naive personas cherish a fragile illusion?

**Pregnant woman.** Is the moral imperative gone?

**Intruder.** Is it desirable to set clear priorities?

**Nervous.** Do ambitious aspirations prevail?

**Yes woman.** Are we in the same boat?

**Angry woman.** Are we gonna get the insurance payout?

**Pregnant woman.** Has an insurance claim come up?

**Rejoicing.** On the glorious road we march, comrades!

**Intruder.** I never exceed the speed limit!

**Angry woman.** A respite in the department: the chief slipped, fell, hit his forehead.

**Pregnant woman.** What is the global idea behind it?

**Yes woman.** Attracted to dressing bourgeois?

**Angry woman.** Winter has come to the fatherland?

**Intruder.** Does the free press write smoothly?

**Nervous.** Are we making a colossal breakthrough?

**Committer.** The main defendants have disappeared?

**Pregnant woman.** The chairman's reviewer made it clear...

**Exalted woman.** I couldn't quite hear: who was given, under what circumstances?

**Angry woman.** Is it preferable to give tête-à-tête or in Russian face to face?

**Rejoicing.** Although the finale isn't exactly clear?

**Committer.** Is it important to retain a sense of reality?

**Nervous.** I expect a very tangible profit in the coming years.

**Intruder.** Do you share our modest optimism?

**Angry woman.** Do we deliver trustworthy video footage to the top?

**Exalted woman.** Can you give me a hint... get a woman's.... pleasure? At least a little bit...

**Pregnant woman.** It's not recommended for everyone.

**Exalted woman.** And recommended? I've heard so many nice things...

**Yes woman.** Plunged into an information vacuum?

**Narratress.** Mailboxes have been removed, envelopes have disappeared. A neighbour received a letter from a school friend in a bedroom community, it took months to arrive.

**Nervous.** Please don't bother me. I want to raise my children in kindness and love.

**Committer.** First about creation, then about the mundane?

**Rejoicing.** Make a patronage?

**Intruder.** Long-awaited adversity creeping out from under all the skirting boards?

**Exalted woman.** Was the conclusion of the conciliation commission signed by a majority of its members?

**Rejoicing.** Shall we ban all parties and movements?

**Nervous.** Are you nuts?

**Angry woman.** Should logistics be modernised?

**Narratress.** Is the budget shrinking like a shagreen?

**Yes woman.** I'm living in the moment.

**Nervous.** Are we once again experiencing the difficulties of growth?

**Pregnant woman.** I'm secretive, I don't confide my feelings to anyone. It's personal, it's all about me.

**Rejoicing.** The firm set up an office right in the lift?

**Nervous.** From the tunnel, a manhole has been dug into the cornflower meadow. In case of indisposition, I'll bring it to light. Do you like the countryside and sitting on a haystack?

**Yes woman.** Wooden cabins on the beach?

**Pregnant woman.** Eye candy?

**Exalted woman.** A friend was cheated on by her husband.

**Angry woman.** How did she find out?

**Exalted woman.** He confessed. It was stupid, dirty.

**Yes woman.** I want to stand in the direction of traffic!

**Nervous.** You're not allowed?

**Yes woman.** I was thrown back by the flow, unable to turn round.

**Rejoicing.** And I want to go by direction!

**Angry woman.** I want to do it too!

**Committer.** I get chills when I listen to the Leningrad Symphony.

**Exalted woman.** My prince charming worthless prince. Waiting for you for so many years.

**Yes woman.** The other day, the lovely TV announcer said goodbye to us. She's taking a holiday. See her in a month.

**Angry woman.** Hairdressers clash with food industry workers. Food industry workers put something in their food, hair grows more vigorously. The barbers made super profits. They pay off the food industry workers, their associates.

**Rejoicing.** You're planning a proper buffet?

**Intruder.** The upper class - the Beaumonde - have their own buffet?

**Pregnant woman.** They let you in with a bike?

**Committer.** Is today's ride legally flawless?

**Nervous.** That's a shame, grey beard. His hair is dark*,* his beard greyed, though much younger, having sprouted in his teenage years. Neither philosophers nor medical men are able to explain.

**Pregnant woman.** Are we at the beginning of the road again?

**Yes woman.** Yes, at the very beginning!

**Pregnant woman.** Is it going to be a long, long one?

**Narratress.** I'm an editor of texts and sentences of all sorts. I will instantly draw up a resolution of solemn meeting.

**Nervous.** Would you deign to present a resolution of vague content?

**Narratress.** As much as you please! I love improvisational texts. Here's a sample order. I read it out slowly. "Investigation of technology to provide promising trends for the purpose of forecasting global systems, aimed at achieving an optimal level of definition of modern principles, promoting the agreement of specific activities to implement positive experience in the creation of fundamental development programmes that ensure the implementation of criteria that establish effective ways to unify the methods of integral analysis in real time."

*A brief pause, then an explosion of applause.*

*The narratress replied with a modest bow of her head.*

**Exalted woman.** I have a weakness for applause. I love it when there's an enthusiastic greeting. Give a round of applause in my honour.

**Rejoicing.** For no reason? Out of the blue?

**Exalted woman.** Out of the blue, I'm here with you now.

*Everyone applauds. The exalted woman walks out onto the platform, bows out, returns to the coach.*

**Nervous.** Signing of documents by the three contracting parties. The sequence of manipulation is ignored: who hands the folder, when to portray a smile on the face, the location of the protocol transferee. I observe strict ceremonial. A breach is fraught with trouble.

**Committer.** A wise law is being drafted?

**Yes woman.** It distracts you from plughole thoughts. Adherents viciously advocate, opponents enthusiastically criticise.

**Rejoicing.** Exquisite white dry wines, subtle flavours, scalding coolness, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, blazing fireplaces?

**Intruder.** The most important component is a partner, your vis-a-vis.

**Exalted woman.** Do strippers striptease?

**Committer.** Shall we check for absentees?

**Angry woman.** Shall we make a list of those in attendance?

**Pregnant woman.** Did you check in the register?

**Narratress.** The wife saved her husband. The bandits pounced on the spouse, brutally beating him. She fell on top of her husband, covering him with her body, calling for help.

**Rejoicing.** Courier, please respond.

**Angry woman.** Why do we need a courier?

**Rejoicing.** To send word with him.

**Yes woman.** I'll tell you in confidence, I belong to the highest circle. I ride with you for disguise.

**Pregnant woman.** Won't there be a vote of no confidence?

**Nervous.** The definition of normal and pathological is a shapeless mess, the distinction is barely perceptible.

**Committer.** Is it too late to start a debate?

**Pregnant woman.** There is a lack of sticktoitiveness. I'd be doing my thesis: "Human beings as passengers."

**Intruder.** Don't put your eggs in a hole-in-the-wall basket!

**Angry woman.** Shall we stop begging?

**Nervous.** Are we deluding ourselves?

**Pregnant woman.** Do our spells fit well?

**Committer.** Did the audience take place in a friendly atmosphere?

**Exalted woman.** Not friendly, but cordial!

**Yes woman.** No answer to any of the questions?

**Angry woman.** Would lawyers clarify the term "immediately?"

**Committer.** Shall we open a currency exchange office?

**Intruder.** Wandering around looking for a solid investor?

**Rejoicing.** And a sponsor too!

**Angry woman.** The therapist listened to the end, didn't throw me out in the corridor, didn't call me a psychopath. On the contrary: he gave practical advice.

**Nervous.** Insomnia bothers you?

**Angry woman.** No, it doesn't.

**Nervous.** Insatiable appetite?

**Angry woman.** Appetite's great.

**Nervous.** Are you prone to sudden impulses of euphoria?

**Angry woman.** No, I'm not prone to sudden euphoria.

**Nervous.** You're in good health. There's no reason to visit him.

**Committer.** Shouldn't we set up a hotline?

**Pregnant woman.** Or a helpline?

**Rejoicing.** The cost of a gram of the rare metal is skyrocketing. Up to a tidy sum. I've got whole bars under my bed.

**Intruder.** Do you have authoritarian ambitions?

**Committer.** Shouldn't we create a new party?

**Rejoicing.** With an executive committee, organising bureau, regional offices and similar attributes?

**Yes woman.** Will it help?

**Committer.** Does the order of things promote the cult of wealth?

**Angry woman.** Have you been handed a mysterious envelope with seven seals?

**Pregnant woman.** Does wet laundry dry faster in the cold?

**Intruder.** Wouldn't it seem faster when it's warm?

**Yes woman.** Does an accusatory or exculpatory bias prevail?

**Rejoicing.** Does shameless self-interest still prevail?

**Committer.** Have you done things that you're not telling us about?

**Nervous.** What was it really like?

**Pregnant woman.** It was like...

**Angry woman.** Aren't we gonna be late?

**Rejoicing.** Bacchanalia – a rampant feast in honour of the merry-maker Bacchus?

**Intruder.** Has the pain threshold been reached?

**Committer.** Make it look like we're getting to the heart of the problem?

**Exalted woman.** Is the intimate services business successful?

**Rejoicing.** Will there be a reign of justice?

**Intruder.** Is the farmer a catalyst for market redevelopment of the village?

**Angry woman.** Looking in the dark instead of under a streetlight?

**Nervous.** Is it inevitable that what happened will happen again?

**Exalted woman.** Is the composition of the competition committee known?

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we summarise the interim results?

**Yes woman.** Wouldn't the quality and competitiveness of products be improved?

**Intruder.** Space is icy darkness. It's creepy to the extreme. But we escaped and survived.

**Rejoicing.** Do you surf?

**Committer.** Should I go on a long sentimental journey?

**Angry woman.** Will only an agreed compact group go?

**Pregnant woman.** Taking those who empathise and sympathise?

**Nervous.** Will there be a flood of takers?

**Intruder.** Humanity faces risks on a daily basis: natural disasters, transport accidents, epidemics, wars, murders. Shouldn't we take an inventory of actual and potential risks?

**Exalted woman.** Ask a woman, "Where did you buy the bread?" she will reply in a peculiar way, "Not good?" Women perceive light in fog a fraction of a second earlier and are not colour blind.

**Rejoicing.** But a colour-blind man could do something like that...

**Angry woman.** Are you insinuating, dear neighbour?

**Rejoicing.** Do you have a clue?

**Exalted woman.** I'd like to know more.

**Rejoicing.** Ready to make a whole lotta love to the little one.

**Yes woman.** Even colour-blind?

**Angry woman.** They pay even for a little something. It's a trinket, but put it out. You can't get in on the freebies, can you?

**Committer.** How's everything going in general?

**Pregnant woman.** The priority of the individual dominates over the interests of the state?

**Nervous.** Is it proper for old people to live with dignity?

**Rejoicing.** The author of the hypothesis?

**Intruder.** Is the final version of what happened polished?

**Committer.** Consider all aspects of earthly ordinariness?

**Yes woman.** Let's organise a get-together in a pleasant setting...

**Pregnant woman.** Not judging, just stating!

**Narratress.** On the plane, the passenger did not fasten her seat belt, she was thrown up, collapsed on the armrest of the seat and crushed her coccyx. It's festering.

**Rejoicing.** Remember when I tapped you on the back?

**Angry woman.** Why did you tap?

**Rejoicing.** You coughed.

**Intruder.** Is it time to build up the formwork?

**Exalted woman.** Is there nothing in the world but friendliness between little people?

**Nervous.** The pretty girl screams in a frenzy, "More!"

**Rejoicing.** What day is the meeting scheduled for?

**Yes woman.** Who's the nail toast to?

**Rejoicing.** Accommodation and food are free?

**Angry woman.** Have you agreed on a toast-master?

**Committer.** Shouldn't we elect a board consisting of: chairman, vice-chairman, executive secretary, sectors: trade, housing, transport, health care?

**Yes woman.** I guarantee confidentiality of the transaction, legal support, tax minimisation!

**Exalted woman.** Tight deadlines for service delivery!

**Pregnant woman.** We recognise only the final results!

**Nervous.** Guided by the presumption of guilt?

**Committer.** Let's try to renew the staff!

**Angry woman.** Can we stop spouting ideas?

**Nervous.** Did the event happen because of or in spite of?

**Intruder.** Who is manipulating the situation?

**Pregnant woman.** The wind rose is in whose favour?

**Rejoicing.** Is it time to not hear or see anything?

**Yes woman.** And not try to understand?

**Committer.** And get rid of the suspense at the same time?

**Angry woman.** Are white threads always visible?

**Nervous.** Which measure is considered the ultimate one?

**Rejoicing.** Is it realistic to prevent outrageous shenanigans?

**Pregnant woman.** Are purchases listed in small, beaded font on the cashier's cheque?

**Exalted woman.** Is it necessary to knock icicles off the roofs of houses in a timely manner?

**Committer.** If a member of society is given a perfect wife.....

**Yes woman.** ... the perfect husband...

**Committer.** . loving children, a fertile plot of land, a lovely cottage, a graceful car, will he be comforted?

**Angry woman.** Also a five-arm silver candlestick, will he be comforted?

**Pregnant woman.** Can you hear the footsteps of time disappearing?

**Yes woman.** Do you fill out your utility receipts without error?

**Nervous.** Has the heating gone up noticeably?

**Intruder.** Is there a reserve airfield lurking nearby?

**Angry woman.** Is there enough paraffin to fly?

**Pregnant woman.** Do they fake in the choir?

**Exalted woman.** Is it a man's destiny to win a woman all the time?

**Narratress.** A young man returned from the army. The girl was waiting for him. Soon they will get married. They're expecting a baby.

**Rejoicing.** Who should I fry the cutlets for?

**Intruder.** Shall we live without too much pomp?

**Nervous.** Is competition a stimulus for development?

**Yes woman.** Have the professionals disappeared?

**Committer.** Is it realistic to vaccinate against all ailments at once?

**Intruder.** Has a rational compromise been reached?

**Angry woman.** Did you save more than enough for a rainy day?

**Yes woman.** Let's fantasise, have MPs been stripped of their parliamentary immunity?

**Nervous.** Biological mothers abandoning their children?

**Yes woman.** Are citizens gradually migrating into individual thinking mode?

**Exalted woman.** A self-respecting lady would never go out in the summer without tights.

**Pregnant woman.** Is the tipping point dragging on?

**Committer.** What is the dominant point of disagreement?

**Intruder.** Flies flying in front of your face?

**Angry woman.** Kitchen equipment is unthinkable without a mortar and pestle?

**Exalted woman.** The pestle is swift: hoppity-hoppity-hop.

**Rejoicing.** Shall we share the pie?

**Nervous.** Isn't everything enough for them?

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we try to reduce the greenhouse effect?

**Narratress.** "But who are we and where do we come from,

When all those years

have left their gossip,

And we are not in the world?" (B. Pasternak)

**Exalted woman.** Enjoying the canary?

**Rejoicing.** A penny canary doesn't sing in bass?

**Intruder.** I'm certainly not going to dry out my cerebellum either.

**Narratress.** Decided to wander around the city at night. I notified the neighbourhood policeman, my husband and relatives. All dissuaded me in unison. Unpredictable consequences were listed. Got the courage... No one was awake, waiting to return. Great luck! I - unarmed - went round the central blocks and into the duty pharmacy!

**Nervous.** You seemed to be seeing things!

**Narratress.** I was! It happened to me!

**Yes woman.** It's not unreasonable to create a worldwide database!

**Nervous.** Organise a presentation?

**Pregnant woman.** Auction or raffle?

**Exalted woman.** Men smell different. You have to put up with your husband's odours, his whims. I'm going to iron out the creases in his trousers. I'm gonna love my husband!

*The Yes woman pushes the Intruder lightly.*

**Intruder.** Are you flirting?

**Yes woman.** I need it badly!

**Intruder.** Flirtatious?

**Yes woman.** Exceedingly valuable.

**Intruder.** Why are you pushing?

**Yes woman.** Cut the crap.

**Intruder.** You're the liar.

**Rejoicing.** The principles of pension accrual are convoluted. It's not easy to charge a man who's worked half a century.

**Exalted woman.** The art of make-up has changed radically. The eyebrow is the dominant detail. We strive for a broad view of the world, affirming our unconventionality. Emphasising the shape of the lips and eyeballs. Lips convexly outlined with bright lipstick colour, conveying feelings and temperament, and the eyes are strikingly expressive, hiding the hidden corners of your essence. The psychology of make-up is an ornate discipline.

**Narratress.** A physicist went to visit a colleague. A bus with the number zero on it. Well, supposedly route zero. He got on the bus, but gradually he became anxious. "Route zero? It's going to take him somewhere, isn't it?" - An ominous thought drilled in his mind. He shared his apprehension with the passengers. Imagine this: passengers who regularly ply the route got excited too. They went to the driver for clarification. He's overscrupulous. And a connoisseur of Gogol's devilry. He had a similar panic attack. Calling his boss on his mobile. The bosses got all riled up, freaked out. There was a savvy little boy on the bus. He explained in detail: "Zero is a trivial identifier. All kinds of symbols are allowed: A, B, 0, minus 1. A significant touch: different routes have different identifiers. Here's if a particular zero bus took a bus one way, and a second zero bus took a bus the opposite way, then you're motivated to make a claim against the transporters. There's nothing bad or demonic about number zero." With these explanations, the passengers reached their home. But is there always a clever boy?

**Angry woman.** Zero is invariably a hassle to deal with.

**Intruder.** In certain areas of expertise, it is adored....

**Yes woman.** Sometimes despised.

**Angry woman.** The driver didn't hesitate to quit.

**Intruder.** Zero can be handled, but negative numbers, for example...

**Exalted woman.** A mate's husband rides the underground. When a bunch of people are crowding in, he suggests that the aunts sit on his lap. The women willingly sit down. Mate's nervous as hell.

**Yes woman.** Shouldn't we set up a board of trustees?

**Pregnant woman.** Will scarlet sails appear on the horizon?

**Intruder.** Let's stop throwing cigarette butts from the top floors of buildings?

**Committer.** Will the number of fires be reduced?

**Exalted woman.** When I remember a tender kiss, a hot wave burns.

**Nervous.** How old were you?

**Exalted woman.** Graduating class. Will I never have to experience true love?

**Angry woman.** More exciting than a kiss or the first wrinkled bed?

**Committer.** It's a cruel thing to wait for gratitude.

**Nervous.** Especially from your own children?

**Pregnant woman.** Do other people's children grow up fast?

**Intruder.** With the influx of weighty money, their owner stopped all contact with his close family.

**Narratress.** My classmate is a film buff. As a student, I didn't ignore any film or festival. Competently gave a detailed filmography of any country's film. About actors, directors, cameramen, composers. Called to get an opinion on a popular film. Heard back, "It's a pleasure to discuss all sorts of topics with you. Except for the cinema. I beg you never to call about the cinema."

**Angry woman.** A citizen waved off a bumblebee, knocked his glasses off his face accidentally, they shattered on the pavement.

**Exalted woman.** In the company of gentlemen we are transformed?

**Intruder.** Intrigues are plotted in a tight circle?

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we instruct the novice angler and hunter?

**Nervous.** We've all started at some point?

**Committer.** Let's stop obsessing, shall we?

**Yes woman.** Fancy restaurant, fancy shop?

**Angry woman.** Who's pulling the blanket?

**Rejoicing.** All slowly?

**Intruder.** Not slowly at all. Subordinates compete for the attention of supervisors.

**Committer.** Depends on the conjun... conjuncture.

**Exalted woman.** Ew, stale bubblegum.

**Yes woman.** Do we have a proactive stance?

**Angry woman.** Determination?

**Nervous.** Instant situational awareness?

**Committer.** Logical thinking and communication skills?

**Exalted woman.** Is intimacy before marriage possible?

**Pregnant woman.** I urge you to listen to the rustling of the leaves.

*Listening to an audio recording of leaves rustling.*

**Exalted woman.** And I – the sound of rain.

*Listening to an audio recording of the sound of rain.*

**Nervous.** And I'm – a heartbeat away.

*Listening to an audio recording of a healthy heartbeat.*

**Narratress.** The fragility, the vulnerability of a living thing is striking. Its temperature is 36 whole and 6 tenths degrees. As soon as the body temperature rises by a paltry five degrees Celsius or falls by the same five degrees, exclusively Celsius, a serious complication is imminent.

**Intruder.** Are simultaneous interpretation booths installed?

**Committer.** Are we going to the market or back?

**Angry woman.** Are we past the mid-life crisis?

**Pregnant woman.** And the eternal and immutable substance?

**Exalted woman.** Does the slightly rank butter give a specific flavour?

**Intruder.** Beekeeping?

**Yes woman.** How can we do without honey?

**Committer.** I have changed, I inform my interlocutors only pleasant things.

**Angry woman.** A winter garden to plant?

**Pregnant woman.** Are the alleys in the park winding or straight?

**Intruder.** Have you practised tropical jungle motion?

**Nervous.** You didn't catch any tropical diseases?

**Rejoicing.** Did the leader's shirt fit?

**Angry woman.** In the beginning, life seemed endless, bearable?

**Exalted woman.** Were we not afraid of it?

**Yes woman.** What is the priority slogan of the day?

**Pregnant woman.** "If it were so, it would still be nothing, and if it were nothing, it would still be so, but since it isn't, it isn't! Such is the logic of things!" (L. Carroll)

**Intruder.** Will an optimistic outlook be predicted?

**Nervous.** Worthless for your forecast on market day.

**Committer.** Plenty of unsolvable problems?

**Intruder.** Is the problem unsolvable? It is advisable to avoid it.

**Yes woman.** Like it doesn't exist in nature?

**Nervous.** Do carbonated drinks hit your nose and cerebellum?

**Rejoicing.** Closed-door negotiations?

**Pregnant woman.** Who do they constantly close themselves off from?

**Committer.** Politicians are good for it. Nothing is confirmed...

**Yes woman.** And they don't refute it...

**Angry woman.** Hiding from who? Should be public, transparent.

**Nervous.** What is discussed in secret is known well in advance of the meeting.

**Exalted woman.** Is it past the statute of limitations?

**Committer.** Finding simple answers to complex questions?

**Angry woman.** Does everyone have a different starting point?

**Rejoicing.** Did you shudder with inner awe when the ladies' choice was announced at the school ball?

**Nervous.** Do you trust your family doctor?

**Pregnant woman.** Are we looking for consensus in vain?

**Yes woman.** What does it look like?

**Nervous.** Have we considered all the factors?

**Rejoicing.** Technical?

**Committer.** Legal?

**Intruder.** Economic?

**Yes woman.** Name the deciding factor.

**Exalted woman.** I feel like I'm getting undressed. With a look, of course. Undressed, undressed...

**Angry woman.** Isn't the logic of thinking impaired?

**Rejoicing.** I know how to promote healing and harmful drugs. Would you like some?

Exclamations. We would, we would!

**Rejoicing.** Sickness will strike unexpectedly when you're not expecting it. Buy the drug Mutaten. Taking "Mutaten," you will see by experience, it successfully causes premature heart attack, joint pain, muscle pain, gastritis, hepatitis, hypertension, bradycardia, tachycardia, arrhythmia. Causes a man's lasting disgust for a woman. And vice versa. Run, buy it. Bring your passport, birth certificate, health insurance, unified rent payment book. Attention! Quantities of the drug are limited. Hurry up and buy it!

*Applause.*

**Committer.** I'm in seventh heaven! The municipal authorities have increased rent and fares. The city budget is finally stabilising!

**Intruder.** Do we really not know how to live?

**Angry woman.** Shouldn't we go straight across the ravine?

**Yes woman.** Is an ambiguous answer susceptible to arbitrary interpretation?

**Nervous.** Is the choice a bold move?

**Pregnant woman.** By trial and error method?

**Rejoicing.** He who has made the choice has overcome the vacillation and is in harmony with himself.

**Committer.** Maybe we'll get lucky at the critical moment?

**Nervous.** Breathe with your lungs full.

**Narratress.** Smacked lips in the ear of a co-worker, have not seen each other for a long time, disturbed the eardrum. Since then, there's been an incessant sea-surf noise in the ear.

**Committer.** Have you approved the staffing table?

**Pregnant woman.** A baby was born. Not a step without custody?

**Angry woman.** He is de facto helpless. It doesn't go to the market, nor does it protect itself.

**Pregnant woman.** When it grows up, is it customary to nurse?

**Exalted woman.** You go after him, he goes after you.

**Rejoicing.** Day after day, year after year.

**Pregnant woman.** Nice! Tending diligently!

**Exalted woman.** Does the unwanted bring the desirable with a loose braid?

**Angry woman.** Like the Mermaid?

**Committer.** If you don't have a braid?

**Exalted woman.** With a regular head?

**Pregnant woman.** I behave as my husband tells me to. I don't make a fuss. The easy life.

**Intruder.** Take a vow of obedience and poverty?

**Nervous.** You can't take it!

**Rejoicing.** Shall we tell no one the most important things about ourselves?

**Exalted woman.** Are you visited by vague lust and frivolous fantasies?

**Yes woman.** Phenomenal! In gigantic quantities.

**Nervous.** When does the negligible risk come in?

**Pregnant woman.** It's excessive thirst.

**Angry woman.** Do unforeseen circumstances chronically arise?

**Committer.** Did you hear the weather prediction for yesterday?

**Pregnant woman.** We ask in vain, "Why, why?"

**Exalted woman.** How do you feel about the alluring scent of night?

**Intruder.** Does it get sticky, doesn't let go?

**Narratress.** Did every Tom, Dick and Harry have his own intimate stuff?

**Rejoicing.** Is it important not to lose azimuth?

**Exalted woman.** To what age do early memories relate? My vivid memory is my mum carrying me from the maternity ward. The snow was falling.

**Nervous.** Do you touch the tip of your nose with your finger?

**Committer.** Shall we start a guild of underground passengers?

**Angry woman.** Do you sometimes use profanity?

**Exalted woman.** At debut rendezvous, are the two gentle, sensitive, attentive?

**Yes woman.** Is the girl showing off, being all obstinate?

**Angry woman.** Looking into his eyes, listening to the modulations of his voice, wanting to catch the deception?

**Committer.** Do we expect to return words to their true meaning?

**Nervous.** Do we have overly exaggerated claims?

**Pregnant woman.** Shouldn't we plant geraniums here?

**Intruder.** Or ficuses?

**Rejoicing.** It would be nice to understand the nature of mental processes under extreme conditions.

**Narratress.** Do we put our reasoning and our arguments into the actions of others?

**Angry woman.** From passion, mindfulness and suffering?

**Exalted woman.** It was the first wedding night....

**Intruder.** The planes are arriving two hours early, already cool!

**Yes woman.** Do we set a realistic goal for ourselves?

**Committer.** Are the subtle natures gone?

**Rejoicing.** Are we heading in the same direction?

**Pregnant woman.** Have you been travelling too long?

**Intruder.** The end of a recession doesn't mean the beginning of growth?

**Committer.** Are we living in a world of illusions - freedom, equality, fraternity?

**Nervous.** Does the smart load office function?

**Rejoicing.** You got a good corporate party?

**Pregnant woman.** Specify current trends.

**Angry woman.** My son read War and Peace from cover to cover.

**Committer.** Anyone wishing to make an important announcement?

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we accept the official interpretation and reject the parallel ones?

**Angry woman.** You're impulsive. Your vibes are a bad influence.

**Yes woman.** Don't make remarks like that - we share a VIP coach.

**Intruder.** Your swagger is annoying.

**Exalted woman.** When's the coffee break?

**Committer.** All accusations need proof. Do we have a solid alibi in our armoury?

**Angry woman.** Is the legend very beautiful?

**Rejoicing.** Would you like a wiener with horseradish or mustard?

**Exalted woman.** When a woman whispers "no," does she often mean "yes?"

**Yes woman.** Would you like to have a lot of money?

**Narratress.** Both delegations expressed their satisfaction at the failure of co-operation on the subject.

**Nervous.** Does that sound like S&M to you?

**Committer.** Shall we statistically filter the results and report the final conclusions?

**Rejoicing.** Clothing is a very valuable invention. In the cold they put on, and secondly, they adorn themselves with clothes. Amazing!

**Pregnant woman.** Have we fulfilled our high purpose?

**Yes woman.** I offer a flexible system of discounts!

**Angry woman.** Do we look around quietly and sadly?

**Nervous.** Back at the bottom of the ladder again?

**Exalted woman.** Shall we round up public opinion?

**Pregnant woman.** Who needs your rounding up and opinion?

**Rejoicing.** Keep it simple and people will come to you.

**Angry woman.** Listening to your remarks, I note that they do not address the leitmotif of the report.

**Committer.** Is private property sacred and untouchable?

**Nervous.** Like the private lives of citizens?

**Pregnant woman.** Are you able to restore oxygen balance?

**Rejoicing.** Let me take you to dinner.

**Exalted woman.** No, thank you. I'm busy in the evenings.

*After a pause.*

Is dinner appetising?

**Rejoicing.** I'll do my best!

**Exalted woman.** Will the dinner be followed by signs of attention?

**Rejoicing.** Depends on conditioning.

**Exalted woman.** Is your conditioning courteous? Intent on flirting? I'm going to dinner.

**Nervous.** Prone to forgive everyone...

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we sit by the river and cry?

**Committer.** While I'm chattering about stuff, it hit me: I haven't streamlined my relationship with a woman.

**Angry woman.** I'd roll up in a decisive, measured manner.

**Committer.** Before it's too late?

**Yes woman.** Sane? It's never too late.

**Intruder.** Are we all marginalised?

**Pregnant woman**. The airfield runway is a little narrow. Sometimes you don't land well.

**Nervous.** The science of pedagogy puts forward ...

**Intruder.** Is man still the crown of creation?

**Committer.** Watercolour courses for the greater good?

**Angry woman.** Pensioners stopped buying medicines.

**Intruder.** I was tempted to take a nap, but by an effort of will I forced myself to get up. I shaved, went on duty. I'm travelling with you at the moment. I'm very strong-willed.

**Committer.** My wife is similarly tenacious, stubborn. He raves about something, he heads in the clouds, but by an effort of will he forces himself to give up.

**Rejoicing.** Do we have a strong will?

**Yes woman.** And skilled labour?

**Nervous.** Do you like my tie?

**Exalted woman.** Sorry, I didn't congratulate you as soon as I walked in.

**Narratress.** Speaking of ties. Mum gave her son two brightly coloured ties. The son chose one of them. Mum asks him, "Son, don't you like the second tie?"

**Intruder.** Speaking of ties. They're tightening around the neck. Why don't we make a knot at the belly button? As per the canons of etiquette.

**Rejoicing.** Then the tie doesn't show cigarette and drink stains?

**Angry woman.** Shall we build more pools?

**Exalted woman.** Do you have an object of worship?

**Intruder.** Shall we try to invent a square wheel?

**Yes woman.** A solid legal backstop wouldn't hurt, would it?

**Committer.** Are the documents in question to be labelled "confidential?"

**Nervous.** Forced to pay all the bills?

**Angry woman.** Or update the living wage calculation?

**Intruder.** Is the centre of gravity of the coach professionally calculated?

**Yes woman.** Registration of commercial entities: joint-stock companies, firms, small businesses. I don't react to trifling violations. Certainly not for a good living! For a fee, of course! I know the traditions!

**Pregnant woman.** My memory has an amazing quality. Completely ignores the bad stuff. Only remembers the good things.

**Intruder.** Get insurance and probate at the same time.

**Nervous.** You haven't hurt anyone?

**Pregnant woman.** Haven't offended anyone?

**Angry woman.** Been rude?

**Exalted woman.** My GP wrote "Rude at appointment" on my medical records. When I come to her, she reads this post first, then asks: "Are you going to be rude today?"

**Nervous.** How to improve sound and waterproofing in houses?

**Committer.** Would you like to buy up for a minimal fee?

**Angry woman.** Blinds are horizontal, vertical, chic. Warranty service, delivery, installation free of charge.

**Narratress.** Walls: Triumph, Decor, Alpha, Vera Sergeevna, Nikolai Petrovich. Great view, bar with mirror, inlaid, baroque style, tapestry upholstery.

**Yes woman.** Beautiful, cheap, aesthetically pleasing!

**Intruder.** Cut all ties with the past?

**Nervous.** Is it worth looking back?

**Pregnant woman.** I'd like to return the compliment.

**Rejoicing.** Shall we set up a fund for understanding and reconciliation?

**Intruder.** Shall we test the effects of electromagnetic waves?

**Nervous.** Did everyone successfully complete the obstacle course?

**Yes woman.** Have you identified a media liaison?

**Committer.** Possess all the documentation?

**Angry woman.** Are we in favour?

**Nervous.** Or pathetic guests at the party?

**Narratress.** The worst thing for children is when parents fight, mutually abusive.

**Yes woman.** Do you have a goldfish aquarium?

**Committer.** Have you ever had confidential conversations?

**Intruder.** Have all the deadlines passed?

**Nervous.** Shall mercy and prudence be contrasted with bitterness and insecurity?

**Exalted woman.** Have you been harassed in the service? Changed several offices - no harassment!

**Rejoicing.** Take advice from knowledgeable experts?

**Yes woman.** Has the dramatic showdown reached a fever pitch?

**Angry woman.** Whose benefit are they advocating for?

**Exalted woman.** Will they be willing?

**Pregnant woman.** Is vice in honour?

**Intruder.** What forces will prevail today?

**Rejoicing.** And not get discouraged?

**Pregnant woman.** Name the ideas on the rumour.

**Nervous.** Does the ambulance arrive on time?

**Exalted woman.** You've never been in a plane crash?

**Intruder.** Who does the overall management and supervises us?

**Angry woman**. Are we getting enough vitamins?

**Yes woman.** And the dream of a romantic hero?

**Rejoicing.** Will we see each other in the future?

**Committer.** One day on the path leading to the sea, I met a girl - beautiful, slender, tannish.

**Intruder.** All the girls are beautiful, slender and tannish. On an exotic path leading to the sea.

**Angry woman.** I don't see the tragedy. Bid farewell to the mediocrity of existence. We have to work from dawn to dusk, tirelessly, without fatigue, in the sweat of our brow. Sooner or later the sprouts of abundance will appear.

**Pregnant woman.** When are we going to sort through the clutter?

**Yes woman.** Shouldn't we strike up the song?

**Intruder.** Is the prime mover on guard?

**Rejoicing.** Did you savour the death angel or the fly agaric?

**Committer.** Gorgeous guys and cute gals here!

**Rejoicing.** The most radiant thing about this second?

**Exalted woman.** One day we'll have it easy?

**Committer.** Are we of sound mind and firm memory?

**Narratress.** An amusing mishap. The man and woman had been intimate as civil spouses for many years. Then they got legally married. They lived in a marriage less than nothing and got divorced. They didn't bear to live with each other.

**Yes woman.** Create an impenetrable anomaly and, with a bit of effort, overcome it?

**Angry woman.** Speak sensitively and affectionately about someone?

**Nervous.** Any episodes of personal enrichment?

**Intruder.** Deliberately glossing over the details?

**Pregnant woman.** Did someone get ripped off while sharing the people's goods?

**Yes woman.** There's always someone who's offended, isn't there?

**Committer.** There was a beginning of the universe - so will there be an end of it?

**Angry woman.** We are out of dumplings, a loaf of bread, vegetable oil, and a salt shaker of salt are available.

**Pregnant woman.** Do you know how to lay eggs from the packing carton into the refrigerator drawers?

**Exalted woman.** Eggshells are said to be suitable.

**Narratress.** Why is the day longer and the light brighter in the early years?

**Rejoicing.** Why in the teenage years ...

**Pregnant woman.** The youthfulness is replaced by a wacky adult drudgery?

**Exalted woman.** Does infatuation follow a reckoning?

**Nervous.** Did you read my profile?

**Angry woman.** Why are you standing with your back to me?

**Yes woman.** There's an amateur talent show?

**Pregnant woman.** A brass band was playing in the city garden. I felt dreary.

**Nervous.** Are friends rare in business?

**Committer.** Any partners, associates, accomplices?

**Intruder.** Do we have authority figures nestled among us?

**Pregnant woman.** Are you a member of the deceived depositor fraction?

**Angry woman.** Are the scary ghosts not threatening us?

**Yes woman.** You don't have nightmares in your sleep?

**Committer.** The instigators believe: we have a distorted interpretation of reality.

**Nervous.** Is happiness a gloomy chimera?

**Narratress.** We're unheard ofly happy, we just didn't realise?

**Rejoicing.** Don't make an escape?

**Intruder.** Will a spontaneous escape be spotted?

**Exalted woman.** Let's get the horse at full gallop?

**Committer.** Did everyone get a counter-mark?

**Nervous.** Are you inspired by the endlessness of space?

**Angry woman.** Much is left unclear, abstruse to understand.

**Intruder.** Is the ruler responsible for a momentous decision?

**Pregnant woman.** Have you run a marathon distance?

**Yes woman.** Or cross-country?

**Intruder.** Remember when the fare was a nickel?

**Angry woman.** Have the negative trends manifested themselves in a radical way?

**Nervous.** Are we guaranteed bizarre surprises?

**Exalted woman.** Nothing better than hanging out with famous actors and actresses?

**Intruder.** Before we part, shall we exchange business cards, say our goodbyes?

**Pregnant woman.** You are a courteous gentleman.

**Yes woman.** Can we wait for the happy ending?

**Nervous.** At least a welcome middle ground?

**Intruder.** Cracking tricky safes.

**Pregnant woman.** The vaccination drive has begun?

**Committer.** Provide the address of the superior organisation.

**Yes woman.** Did you sign the pay slip?

**Nervous.** Do you have any commercial offers?

**Intruder.** Struggling to find new partners?

**Angry woman.** Does the consumer basket include a refrigerator, a TV, a car?

**Rejoicing.** Were there any worthy ones who made it to the finals?

**Nervous.** Have you been to the anatomical theatre?

**Exalted woman**. Do you have a Fabergé egg, too?

**Yes woman.** Are you invited to the party?

**Angry woman.** Are the right people only invited?

**Nervous.** Keep the crowd out?

**Rejoicing.** Do you have any slippers made of canvas?

**Committer.** Are freelance journalists honest and incorruptible?

**Intruder.** The rumours aren't just about journalists....

**Yes woman.** Give and take proportionately. According to the giver's wealth?

**Angry woman.** Are the offerings in a white envelope with no writing or in newsprint? **Committer.** Account to account?

**Pregnant woman.** Or card to card?

**Rejoicing.** Depends on the amount.

**Narratress.** A dead baby is born. Asphyxia, no heartbeat. The resuscitator is a last resort - giving his blood. He had experienced the previous day a great shock: he had not passed the certification, his scientific work was rejected. The girl started breathing and was resuscitated within a month. She's ten years old now. She's slender, athletic, excelled in school.

**Intruder.** Is the central control room operational?

**Yes woman.** Suddenly find myself in a maze with many inaccessible nooks and crannies?

**Committer.** Need a granite monument?

**Nervous.** Did you get an encephalitis tick in your leg?

**Pregnant woman.** Have we vaguely outlined our goals?

**Angry woman.** Is the triumph of hate short-lived?

**Exalted woman.** Are we suffering from delusions of grandeur?

**Intruder.** Did the technicians fix the fuel malfunction?

**Angry woman.** Why are you cracking jokes in a familiar, unceremonious manner? It's fate to bring us together in a confined space. Not an excuse! What if I'm striving for loneliness?

**Nervous.** Do you want a sign on your chest that says "No contact with me?"

**Yes woman.** Can't a mum be told the whole story?

**Intruder.** Shall we reach an agreement within ourselves?

**Committer.** Keeping a punctual logbook?

**Pregnant woman.** Do we fear the worst?

**Yes woman.** What does the pipe basically look like?

**Committer.** It's advertised to the full extent.

**Angry woman.** In Siberia, oil wells stick out every kilometre.

**Exalted woman.** Siberia is vast... Boundless. You keep walking along it...

**Intruder.** Do the deposits belong to the community?

**Nervous.** Or to specific citizens?

**Angry woman.** Do we get at least one ladle of oil each?

**Rejoicing.** Where do we put it?

**Angry woman.** Where the rest of us go - trading.

**Nervous.** With one ladle?

**Angry woman.** To begin with. That's not much to ask. Just a ladle.

**Intruder.** Today a ladle of oil, tomorrow a cylinder of gas, and the day after that a cubic metre of wood. Yeah, I bet it's the choicest kind - oak or pine. There won't be enough for everyone!

**Committer.** Can't we quietly nestle against the oil pumping machine?

**Rejoicing.** Is gas money different from those of oil?

**Angry woman.** Whose smell is more pleasant?

**Pregnant woman.** Re-institute separate schooling for girls and boys?

**Exalted woman.** Will they assail each other?

**Narratress.** Why assail? Most are behaving decently. Unlike the famous female passengers.

**Exalted woman.** I'm behaving with decorum. I have a fiery imagination, hard to curb.

**Yes woman.** Make efforts to curb.

**Exalted woman.** I make. The brilliance, opulence, pomp and luxury awakened my savagery.

**Angry woman.** Is the gossip about women's unsatisfactoriness overly exaggerated?

**Intruder.** Are we in the parterre or the paradise?

**Committer.** Shall we all go to the fortune teller?

**Pregnant woman.** You never know, she'll tell us where we're going, won't she?

**Nervous.** Declare a close communion with nature?

**Narratress.** Walks in the forest, in the mountains, on the banks of the river or sea are refreshing, energising and contribute to longevity.

**Exalted woman.** I know why! The atmosphere there is saturated with negative ions!

**Committer.** An emerging tradition? You've had two visits from the foreman. He's coming for the third time. Is the third time a tradition or just a practice?

**Intruder.** Is it the same social landscape up there?

**Rejoicing.** Saved a huge amount of money: the laundromat is closed for technical reasons, the grocery shop is being accounted for, the hairdresser's shop had a power cut.

**Committer.** Shall we form a group of young radicals?

**Nervous.** Isn't there enough on the surface?

**Yes woman.** Do you catch the apparent lack of dialogue between us?

**Angry woman.** You don't care about other people's misfortunes?

**Intruder.** A gathering of law-abiding citizens?

**Exalted woman.** Wouldn't duplicating the stored data make sense?

**Pregnant woman.** Will beautiful statements turn into valiant deeds?

**Nervous.** Is there no end in sight to the stomping on the patch?

**Angry woman.** Is solidarity building in families?

**Rejoicing.** Are the incentive prizes designed for everyone?

**Intruder.** Is it unbecoming to lose faith in yourself?

**Yes woman.** Do you prefer lean pork?

**Narratress.** The man has four kids. All girls. Wife left them, ran off with a bastard. He's raising his daughters alone.

**Angry woman.** Daddy, poor man.

**Nervous.** Not a poor man, a hero of our time.

**Exalted woman.** Should we chat about something first?

**Committer.** They're supposed to love affectionate speeches?

**Intruder.** I notice during the course of the leisurely polemic your neck and shoulders have straightened.

**Exalted woman.** And undressed! Completely undressed. I'm standing naked. With a glance, of course. Although, maybe...

**Pregnant woman.** What's the cumulative blame?

**Rejoicing.** Is time in favour of all or against us?

**Nervous.** Why was joy perceived more intensely before?

**Yes woman.** Didn't rejoice in the wrong thing?

**Committer.** A good impromptu is most often a pre-prepared text?

**Angry woman.** Are you getting high or muddled?

**Intruder.** Pardon me.

**Nervous.** I apologise to you.

**Intruder.** No, I apologised first.

**Nervous.** But I thought of it first.

**Intruder.** All right, then. You got the idea to apologise, but I was the first one to actually ask.

**Nervous.** All right. You asked, but it was the first thing I thought of.

**Angry woman.** I got distracted and accidentally ate my husband's sandwich.

**Yes woman.** Who managed to get to the microphone?

**Pregnant woman.** But the sound was turned off promptly, wasn't it?

**Rejoicing.** Is compensation for extraordinary parking in the tunnel prescribed?

**Committer.** The poet proclaimed: "And what kind of wreck can there be, if there are so many people on the train?" (N. Rubtsov)

*From behind the right backstage - in succession, one by one - come out a 10-year-old boy, a 20-year-old young man, a 30-year-old young man, a 40-year-old man, a 50-year-old mature man, a 60-year-old man, a 70-year-old aging man, an 80-year-old stout man.*

*From behind the left backstage - towards them - a similar "female procession" moves: a little girl, a maiden, a young woman and a woman, a woman, a woman....*

*When they meet, the participants of both processions gaze at each other, looking into each other's faces.*

*As the "two columns" move away, the participants turn around, not wanting to part, trying to anticipate mutual desires and preserve the memory.*

*Moving away to different backstage areas.*

End of the first act

# Act Two

*Same coach. Same passengers.*

**Pregnant woman.** When duties are reduced or abolished, there is a reduction in the value of imported goods. The domestic production output will decrease by the amount of duty reduction. The size of the loss is equal to the product of the amount of the reduction in output by the amount of the price fall minus the reduction in variable costs caused by the reduction in output.

*Silence. The passengers look at the Pregnant woman with bewilderment and consternation.*

**Yes woman.** Were you unloved as a child?

**Exalted woman.** Does adultery sometimes strengthen a marriage?

**Intruder.** In the event of a street shooting, will we have time to calculate the trajectory of the ricochet?

**Committer.** Sometimes it's not a bad thing to be a little less arrogant, a little more maximalist?

**Rejoicing.** Reasonable concessions to favours, earns the respect of others.

**Yes woman.** Who creates beauty and justice?

**Pregnant woman.** There's no limit to perfection!

**Nervous.** Shall we take part in the employment competition?

**Angry woman.** Or in all competitions without exception?

**Intruder.** I ask again: are we being incriminated for our words?

**Pregnant woman.** I'm standing here, not touching anyone.

**Nervous.** Did you make mistakes when you were younger?

**Angry woman.** You've appointed a scapegoat?

**Rejoicing.** How long have you been going out at night?

**Pregnant woman.** Did the horses survive?

**Yes woman.** Are you exercising?

**Exalted woman.** By ritual, do you contact your wife before exercising or after?

**Nervous.** Unswervingly devoted to one woman.

**Committer.** Keep a cool head about everything?

**Intruder.** Has there been a transformation in the genetic code?

**Rejoicing.** Do you hear your daughter whispering in the old fashioned way, asking to be carried around - like she's a toddler?

**Yes woman.** Will a translator agree to translate cornerstone thoughts into another language, without mutilating them?

**Committer.** Attempts to convey stylistic nuances?

**Pregnant woman.** I don't like winters anymore. It's cold in the winter, I'm freezing.

**Narratress.** Is statistics a progressive subject? A brief clarification. You eat the tender chicken with gusto, and I - hungry - greedily gaze on it. Statistically, it's half a chicken per brother.

**Exalted woman.** A burning desire arises, is it desirable to quench it?

**Intruder.** Not caring enough about the financial and industrial bourgeoisie?

**Nervous.** Shall we create a privileged business climate for it?

**Committer.** Have you confirmed the responsible rapporteur?

**Pregnant woman.** We're just gonna have to put up with it?

**Exalted woman.** Will there be admirers?

**Angry woman.** Day and night searching for an acceptable alternative?

**Nervous.** Will exercise, healthy food and restraint in watching television programmes protect you?

**Rejoicing.** Do negative emotions upset the chemical balance of the brain?

**Pregnant woman.** Shouldn't we take a lie detector test?

**Intruder.** Shall we introduce a hitherto unprecedented reorganisation project?

**Committer.** Is your signature legible?

**Angry woman.** Are creative individuals prone to taking a little nap during the day?

**Rejoicing.** How's the unforgettable voucher doing?

**Committer.** Idle in the vast expanse of a great power?

**Intruder.** It started with enthusiasm, with uplift, with passion.

**Yes woman.** The intellectual potential is pretty powerful!

**Narratress.** Are we catching up?

**Nervous.** Are you here for the kvass?

**Intruder.** Are integration processes strengthening or weakening?

**Committer.** Isn't it time to return to a revolutionary legal consciousness?

**Nervous.** Are we going to be let off with no offence?

**Yes woman.** What is the fundamental point?

**Angry woman.** Are we at ease at this point?

**Rejoicing.** Listening to beautiful music, contemplating works of art?

**Exalted woman.** We look forward to seeing you at the massage parlour! We guarantee quality and safety.

**Yes woman.** Take a productive pause, reflect on the situation?

**Intruder.** Will a good idea slip in during the pause?

**Committer.** Precepts are not of practical importance, empathy, sincere empathy are fundamental.

**Pregnant woman.** Implement effective short circuit prevention?

**Angry woman.** Have you bought your school supplies yet?

**Rejoicing.** And textbooks?

**Intruder.** Did you flush the nozzle thoroughly?

**Narratress.** Is an aggressive natural environment awaiting you everywhere?

**Yes woman.** Will we be fortunate enough to be nimbly enriched?

**Rejoicing.** Are you fully armed for certification?

**Committer.** Has the certification programme been tested?

**Pregnant woman.** Are the objectives clear, coherent?

**Nervous.** Are proper measuring instruments being used?

**Intruder.** How is the sampling situation?

**Yes woman.** Has the inspection report been published?

**Narratress.** Whose signatures are on the test report?

**Nervous.** Specify the forty-ninth room.

**Rejoicing.** Did you dust off the dresser?

**Angry woman.** Did you attach the export documentation?

**Committer.** Are the precedents appropriate?

**Pregnant woman.** What are the butchers leaning towards?

**Nervous.** Are you hoping for a miracle?

**Intruder.** Can we come in through the back porch?

**Committer.** Do the pluses stand against the favoured surname?

**Rejoicing.** Did they keep a stone in their bosom?

**Angry woman.** Shouldn't we have a business game?

**Yes woman.** Suggest a design for the simulation.

**Nervous.** A universal disaster?

**Exalted woman.** Is there a duty officer assigned to the coach?

**Intruder.** Is the feedback loop broken?

**Committer.** To what does the increased attention manifest itself?

**Nervous.** Where are the masters of obedient independent commentators?

**Narratress.** I promise to raise wages and pensions, provide a flat, allot homestead plots.

**Yes woman.** And I guarantee stability and order.

**Angry woman.** Has a brainy elite been formed?

**Intruder.** No offence to the brightest members of the old party cadre?

**Rejoicing.** I'm happy for them!

**Nervous.** Are the young leaders out of favour?

**Rejoicing.** I'm happy for them!

**Exalted woman.** Are the aspiring bosses elbowing each other out of the way?

**Narratress.** Not just elbowing!

**Nervous.** Saw a stranger at the station.

**Pregnant woman.** Let's not put problems on hold, shall we?

**Angry woman.** Bought a washing machine, virtually no user damage.

**Intruder.** Shall we resubmit our documents?

**Committer.** How to perceive - the challenges of the era?

**Pregnant woman.** Who is she calling and why?

**Yes woman.** Do those seeking redistribution nip at your heels?

**Nervous.** When some are babbling, it is clear - they are right, and when their opponents are babbling, it is clear - they are equally right.

**Exalted woman.** A distinctive female trait is intuition?

**Angry woman.** How do you feel about the tragedy of loneliness?

**Intruder.** Are we tireless travellers?

**Yes woman.** Did you whitewash the house?

**Nervous.** Above all, do no harm?

**Intruder.** Has the antidote taken effect?

**Committer.** Have you weighed all your motives?

**Pregnant woman.** What do we end up with?..

**Rejoicing.** Any luck in rescuing the rescuers?

**Yes woman.** Are you happy with the option you've taken?

**Exalted woman.** Shouldn't I tender my own resignation?

**Narratress.** As if nothing had happened?

**Nervous.** What, in fact, happened?

**Committer.** Hitting all the pain points?

**Yes woman.** Shall we give the columnists an exclusive interview?

**Exalted woman.** Shall we discuss the private and intimate aspects?

**Nervous.** Do protective or destructive instincts prevail?

**Committer.** Is tomorrow a hazy day?

**Exalted woman.** Does the price list include rates for all services?

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we replace showman with showwoman?

**Angry woman.** Will she please the show?

**Rejoicing.** A nasty smile lit up the young beauty's face.

**Intruder.** Are there any CCTV cameras installed?

**Nervous.** Moving on to the personal services section?

**Pregnant woman.** Alltogether or one at a time?

**Committer.** How about a ride on the Ferris wheel?

**Narratress.** Claiming over the top: both food and spirituality?

**Angry woman.** Anything to cut back on?

**Rejoicing.** We're gonna roll into the sauna and saltwater pool right from here?

**Intruder.** Tennis court, billiards, bar.

**Pregnant woman.** Do we retain a childlike curiosity?

**Angry woman.** In conjunction with the depth of judgement?

**Committer.** Life is utopia, anticipation, wonder?

**Pregnant woman.** Is life there concern, bewilderment, danger?

**Yes woman.** It's been a lovely day!

**Exalted woman.** For a cup of tea without any ceremony!

**Rejoicing.** To whom is the call addressed?

**Intruder.** Which surface of the sandwich is buttered?

**Nervous.** Do you live neatly, like me? My wife is the chairman of the board of the holding company. My daughter is studying abroad, my son is finishing his twentieth symphony. The furniture is made of precious wood, the chairs are comfortable, soft. Woke up in a cheerful mood. My wife cooked breakfast. I had a bite to eat in no time. I never eat too much. My cottage is over the ring road. The windows look out onto a flowering garden. An executive class car. The engine is quiet, the brakes are reliable and it wastes little petrol. In the evening the family is by the fireplace, the wood crackling pleasantly. We're reading Pushkin. To the music of Sviridov. (*G. V. Sviridov's waltz from the musical illustration to Pushkin's story ‘The Snowstorm’ is playing*.) Then the grandchildren go to the children's room. When the desire arises, the wife immediately diligently spreads out. The day after tomorrow - invigorated and inspired - I do a jog, take a refreshing shower. Life is going well, and I wish you the same.

**Committer.** Would you like to take a little time off, come to your senses?

**Yes woman.** Why not!

**Angry woman.** When the going gets tough, shall we close ranks?

**Pregnant woman.** How to behave when tragic circumstances occur?

**Intruder.** Will the frugal memories of childhood be preserved?

**Committer.** Childhood is always a joyous time.

**Rejoicing.** To be small again, to know nothing?

**Nervous.** Ride a donkey or a pony?

**Exalted woman.** Do you have to walk in puddles?

**Rejoicing.** Frolicking in the blind rain?

**Narratress.** Do toys break?

**Angry woman.** Shall we play hide and seek?

**Pregnant woman.** Did you dive back into those years?

**Nervous.** A pang of longing for the past?

**Committer.** Should we give up the nostalgic echoes?

**Intruder.** Deny it, eliminate it forever?

**Angry woman.** Inevitably creeping up on balzac age?

**Nervous.** I know the salvation from the piling on, put it in a golden cage and drive it around town.

**Pregnant woman.** I'm very touched by your attention.

**Exalted woman.** Is the coming hidden in the darkness of the unknown?

**Committer.** Isn't it time to have a little fun?

**Yes woman.** Didn't we have a lot of fun?

**Intruder.** Moral character traits are great?

**Rejoicing.** Considering our coach as a shelter?

**Angry woman.** A refuge?

**Intruder.** A retreat?

**Committer.** You don't need to use refined language.

**Pregnant woman.** Do you behave morally in your household?

**Nervous.** Spells turn to dust?

**Rejoicing.** Have you been instructed to do so?

**Exalted woman.** Doesn't it frighten you to be separated from me?

**Yes woman.** Did you hear that? The nerd has tendered his resignation.

**Angry woman.** We don't give a damn.

**Yes woman.** What a grief!

**Exalted woman.** What grief?

**Yes woman.** He also had the mandate and the finances.

**Angry woman.** What good are his finances and mandate to us?

**Yes woman.** We don't care, but what's it like for the wife?

**Angry woman.** What's it like?

**Yes woman.** It sucks! The kids are abroad. Where to get the money to go to school?

**Exalted woman.** Need a change of guards, hairdresser, doctor, car.

**Nervous.** He's done well in his term.

**Yes woman.** He's done, but what he's done is only enough for a little while.

**Rejoicing.** And ask him whether or not he had time to pull it down.

**Angry woman.** Or ask his wife?

**Nervous.** Wives are secretive these days.

**Intruder.** Learn the true story, give up your grief?

**Yes woman.** I will.

**Exalted woman.** Let's pretend, crack-losers.

**Nervous.** Nutters.

**Narratress.** You have to rely on yourself?

**Pregnant woman.** Will you be pleasantly surprised by the surface prices?

**Angry woman.** Everyone step aside?

**Committer.** I appreciate the indelicate innuendo.

**Nervous.** Preferably latching onto a unique chance?

**Pregnant woman.** Easier to sacrifice pawns and keep the title pieces?

**Intruder.** Mouldy cheese?

**Rejoicing.** Are the old idols irretrievably gone?

**Committer.** We have not forgotten how Soviet prisoners taken to Nazi factories sang songs, drowning out the hum of the machines. These songs made the blood run cold in the veins of prisoners of other nationalities.

**Exalted woman.** Did the living keep the memoirs alive?

**Narratress.** A famous film actor, a famous official and an unknown tractor driver from Tambov province share their thoughts on alcoholism.

**Rejoicing.** Why did we do it this way and not the other way round?

**Nervous.** Taking into account the smallest details?

**Angry woman.** You take a shovel, you throw it away?

**Yes woman.** Shall we express compassion, empathy?

**Pregnant woman.** Did the seeds you planted produce lush sprouts?

**Rejoicing.** You got an oxygen cushion for medical emergencies?

**Committer.** Will the friend-or-foe recognition devices work in time?

**Intruder.** Is the dress rehearsal coming to an end?

**Narratress.** Are we living through a historic moment?

**Pregnant woman.** There's been so many!

**Nervous.** What are the reasons?

**Exalted woman.** Are you at risk?

**Intruder.** On the threshold of unexpected twists and turns?

**Angry woman.** Nonsense pestering you from everywhere?

**Committer.** Will a concert grand piano fit in here?

**Exalted woman.** Do we really need objectors?

**Yes woman.** Shall we stand by our convictions?

**Nervous.** Have you learnt your lessons?

**Pregnant woman.** Name the author of the idea.

**Rejoicing.** Are we blind and can't see the progress?

**Intruder.** Have you lost your instinct for self-preservation?

**Angry woman.** Failed to adapt?

**Nervous.** Did you privatise, clearance, preferential treatment?

**Exalted woman.** Do we rank?

**Yes woman.** Is your breakfast cereal burnt?

**Committer.** A moment of meditation.

*A moment's pause.*

**Committer.** Thank you.

**Nervous.** It's time to hear from the press officer.

**Intruder.** May I? Please, please. Shyly daydreaming.

**Voices.** Permission granted. Spell it out. Dreams come true.

**Intruder** (*comes to the forefront*). Dear Sir or Madam, My friends! Sweet, dear passengers! I salute you sincerely. Many have repeatedly resorted to the services of the underworld. It's nice and cosy in it. It's cool in the summer and warm in the winter. The rumble of the rushing train creates acoustic discomfort, but we will eliminate all noise. You are free to organise seminars, karaoke, fitness classes and edifying philosophical talks. I am sure your current wanderings will be fascinating, you will retain lasting impressions. Have a safe journey.

*The passengers applaud. The intruder returns to the coach.*

**Yes woman.** Is it opera or ballet tonight?

**Committer.** Does travelling together bring you together?

**Nervous.** And old songs?

**Exalted woman.** Is a woman's flesh mystical and insidious?

**Rejoicing.** Wouldn't mind learning legal terms and looking infinitely clever.

**Nervous.** Why is specificity far from expectation?

**Intruder.** Are we going to be replaced by new recruits?

**Angry woman.** Are the new babies girls and boys?

**Intruder.** Are the new adults women and men?

**Committer.** With their scale of values?

**Rejoicing.** How will the humiliated and insulted be treated?

**Yes woman.** The air is permeated with the anticipation of change.

**Narratress.** Many clues emerge: whose air, whose premonitions, the dynamics of change?

**Exalted woman.** From age to age does he recite the Pledge of Allegiance?

**Angry woman.** Is the soup brought to a boil and cooked until tender?

**Narratress.** A young family came out of the park: a husband, a wife, a boy and a girl. My wife took two chocolate bars out of her purse, split them in half, and gave us each half a bar.

**Pregnant woman.** A praiseworthy deed!

**Yes woman.** A caring wife!

**Rejoicing.** When is the opening ceremony scheduled?

**Intruder.** The assistant made a mistake while processing the tax return of a gubernatorial candidate.

**Committer.** How many zeros wrong?

**Yes woman.** Do we know the origin of the fabulous profits?

**Rejoicing.** Can't wait to hang around the establishment?

**Nervous.** Doesn't the home-fire warm?

**Intruder.** Does it take your breath away when you look at the mountains through the porthole of an aeroplane?

**Angry woman.** Why do we live in the context of force majeure?

**Rejoicing.** Attracted to slim blondes with bags under their eyes?

**Yes woman.** They are judicious, sensitive, responsive.

**Intruder.** Do you like high or low fashion?

**Committer.** Are we transported to a parallel reality?

**Rejoicing.** Can we tame the chaos?

**Angry woman.** You don't lend money as a matter of principle?

**Pregnant woman.** "They say that life can be wonderful, but it hasn't been truly discovered yet, and in anticipation of that you have to live somehow." (R. Gary)

**Nervous.** Will the drops help? It is injected into the nose with an ordinary pipette. The patient lies on his back, the pipette is carefully brought to the nasal orifices, and a standardised number of drops are squeezed out.

**Intruder.** Back on a soft or hard plaid?

**Nervous.** On the soft, but also on the hard.

**Intruder.** Preferably on soft or hard?

**Nervous.** Preferably on soft, but also on hard.

**Committer.** Are we being presented with most-favoured-nation treatment?

**Yes woman.** You think it'll be all right?

**Angry woman.** Every medal has always its reverse?

**Pregnant woman.** Depends on what medal.

**Exalted woman.** Are you following your stylist's instructions?

**Committer.** Getting bogged down in the details?

**Rejoicing.** Are the interests of large corporations being successfully served?

**Angry woman.** Are there literate people living competently?

**Nervous.** Competently eliminating competitors?

**Pregnant woman.** Has a portfolio manager been appointed yet?

**Rejoicing.** In the absence of the cranium, would the grey matter be dangling in everyone's view?

**Intruder.** Is my precious one going to go small and big?

**Yes woman.** Inevitable! I bet my boots.

**Nervous.** Do dialogues relate to trust information?

**Angry woman.** Why does my soul ache?

**Exalted woman.** Do the Japanese take pictures everywhere and anywhere?

**Pregnant woman.** Then they analyse it thoroughly?

**Intruder.** With the expectation of overtaking you on the bend?

**Committer.** Are we destined for good fortune by the totality of our experiences?

**Angry woman.** Avocados contain potassium, magnesium, sodium, phosphorus, iron, and copper.

**Nervous.** In the proper proportions needed by the body?

**Exalted woman.** Is she on the defensive when she's touched?

**Pregnant woman.** Depends on what's being touched.

**Yes woman.** How's the drosophila fly doing?

**Angry woman.** Is there plenty of room under the sun?

**Committer.** Create material prosperity first, and then intellectual prosperity?

**Yes woman.** Don't they go shoulder to shoulder?

**Rejoicing.** Comments on my statement?

*A middle-aged woman appears on the platform.*

*Garson brings in a small table and two chairs. On the table he places a napkin, on it he places a plate of green salad, a glass of red wine, a piece of white bread.*

*The woman sits down on a chair and, not without appetite, eats salad and bread, drinking wine.*

*There is a sign attached to the second chair that says, "Do not touch the chair!"*

**Exalted woman.** Are the female arias sung by a male voice?

**Angry woman.** Have we dealt with the pesky temptations?

**Committer.** All the rubbish we call by mistaken names?

**Nervous.** Is the century coming to an end soon?

**Rejoicing.** Where will the new one begin?

**Intruder.** Will it spin the same old way?

**Angry woman.** Shall we endure and wait?

**Yes woman.** Is the family a fortress of safety?

**Committer.** Wandering within the bounds of sound or dubious design?

**Yes woman.** Shall we listen to subjective understanding?

**Nervous.** Always looking only forward?

**Exalted woman.** Isn't there a balcony?

**Pregnant woman.** Does the balcony belong to the flat owner or the city?

**Yes woman.** What is being pondered in Africa's diplomatic circles?

**Angry woman.** Sleeping with a stuffed belly is not recommended, but there is little jubilation with a hungry rumbling stomach.

**Committer.** It's not unreasonable to learn the precepts of good as well as bad manners?

**Nervous.** Shall we reflect on ideals of the highest calibre?

**Angry woman.** Are people born free and equal in dignity and rights?

**Intruder.** Dropped the baton?

**Yes woman.** Despite the difficulties of the current moment?

**Pregnant woman.** Is the information space polluted in terms of indoctrination?

**Rejoicing.** At the next station, is the platform on the normal side?

**Narratress.** It's an amazing scene. A flock of sparrows were swimming in the fountain. They dived right in with their heads and came out with a cheerful squeak. How wisely the world works. There is water and sparrows. Going for a swim. Unreal: a diving bird. Doesn't know if he'll hit a rock below. Festive and relaxed. I wanted to have a chat with them. Unhealthy considerations came into play: unemployment, inflation, stagnation of the world economy.

**Pregnant woman.** Are market relations finally established?

**Intruder.** I know how to present nice compliments.

**Exalted woman.** Are the minutes of the meeting kept?

**Yes woman.** Is it important to put legitimate dates and legitimate signatures?

**Angry woman.** Is a left-handed person being pressured, converted to a right-handed person?

**Committer.** By the way, the chair is a good place here, everyone could speak from the rostrum and present constructive ideas.

**Exalted woman.** Is this year a milestone year?

**Angry woman.** Remind me of the location of the women's rest room.

**Nervous.** And men's?

**Exalted woman.** It's time to set up a collective rest room...

**Rejoicing.** Anyone willing to subject us to excessive testing?

**Pregnant woman.** The controller didn't let the girl in the miniskirt through?

**Angry woman.** Unrequited love, treachery and deceit again?

**Nervous.** Is there even a rudimentary warranty?

**Exalted woman.** I forget: do they ask for your hand first or do they pull you straight into bed?

**Yes woman.** Living alone?

**Angry woman.** The baker called me by name and asked me about the children. I'm thrilled! I only buy bread from him.

**Exalted woman.** Will there be shouts of "vivat" and similar cheers in our honour?

**Nervous.** Shall we buy an innovative piece of document shredder?

**Committer.** By communicating in a friendly way, we are not only colleagues but friends?

**Rejoicing.** Or are we digging our own plot of land one by one?

**Angry woman.** Shall we have a drinking bout?

**Pregnant woman.** A show for the public's amusement?

**Intruder.** Are we at a loss or in agreement?

**Angry woman.** Is the replacement team successfully squatting near the sinecure?

**Nervous.** The previous acquired an ideologically pristine island in the Indian Ocean?

**Intruder.** Not in the Indian Ocean but in the Pacific Ocean, and secondly, not ideologically but ecologically pristine island.

**Rejoicing.** Shall we call 911?

**Yes woman.** Just randomly?

**Committer.** They're waiting for your call?

**Intruder.** Do we rely only on our own strength?

**Pregnant woman.** Do you have coloured dreams?

**Nervous.** Has there been an emergency?

**Narratress.** One man conducting an entire orchestra?

**Intruder.** You got a deal in advance?

**Rejoicing.** Who should join when?

**Nervous.** Medical parameters are at zero?

**Yes woman.** I guess not all the bureaucrats have started their own company, their own casino and gun factory?

**Angry woman.** You don't think it's all of them?

**Committer.** Well, at least half of them?

**Pregnant woman.** How do you feel about the expressions "my frenemy" and "my frienemy?"

**Exalted woman.** Isn't there any other way?

**Yes woman.** The whole bunch of us pulling the plug?

**Intruder.** We've been left to our own devices?

**Exalted woman.** Did you visit the sea with the lovely lady?

**Rejoicing.** The sea excites the young lady.

**Nervous.** What is the substantive meaning of things?

**Angry woman.** Do you have a low tolerance for heights?

**Yes woman.** Do you add salt and pepper to taste?

**Rejoicing.** Need extra ingredients?

**Nervous.** Are you for or against the death penalty?

**Intruder.** And euthanasia?

**Pregnant woman.** Do you support or oppose abortion?

**Committer.** Are we neutral?

**Intruder.** Neutrals don't care.

**Rejoicing.** In a hurry to see your wife, fortify her with chicken broth?

**Angry woman.** You believe my word of honour?

**Committer.** Is the intrigue about to be resolved?

**Exalted woman.** Experienced hoity-toity boasts: it was like this with her only now.

**Rejoicing.** Are we all subject to fingerprinting?

**Intruder.** Have you been fingerprinted yet?

**Angry woman.** And breast volume?

**Yes woman.** Formal consultations flow seamlessly into a business lunch.

**Pregnant woman.** Apparently and from the looks of it, I'm in an interesting position?

**Intruder.** Continuously changing your driving route?

**Yes woman.** Did you put "exceptionally" on your application?

**Rejoicing.** Who is fortune smiling on today?

**Intruder.** Was it possible to reconcile without distinction of ranks, estates and religions?

**Yes woman.** Are staff aware of their role in the hierarchical chain of command?

**Exalted woman.** Don't count the money in other people's pockets.

**Nervous.** Let's agree once and for all: everyone is equally good and don't muddy the waters.

**Committer.** What to do then?

**Rejoicing.** What will soothe the heart?

**Pregnant woman.** At first you thought you were lucky, lucky to have a fortune?

**Yes woman.** How are we perceived by those around us?

**Angry woman.** Are we whining for nothing?

**Intruder.** Are we going downwind or upwind?

**Nervous.** Continuously upwind.

**Exalted woman.** A summer breeze blows in the clear field. From top to toe at the mercy of the hospitable elements. The wind is enveloping, handing yourself over to its inexhaustible gusts.

**Committer.** Will the tailwind furiously pull up the sails?

**Rejoicing.** Is the ship going to surge forward?

**Nervous.** Jumping outside in inclement weather?

**Angry woman.** And in a thunderstorm?

**Intruder.** Why are managers resentful? First they ask, they beg to bring the truth to their faces.

**Committer.** Are bureaucrats relentlessly wrong?

**Yes woman.** Deliberately wrong?

**Nervous.** Is someone being lobbied?

**Angry woman.** We wish we had their worries!

**Narratress.** The picture shows a boy in tears. Mum slapped him on the legs with a stick - he was running away from the camera. When he was transferred to the older group of the kindergarten. Never took offence again.

**Committer.** Do we agree to separate without mutual understanding?

**Yes woman.** Masterpiece piece of advice. Take a different perspective.

**Exalted woman.** I feel like there's someone standing around.

**Nervous.** Does it feel like this often?

**Narratress.** Are the good old days gone forever?

**Angry woman.** For some were kind, for others not so much.

**Rejoicing.** The guests are coming, what to treat them to?

**Committer.** Who's in charge of cutting the ribbon?

**Yes woman.** I agree to serve scissors at ribbon cutting presentations.

**Intruder.** Did you make it over the pass yet?

**Angry woman.** Does the model always look exemplary?

**Pregnant woman.** And the hard-working peasant woman?

**Intruder.** Who do I ask for a petition to re-pass?

**Yes woman.** Is the savoury news as bad as always?

**Exalted woman.** Peacock feathers preferably placed in caring hands?

**Pregnant woman.** And a whale's whisker?

**Committer.** Patch the ozone holes?

**Angry woman.** Is the hole above Antarctica expanding on a much larger scale than scientists have determined?

**Intruder.** Do we have time to drink the stirrup cup?

**Rejoicing.** What don't you say when you're drunk?

**Yes woman.** What don't you promise?

**Exalted woman.** If I had a baby, I'd calm down.

**Intruder.** Is a specific incident dealt with on an individual basis?

**Nervous.** Does the unfulfilled cause anxiety, throw you off balance?

**Pregnant woman.** Dwelling in uncertainty?

**Rejoicing.** Maybe we should take a time-out.

**Intruder.** Are the true motives behind the events becoming clearer?

**Angry woman.** Is everyone never satisfied?

**Yes woman.** How were the initial easy capitals created?

**Rejoicing.** Do you know how to forgive your loved ones?

**Nervous.** Has an atmosphere of pure motives been created?

**Committer.** A wife should not be annoyed before cooking?

**Exalted woman.** And before other preparations?

**Pregnant woman.** The husband should absolutely not be annoyed.

**Angry woman.** Drain the water. Game over! Get your foor wrap dried.

**Committer.** Will you be lucky enough to solve the great mysteries: love and death?

**Intruder.** Shall we make up regulations that eliminate disagreement?

**Narratress.** Who is in the lead in a conflict situation?

**Rejoicing.** Shall we write off worn and rusty parts?

**Exalted woman.** How do you get on the cover of a glossy magazine?

**Yes woman.** Stopping by the taxman, giving him a fair shake?

**Nervous.** No wages for a long time.

**Intruder.** Shall we start a different line of behaviour?

**Committer.** Or install a metal door?

**Angry woman.** Have you coordinated it with the sanitary and epidemiological authorities?

**Rejoicing.** With the fire department?

**Nervous.** Forced to be as good as gold?

**Intruder.** Keep a low profile?

**Committer.** Is the root of the evil in the eyes, are they misrepresenting realities?

**Pregnant woman.** When you were sick as a little girl, did your mother please you?

**Angry woman.** Did she give you treats?

**Intruder.** You, a sixth grader, the whole class came to visit you in the hospital?

**Exalted woman.** And the one and only one who'd make you shake at the sight of her?

**Intruder.** Did they put you at the same desk once?

**Exalted woman.** Did the class teacher put you deliberately?

**Yes woman.** Guessing you two are attracted to each other?

**Angry woman.** She taught Russian?

**Intruder.** It's never coming back? Not the sixth grade, not that girl?

**Nervous.** Lucky we got stuck. The comet's gonna fly right by, and it's gonna kick you to the dome.

**Exalted woman.** My boyfriend is at a loss for words.

**Angry woman.** Shall we conduct an impartial examination?

**Rejoicing.** For an objective assessment?

**Committer.** The original type of book. Without any text. Untouched, exposed sheets of paper. Looking at the pristine pages, reading the lines you like in them.

**Pregnant woman.** Is the text born spontaneously?

**Yes woman.** Do they always retain control of the execution?

**Angry woman.** Is it easier to control than to execute?

**Nervous.** Do your pupils constrict when you go from a dark room to daylight brightness?

**Exalted woman.** Men and women ride in the same coach. A mystery. For they are as differential as water and fire.

**Angry woman.** Nothing's going on?

**Committer.** Do we have the legislative initiative?

**Rejoicing.** Do you summarise the questions competently?

**Nervous.** Did you take the tests at the turnstile?

**Intruder.** Is the numerator always divisible by the denominator?

**Pregnant woman.** What if the chatter goes berserk?

**Committer.** Do you recognise faces in a crowd?

**Nervous.** Will tomorrow be the next day?

**Yes woman.** I know how to write vivid characterisations.

**Intruder.** Will you text me?

**Yes woman.** "A seasoned, elegant man. No spitting, no blowing his nose, no messing around. **Perfectionist.** Behaves in a proper, respectable manner. The characterisation is given for submission on request."

**Intruder.** Thank you. True to form.

**Angry woman.** I bend my back as a nurse, courier, cleaner, barely able to feed my children. The husband works hard but earns little.

**Rejoicing.** A niece regrets: she didn't have a baby with the guy she loved.

*Suddenly a dog barked sharply and viciously. Passengers rushed to the corners of the coach.*

*An empty space was created. But no matter how many times they looked around for the source of the barking, they found no one. Gradually the passengers took their former place.*

**Yes woman.** Why is all the moaning and groaning like talking to a stone wall?

**Intruder.** On time to plant and on time to harvest?

**Pregnant woman.** Is it a cure-all?

**A voice from the back of the coach.** Hurry up and help: a man is unattended!

**Narratress.** What if the poor guy doesn't get approved? I'm worried about him.

**Committer.** Why do you take the tragedy of distant people so closely?

**Narratress.** Let's speculate. The servant is relentlessly creeping upwards. An official vacancy loomed. With all the fees and awards that come with it. Starts throwing promises around. There are relatives waiting at home. Everyone is waiting: wife, mistress, children, grandchildren, mother-in-law, co-workers ... A chance to jump higher. There's a whole bunch of them waiting. Overnight, lost his temper, frustration sets in.

*A short pause.*

**Angry woman.** Your suffering has been transmitted to me. Shivering, the hairs on the top of my head move. What if you're not really lucky? Look... I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. Everyone is waiting, in suspense, huddled.... Wife, companion, children, fellow officers. Real advancement, real pennies, connections are on the horizon. And just like that... there you go...

*A longer pause. The passengers are pensive.*

**Nervous.** Literally paralysed by the chill.

**Rejoicing.** Do events unfold in an unconventional and parallel way?

**Exalted woman.** Do you find nutria from Argentina interesting?

**Intruder.** I know the head of a travel agency. She takes domestic citizens around the world.

**Angry woman.** So what's next?

**Intruder.** Never once left Russia.

**Pregnant woman.** Will dairy-woman take over fresh milk?

**Rejoicing.** The greengrocer fresh fruit, vegetables?

**Committer.** Is the concierge door boarded up tight?

**Yes woman.** No, it's wide open!

**Nervous.** There's no such thing as wide open.

**Rejoicing.** Was it ajar?

**Exalted woman.** Was it slightly open or slightly closed?

**Angry woman.** Is bargaining allowed?

**Pregnant woman.** Will we be reimbursed for lost profits?

**Yes woman.** Will you be patient, listen carefully?

**Nervous.** Laughter therapy is coolly restorative?

**Committer.** Shall we have a hearty and light-hearted laugh?

**Intruder.** One capsule will saturate the body with iron?

**Angry woman.** The amount of all the chemical elements?

**Intruder.** Close to a hundred.

**Rejoicing.** Aren't we waking up late?

**Nervous.** Late to bed?

**Committer.** Do we get our minds right? Those accumulated during the day.

**Angry woman.** Shall we refine the formula for existence?

**Narratress.** To the four traditional indicators - material goods, moral sentiments, profession, disinterested views - add a fifth: hardship-driven existence.

**Exalted woman.** Feeling on the cusp of bliss?

**Rejoicing.** Shouldn't I sign a non-disclosure agreement?

**Nervous.** What?

**Intruder.** What we've been scribbling about.

**Pregnant woman.** Let's gather at this station more often.

**Committer.** I suggest we exchange phone numbers.

**Pregnant woman.** And be friends at home?

**Angry woman.** Do children mimic us in positives and negatives?

**Intruder.** Is solfeggio taught in school?

**Rejoicing.** How could you do without it?

**Yes woman.** Shall we set up an investment fund?

**Nervous.** Trying to regulate our financial behaviour?

**Committer.** Long live our capitalist banks! The most reliable in the universe!

*Applause.*

**Yes woman.** Here come the native party people. Let's have a big round of applause.

*Passengers shout loudly, "Hey, party people!"*

**Rejoicing.** Are we the victim of a mysterious hoax?

**Nervous.** I invented the buzzer to alert you to the arrival of the train. So there's a dividend due on every signal?

**Angry woman.** Quirky, is that too greasy?

**Committer.** It's customary to pay off your mates....

**Intruder.** Shouldn't we get some night vision equipment?

**Nervous.** A computer with all the bells and whistles?

**Rejoicing.** Taking news from all over the world?

**Narratress.** Are we operating in a state of expediency?

**Committer.** Striving to find the root cause?

**Angry woman.** Private labourers at a crossroads?

**Pregnant woman.** Do you have exquisitely delicate manners?

**Exalted woman.** I'm cleanie! Before entering the underground, I wipe my feet thoroughly.

**Intruder.** Old-timers tell tales?

**Rejoicing.** Did the young reformers lost their faces?

**Yes woman.** Are we destined to be underparts in the crowd?

**Pregnant woman.** Or on the subs' bench?

**Intruder.** Will the string of fateful adventures ever run out?

**Nervous.** That's not what you're saying.

**Exalted woman.** We don't have any bad habits?

**Narratress.** An acquaintance has a strange digestive system. Food is processed into alcohol. He gives off a huffy smell. He doesn't take alcohol in his mouth, by the way. Another acquaintance of mine in the South met his principal. He came up on the beach to greet him, and he had an urgent assignment. He had to go back to the capital. Without a whole week's holiday.

**Nervous.** What does a wandering Bedouin do for fun?

**Rejoicing.** Do you have a tendency to push all the buttons in a row?

**Intruder.** I wouldn't want to belabor the point, but .

**Exalted woman.** Just a little bit.

**Yes woman.** Why a little? It's a good time to act crookedly.

**Angry woman.** A lot of people act crookedly. Why can't we?

**Rejoicing.** There are glad-handers running around, shouting about a rosy future.

**Pregnant woman.** Is the turmoil on Hong Kong's stock exchanges not abating?

**Intruder.** Sociological surveys testify: it takes twenty-one minutes to persuade a civilised lady.

**Exalted woman.** However, the hotties themselves disagree. They claim: a careless lady can only be persuaded in twenty-nine minutes.

**Angry woman.** Still on the waiting list?

**Committer.** Caught in the turbulence zone?

**Intruder.** Can't get past it?

**Pregnant woman.** Is a reassessment of values in full swing?

**Nervous.** The basic value of being is time?

**Committer.** Is this a time of doubt?

**Angry woman.** There's not enough for everyone!

**Rejoicing.** No turnips, no lentils, no dogwoods?

**Narratress.** Bought matches. The sulphur head flares brightly, the flame does not want to spread any further. Amazing match goes out at head level.

**Exalted woman.** Intimacy and marketing are not welcome.

**Intruder.** Are we going to the fair or vice versa?

**Rejoicing.** Did you hear they invented humane slaughtering devices?

**Committer.** Tempted by luck?

**Angry woman.** Don't know how to stitch boots?

**Yes woman.** Has the track switch been moved to a safe track?

**Narratress.** A friend had a bedtime tea, weak, not strong. She went into the kitchen. She lived on the top floor. She hears an unimaginable rumble in the room, comes back - on her bed there is a concrete slab that has collapsed from the ceiling. There is a huge hole gaping in the ceiling, and in it is a huge sky and an untold number of stars.

**Nervous.** Stock market trading staggered?

**Committer.** We wish we had their worries...

**Intruder.** Shouldn't there be an audit of the tariffs of the major monopolies?

**Pregnant woman.** Is there a madonna at the centre of the universe?

**Rejoicing.** With her nervous structure?

**Intruder.** With her complexes?

**Committer.** Mystery and innuendo?

**Pregnant woman.** What are the proportions in which the cocktail is mixed?

**Rejoicing.** File an honour and dignity lawsuit?

**Intruder.** Should a civilian airliner pilot be issued a parachute?

**Narratress.** A solar flare has been recorded, the cause of a magnetic storm. Causes increased fatigue, migraine, mood instability.

**Exalted woman.** Are you going to a glamour party?

**Rejoicing.** Will everyone be invited into the living room or will some stay in the hallway?

**Yes woman.** In addition to the originals, keep copies of the documents?

**Angry woman.** Along with a delivery receipt?

**Pregnant woman.** They won't be able to get away with it?

**Intruder.** The well-being of the nation is made up of the well-being of the individual citizen?

**Yes woman.** A destiny without ideals?

**Nervous.** In that case, she's stupid and worthless!

**Angry woman.** Should I press the accelerator and brake pedal at the same time?

**Intruder.** The fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood is three hundred years old.

**Committer.** Time passes quickly!

**Intruder.** It would seem like only yesterday that Frenchman Charles squatted at his desk and wrote his Riding Hood?

**Nervous.** Here's the result: three hundred years for nothing!

**Angry woman.** Why did you go into the woods alone?

**Exalted woman.** There is danger at every turn in the forest.

**Yes woman.** Dense thickets, fallen trees, wild animals.

**Pregnant woman.** Responsive, trusting, she carried a pie to her sick grandmother.

**Committer.** She needed to adjust her behavioural strategy!

**Nervous.** But the finale is optimistic!

**Pregnant woman.** At least leave Little Red Riding Hood alone!

**Angry woman.** There's plenty of fairy tales of your own.

**Narratress.** I remember a football match in a provincial town. The stadium watched the manoeuvres of the adored footballer who had suffered a stroke. Lift pass. The fans see him confused. They became paralysed. Holding their breath... He received the ball with his head! The unthinkable was happening in the stands! The fans jumped up and gave a standing ovation! Nobody was interested in the continuation of the match!

**Nervous.** Is there a rematch planned?

*An stranger runs in with a suitcase in his hands.*

**Stranger** (*alarmed*). Landing where?

**Passengers** (*interrupting each other*). First straight ahead, then left and left again - without turning, straight to the aircraft ramp.

*The stranger ran. Passengers see him off with their eyes, waving their hands.*

**A diligent, disciplined runner.** Will he succeed or won't he?

*A sigh of general relief.*

We empathised fervently.

**Angry woman.** How many lifeboats can you count?

**Rejoicing.** We don't drink to get drunk, we drink to relieve stress?

**Pregnant woman.** Was a warning shot fired?

**Committer.** Or do you want to go straight to defeat?

**Yes woman.** Did the mediators get lost?

**Nervous.** The most important motto of the day is to endure?

**Angry woman.** Is a shaky memory a thorough proviso?

**Committer.** Is the memory falling off like old plaster?

**Pregnant woman.** Lost spatial reference points?

**Narratress.** In a northern town, residents fall ill with ornithosis, the source of the infection is birds. Parrots were suspected, brought into town. There were threats to put them to sleep and burn them to death. The birds were protected by the sanitation officer. She stated: a court order is required.

**Nervous.** Even a harmless parrot can only be killed by a court order?

**Exalted woman.** A toast to the sanitation officers! As long as there's a sanitation officer, it's no big deal.

**Rejoicing.** Thirty-seven years seems like a lot of time ahead of me. Then you realise - it's already behind you, you're trying to jump on the step of the departing train!

**Committer.** Check out a museum, take in a painting?

**Nervous.** Masterpieces can't be touched!

**Intruder.** Are our judgements wasted speculation?

**Exalted woman.** How does "guillotine" translate into Russian?

**Rejoicing.** Have we been asked the cardinal Russian question?

**Committer.** No reply?

**Nervous.** The decisive test ahead?

**Pregnant woman.** Has there been a collapse of the essence?

**Exalted woman.** What is the moral lesson?

**Angry woman.** Are the openings quite lucrative?

**Intruder.** Always struck by the ripple between the two edges. Shall I show you?

**Voices.** Show us, please.

**Intruder.** I'll get out. I'm afraid the door will close.

**Voices.** We'll hold it. Step boldly.

*The Intruder gets out, draws a line on the floor with chalk.*

**Intruder.** On this side of the line is survivability, on the opposite side is perdition. That's the whole line. And you... conceptualism, existentialism, globalism. That's the line. (*Returns to coach*.)

**Nervous.** Have the black box recordings been decrypted?

**Pregnant woman.** The barn lock is lost?

**Yes woman.** Is there an urgent dispatch waiting up there?

**Exalted woman.** Does he hug her first?

**Rejoicing.** Are we blessed with a creative meeting?

**Committer.** Is the rake as rusty as ever?

**Yes woman.** A controlling shareholder has been found?

**Angry woman.** I read an advert: "Please take dirty dishes to the sink." Is the sink at the end of the coach or on the platform?

*Two Merchants appear.*

**First merchant** (*carrying a woman's mannequin, shouting out*). Buy a woman's mannequin! The world's best mannequin!

**Second merchant** (*holding up books, shouting out*). Don't run past! Stay with us! A unique exploration of otherworldly forces. Buy, an authoritative monograph. The book is a treasure trove of knowledge. Don't rush past, stay with us. A comprehensive analysis of otherworldly forces.

**Intruder.** Maybe tweak the "pi" number?

**Committer.** Or sit in the Turkish way?

**Yes woman.** Wouldn't it make more sense to have the dialogue in the presence of a lawyer?

**Rejoicing.** Does the solicitor have a personal solicitor?

**Exalted woman.** Do you find men with no problems?

**Committer.** Shall we rehearse the euphoria shouts?

**Yes woman.** Has the carpet been rolled out by the plane ramp?

**Intruder.** Are you an individual or otherwise?

**Nervous.** Obviously, we're bothering someone, aren't we?

**Pregnant woman.** We're not being interrupted?

**Angry woman.** Why did my mum push me away as a child? For the smallest of reasons, she'd say, "You're a girl. I can still hear the reproach: you're a girl.

**Intruder.** Do you have a wish? Try harder!

**Rejoicing.** One must always try!

**Exalted woman.** Especially if you want to.

**Rejoicing.** I have a wish!

*The passengers inspirationally applaud the Rejoicing.*

**Intruder.** I don't read horoscopes, I don't play TV shows, I get up early - and go to the niva or to the toque.

**Nervous.** Experiencing vertigo from heights?

**Committer.** What does it look like - harmony incarnate?

**Pregnant woman.** A young mum of a one-year-old son stated: "My husband and I have decided to adopt our second child from an orphanage."

**Yes woman.** As long as there are mums like this, it's a bright ray of hope.

**Rejoicing.** You did dispose of your ticket, didn't you?

**Angry woman.** By mistake.

**Nervous.** Tickets will not be accepted back!

**Angry woman.** I changed my mind about going further...

**Yes woman.** Pit your wits in advance! There are no cashiers accepting a used ticket.

**Nervous.** I only have a one-way ticket.

**Rejoicing.** Why's that? You can go all the way! But first things first!

**Committer.** Figure it out, weigh it up, discuss it with your boss.

**Yes woman.** Not the boss, the general boss.

**Pregnant woman.** Do we have veto power?

**Rejoicing.** Shall we make a formal application?

**Yes woman.** An unprecedented amount has accumulated?

**Nervous.** It's not worth considering them.

**Pregnant woman.** Vanity and languor of spirit.

**Committer.** Will conflicts be resolved by the next generations?

**Angry woman.** They're doing it their way?

**Nervous.** And so on and so forth?

**Narratress.** There was an idyllic cow walking along Tverskaya. Suddenly, a crazy fox jumped out of somewhere, pounced on the cow, biting it. The fox took off down Strastnoy Boulevard. The cow took injured look and started mooing.

**Exalted woman.** Are you all hung up on mundane details?

**Pregnant woman.** Shall we speculate on the spiritual and eternal?

**Yes woman.** The meaning of life?

**Intruder.** Going the same way?

**Rejoicing.** Are there any tight turns ahead?

**Nervous.** What about the music?

**Narratress.** Shall we take it with us?

**Committer.** It's not **his** fault, it's just what happened...

**Pregnant woman.** If **He** did appear here, showed himself among us, then happened in this way, I don't see **his** fault.

**Angry woman.** Higher the sun rises.

**Rejoicing.** The first rays warm the soil.

**Committer.** Peasants ponder how best to nourish and cultivate their native lands.

**Yes woman.** "Visit planet Earth. She's got quite a reputation." (A. de Saint-Exupéry)

*Two homeless men and a homeless woman appear.*

*In complete silence, obeying their inner musical intuition - rhythmically, coherently and with ecstasy - they perform a short dance of despair. Then - also silently and uncomplainingly - they sit behind the backs of the other passengers.*

*Exalted pulls out a mirror, a tube of lipstick, an eyelash brush. She disposes of them skilfully and skilfully, she fashions herself in full view of everyone. Pulls up the tights. The passengers watch with keen interest.*

**Exalted woman.** I withheld the big news: I'm a bride.

**Exclamations.** Congratulations, congratulations. We wish you happiness.

*Applause.*

**Narratress.** "Mankind is in the position of passengers trapped in a long railway tunnel, and moreover in a place where the light of the beginning can no longer be seen, and the light of the end is so faint that the eye seeks it now and then and loses it again, and even the existence of the beginning and the end cannot be certain." (F. Kafka)

*Final scene.*

**Intruder** (*To Yes woman, getting out of the coach*). Where are you going?

**Yes woman.** Turn the hourglass over.

**Intruder.** You don't want me to come with you?

**Yes woman.** You're acting vaguely.

**Intruder.** How do you want it?

**Yes woman.** Teach you? Come with me.

**Intruder.** Shall we try with arms round each other?

**Yes woman.** Yeah, we'll try to work together.

**Intruder.** Will it gradually settle down?

*The Yes woman turns the hourglass over.*

*Slowly a new time begins to dawn.*

**Driver's voice.** The train's not going any further. Please vacate the coaches.

**Angry woman.** Will the tunnel passengers get out too?

**A wild scream.** Take the child's hand! Take it now!

**Intruder.** Screamer, whose baby is it? Someone is screaming incessantly at this station.

**Committer.** Madame Kikiriki! Hiding in the station, screaming to no end.

There's the screaming again. Hold your child's hand all the way. You have no choice! If it's a child, it's by the hand and all the way.

**Pregnant woman.** Calm down, Madame Kikiriki. We will hold your hand and all the way.

Same voice again. Thank you. Well done. You'll do fine. I won't scream again.

Heard the dignified response.

*Two young single mums appear with their babies in prams.*

**First mum.** I don't have a husband, but I've decided to get a baby.

**Second mum.** Same thing.

**First mum.** The guy... did you like him?

**Second mum.** Yes, very much. I was in love.

**First mum.** So he'll come back.

**Second mum.** I hope so.

**First mum.** Mum and Dad don't judge.

**Second mum.** I've made up my mind.

**First mum.** They take it as it comes.

**Second mum.** Mum rejoiced. Dad lives apart. Supplying some money.

**First mum.** You can't live without them.

**Second mum.** Preferably something on top of it.

**First mum.** I'm working odd part-time jobs. So far, I'm doing okay. Though it's heavy and the tears are pressing.

**Second mum.** Dad didn't judge. He gave me a sad look, stroked my back. I live with my mum, but I don't have feelings.

**First mum.** Informed decision.

**Second mum.** I remember his pensive look. I love my Dad. He lives alone.

**First mum.** I'm less picky as I get older.

**Second mum.** I've been calling him faithfully. I'm trying to be supportive.

**First mum.** Mum's more involved.

**Second mum.** I feel sorry for him.

**First mum.** I'll raise my baby alone. Without fake counsellors.

**Second mum.** And I'm an open-minded person. Let it absorb, let it grow. At the critical moment, I'll save him.

**First mum.** Do we need saving?

**Second mum.** Children need to be rescued all the time.

*A well-to-do family appears: dad, mum, three kids. Dad is animatedly telling the kids something, and they're prancing around. Mum walks alongside, keeping an eye on her offspring.*

**Well-to-do mum.** A domesticated husband. I trust him implicitly. I watch him out of the corner of my eys, I like his tricks. He loves children. Takes care of them. How many children? Whatever works out... The kids mimic their daddy. Diligent. At night they wash their feet, their bottoms. They put on their night pyjamas, clinging to their necks, prancing around. They're going to bed. Waiting to start reading books or discussing the day's adventures. On Saturday or Sunday, my husband treats me to a glass of white wine. In a cafe or at home. Treats to taste. I love my husband. (*Addressing the audience*.) **We'll help you. The important thing is not to despair.**

(Optional episode.

*From backstage, a nurse rolls a gynaecological chair onto the stage.*

*From backstage, a nurse rolls in a guillotine.*

*The sandwich man appears. The poster reads, "I'll do it for a reasonable fee."*

End of optional episode).

*The waiter brings a table and two chairs out onto the veranda. A young man and a young woman take a seat at a table.*

**Waiter.** Can I get you something?

**Young man.** Coffee and green tea.

**Waiter.** Just a second. (*Disappears*.)

*The young man whispers something eagerly to his companion. She absorbs every word, keeping her eyes on him. The young man leans closer to the girl, whispering warm words. She clasped her hands over her ears for a moment, but immediately lowered them and continued to listen, her whole body arching towards him. Pulls the chair closer to the young man, then closer still. Closes his ears again, can't stand it, opens them. She's totally at the mercy of a conversation with a young man. She's twitching her shoulders, rolling her eyes. Sitting quite close to the young man, listening avidly, their cheeks almost touching.*

**Pregnant woman.** An unprecedented stratification of society. The names of the rulers change: pharaoh, emperor, king, president, but the cruelty remains. What is the essence of being? A waste of energy, a place of sorrow. I'm a technician by mind, by education. Graduated from the Aviation Institute with honours. Got into an up-and-coming firm. This was the one they were looking for. When they saw her with a belly, they were very upset. A major international project is at risk, every employee counts. They promised to take it when the family life got better. They gave me a bonus. The director, a renowned scientist, called for a talk. "What can I do to help?" How to help, I'm about to have a baby and they need a 24-hour workaholic. The personnel officer cried as she handed out the labour book.

**Narratress.** "We shall hear angels, we shall see the whole sky in diamonds, we shall see all the evils of the earth, all our sufferings drowned in a mercy that will fill the whole world with itself, and our life will become quiet, gentle, sweet as a caress." "Happiness and peace shall come upon the earth, and a good word will be remembered and a blessing given to those who now live. The music plays so cheerfully, so joyfully, and it seems a little while longer, and we shall know why we live, why we suffer... If only we knew, if only we knew!" (A. Chekhov)

*We hear a bell. Its call - at first distant, uneven, timid - gradually grows, gaining strength. Then the sound weakens, slowly fades into the distance, breaks off.*

*A waltz sounds. All passengers go to the platform to the sound of the waltz.*

*They are joined by other people: the unforgiven, the destitute, the orphaned and the wretched.*

*Everyone needs to be sheltered, fed, watered.*

*The underground is always crowded, especially during rush hour.*

*But there's plenty of space, air and light for everyone.*

THE END

Moscow, 2002

1. "The title of the play in Russian, Ревизская сказка (Census list), is difficult to translate into other languages. This expression is used by Gogol in his poem Dead Souls to confirm the roll call of peasants who died after the last census" [↑](#footnote-ref-1)