

FLYING

By Olga Mukhina

Translated by John Freedman

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Contact for author and translator: jfreed16@gmail.com

Author's Note: This text was created according to the principles of verbatim. That is, it is an entirely documentary play. It is sampled, so to speak, from 15 interviews. It contains not a single phrase of my own unless it is the odd stage direction or a simple explanatory phrase. Even the incident with the window and the dog is the whole truth and nothing but. Believe me. All of this is life, like rain in July; this wintery snow is for you.

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MUKHINA.

M

Snowstorm

A freelance DJ

Blizzard

VJ and streetfighting man

Maniac

Promoter and BASE jumper

Volodya

Policeman

W

Snowflake

Brunette, a vamp and a TV star

Lenochka

Blonde, cute, a media-planner

Orangina

Redhead, a glamorous beauty, a designer

Bushy-Tail

Light-brown hair, waitress, a beauty, a virgin

Television studio employees, journalists, café clients, guests at the home of Maniac, people on the street, soldiers, dancers, "Yo-Yo" the pet dog.

PART ONE

FEAR

A large office at the BCH television studio flooded with light.

The BCH initials are on everything. Five people sit at five computers. Maniac, who is a tall, handsome blond, Orangina, Snowflake, Lenchka and Blizzard, a psychedelic-trance star and a charming, short-statured young man of about 26 with the face of a child and child-like eyes to match. All of them are at work. There is a sixth - a young man also of about 26 with the pale face of a cherub, as if he were created to give women insomnia. He sits on a sofa, wears large silver headphones and leafs through a magazine. A small yellow case stands at his feet. He occasionally puts down the magazine and moves about the room, dancing and looking around. This is his first visit here - he is a stranger. All are dressed in black or dark blue tight-fitting clothes. Only Orangina wears orange. Lenchka wears a T-shirt emblazoned with the text, "Fuck Face Control," and she has a big, black eye. She constantly looks at it in her mirror, touches up her make-up, powders the shiner and brushes it with toner. Snowflake wears a black blouse printed with "Sin" in red letters. The red straps of her bra occasionally slip seductively off her shoulders. Snowflake takes tranquilizers three times a day and so is always very calm.

Music plays. People come and go, bringing things in, taking things out. The five sign papers. Maniac stamps official documents, draws something, leafs through glossy magazines. It is as though all of them have stepped out of one of these magazines - they are young, hip and attractive. Someone fiddles with computer or stereo wires; someone else is looking through compact discs. Maniac counts money. Someone wipes off a camera lens. Someone watches television; someone looks at a computer monitor. On some computer monitors we see the faces of Snowflake and Blizzard - their faces are also on magazine covers and advertising posters. On one of the computer screens we see the words of the TV station's slogan running continually: "No Fear in Love." Someone smokes in the corridor and peeks in the door. The teapot whistles;

someone is making tea, someone else - coffee. Someone is sitting beneath a palm tree, others beneath an aquarium. A big gold fish swims in the aquarium. Some people are tired, others are sad and stare thoughtfully out the window. Outside the window there is snow, life, sun, blue clouds, cafes, cars, bustling people in scarves and winter hats.

MANIAC

The sensation reminds you of fear. You feel it between your solar plexus and your neck. Somewhere in the chest. You know it because you feel the desire to touch. You physically want to touch someone. To see, to hear, to smile and to be embarrassed.

BLIZZARD

It's a chemical reaction.

MANIAC

Nobody can define why it happens at this very moment with this specific person. Every telephone ring sets you on fire, every time you go out you hope you will see them.

SNOWFLAKE

Nobody knows the secret.

LENOCHKA

The meeting of two parallel lines.

BLIZZARD

Nobody knows why it disappears.

ORANGINA

You try to get it back, but it's not the same.

They work silently. It's obvious they've been working together forever; they're a tight-knit, well-oiled crew, as if they are relatives or a band of small monkeys. They are constantly in motion, never sitting still, always doing something and they have no idea they are being observed. Maniac likes Snowflake but Snowflake has all kinds of affairs going. She considers Maniac a friend. Blizzard is smitten with Orangina, he directs his every word at her. She pretends not to notice; she likes Snowstorm. In fact, all the girls like Snowstorm, although maybe that's only true because he's the newest one here - they all

want to be the first one to win him. Lenchka has a husband; he's the one who gave her the black eye. She likes Snowstorm, too, but she is mortified because the shiner has made her less beautiful than she really is. All of them are extremely attractive; you want to look at them, to be next to them, to be their friends, to fall in love with them. Something about them gives off warmth, contentment, tranquility and a physical sense of pleasure.

BLIZZARD

I had a girlfriend, a ballerina, and we used to buy things in pairs - unisex. That way both of you can always wear the same things.

LENOCHKA

It's that easy?

BLIZZARD

Not really. When she dumped me she took everything. Even the sheets. When I tried to stop her she hit me on the head with a chair.

SNOWFLAKE

She was absolutely firm in her decision.

BLIZZARD

The whole hall was bloody.

MANIAC

Did she find somebody else?

BLIZZARD

You know how girls do it.

ORANGINA

How?

BLIZZARD

To get rid of one guy they find a third they go live with and then they dump him. They just keep crab-legging it from guy to guy until they find what they want.

MANIAC

I asked a friend today if you can just walk up to a woman you like and put your head on her shoulder. He said you can.

BLIZZARD

Basically, that's what everybody does.

Maniac goes to Snowflake and puts his head on her shoulder. Snowflake smiles and washes a tablet of some kind down with a drink of water.

SNOWFLAKE

I finally decided today. I'm not going to love anybody anymore.

ORANGINA

Why's that?

SNOWFLAKE

I can't love anybody if they don't love me.

MANIAC

I can't either.

SNOWFLAKE

I'm only going to love when somebody loves me.

LENOCHKA

I feel this hatred welling up in me. Instantly. I don't know what it is.

SNOWFLAKE

I know exactly what you mean. And I'm perfectly aware of it as it happens.

MANIAC

It's the ego.

SNOWFLAKE

But that's what my love is like.

LENOCHKA

If I see somebody's getting frustrated with me, that's it. It's all over. The love boat has landed. On the rocks.

SNOWFLAKE

I know it sounds awful, like somebody handing down an irreversible verdict. It's not very Russian and it's not very

feminine - but these mood swings have just become a part of my life.

They work silently. Someone sighs, someone eats something, someone drinks something, someone goes out, another comes in, someone forgot something and came back in before going back out.

SNOWFLAKE

I was walking down the street today and on the corner when I turned in from the left side, right there on that spot, I promised myself - this is it. I'm crossing out love and I'm never going to love alone again.

LENOCHKA

Yeah, let's put an end to solitaire love.

ORANGINA

What's he say about it?

SNOWFLAKE

He says, "Your skin drives me wild! Show me another man who can love you more than I do!"

LENA

How's that for an equation?

MANIAC

Yeah, but he doesn't know you're toying with him -

SNOWFLAKE

Is that what I'm doing?

MANIAC

Well, yeah -

ORANGINA

I need him, I need him not; I love him, I love him not

BLIZZARD

Good in the evening, bad in the morning

ORANGINA

Or the other way around

SNOWFLAKE

You know what he says to me? A thousand years ago people like me were burned at the stake

SNOWSTORM

Snowflake, that's a compliment

SNOWFLAKE

It is?

BLIZZARD

A hundred years ago you would have been stoned

ORANGINA

Poor women

SNOWFLAKE

I don't care what you say; I think women are an incredibly deprived lot

BLIZZARD

I mean, women have fear instilled in them from childhood

SNOWFLAKE

I mean, it's men that are afraid of women

ORANGINA

I mean, everybody's afraid of everybody

MANIAC

I mean, everybody's just afraid of fear

LENOCHKA

I'm afraid of darkness, maniacs, the cold, germs, snakes, spiders, heights, fast cars, policemen, guards, face-control, rude people, dogs, men and random sex

Orangina looks out the window, beyond which another window is visible, as well as the window of a café, a really pleasant place where it smells of coffee and a waitress's hands are cleaning off a table and emptying ashtrays. A handsome young man named Volodya is drinking espresso and talking about something as he cracks and eats pistachios. The waitress, Bushy-Tail, looks like Twiggy. She has huge eyes, a smart little blue dress, long legs, a white apron and a chic, tidy hair-do. She is always smiling, humbly and modestly.

VOLODYA

I think about women a lot. I think about them constantly. In fact, I don't think about women in the plural, but about one woman, one single woman. Of all the women I've ever met, I know not one could ever become my other half.

BUSHY-TAIL

Why not?

VOLODYA

Ah, for one reason or another. When people come together - it's a whole science.

BUSHY-TAIL

What about when they break up?

VOLODYA

No one person is ever to blame for breaking up. It's nobody's fault. It's just two puzzle pieces that don't fit.

Volodya sips his coffee. Bushy-Tail leaves. Volodya is silent. Looks at her. Waits for her to come back. Looks out the window. Sees Orangina looking out her window but he doesn't know her name. Bushy-Tail returns, replaces his ashtray.

I've always been attracted to unhinged women, I guess you could say. I mean, the kind of girls who know how to stick up for themselves, the kind that can really stick it to you. But I've always wanted someone defenseless and fragile so that she'd be the kind I'd be able to protect and take care of.

BUSHY-TAIL

Can you do that?

VOLODYA

You know, I never leave anyone in the lurch. Anybody's secrets are safe with me. If you ever end up on an uninhabited island with me - you won't go hungry.

The office. People are coming and going. The group of six is constantly surrounded by a crowd of faceless people. Five of them are working. Snowstorm is always up and dancing. Somebody sighs. Lenchka puts make-up on her eyes. Somebody's looking at the clock; somebody's washing their hands. Snowflake sprays on

*some perfume. Somebody's cleaning their desk,
somebody's putting something on, somebody's taking
something off, somebody's getting ready to go
somewhere.*

LENOCHKA

I think women are made purely for decoration

ORANGINA

(Taking Snowstorm's photo) Those are just childish illusions

LENOCHKA

Why did people invent Faberge eggs or Feng Shui?

SNOWFLAKE

I would really like to settle down. Become soft, calm and caring. But I'm so sensitive. I like it when people care for me

MANIAC

People ask God for love even though they haven't the vaguest notion what it is. What a nightmare.

LENOCHKA

I'm afraid of falling in love

BLIZZARD

Why?

LENOCHKA

I can't. I'm married

ORANGINA

I fall in love once a year

SNOWFLAKE

I never do

BLIZZARD

Being in love should be more controllable the older you get. But

-

ORANGINA

Whenever I fall in love I am all nerves

MANIAC

Love is a damned psychosis. Last fall I liked this one girl so much my knees went weak. I prayed to God, "Lord, bring her back

to me. Bring her back." And what do you think happened? What came of all that? Six months of nagging ailments.

LENOCHKA

(Reading from a book) An obsessive thought of a yellow-black aura evoked by the constant reconsideration of a certain individual of the opposite sex

SNOWFLAKE

All you have to do is redirect the energies of love

LENOCHKA

The older you get, the less there are

BLIZZARD

Love is destiny putting you to the test

MANIAC

It's destiny having a systems failure

The café. People are coming and going. Music plays against the sound of tinkling forks, plates, knives, glasses, cups and saucers. It smells of cinnamon, honey and hot apple cider.

BUSHY-TAIL

Are you married?

VOLODYA

No.

BUSHY-TAIL

Why not?

VOLODYA

I had a girlfriend. She was a ballerina. I had really strong feelings for her. They still surface at times. Like a time bomb or something. We used to meet in corridors and dark corners, there was never anything official about it like I would have liked. She always denied it all and she begged me never to tell anyone about us. "If you tell anybody, I'll kill you," she used to say. That's the kind of girl she was

Through the big window the six are seen leaving their office and going out onto the street. One breathes in the fresh air, another lights a cigarette and stands looking around with satisfaction. Snowstorm forgot

something and goes back inside. Everyone waits. The girls are beautiful and flirtatious and they look towards the window of the café. Snowstorm returns with a yellow suitcase. Everyone waves their arms in different directions; they can't come to a consensus about where to go. Big snowflakes fall on them all. Someone is cold, others are not. Someone goes back in for a hat or a scarf. Others fumble as they put on gloves or mittens, taking them off, dropping them, picking them up as they cross the street while others catch up with them. One tries to hold another's hand, but the hand is pulled back before it can be clasped. Someone pulls up a collar or a hood; someone puts on glasses. They laugh.

And then this guy shows up in a white Lexus. Makes a ton of money a month, all real cool-like. A DJ or something. Talk about being outgunned. I tried to make her see sense, tell her it was just a fling, but people don't hear anything at moments like that. So she packed up her bags and she was gone. I even wanted to marry her. But it turned out she didn't love me.

BUSHY-TAIL

Why not?

VOLODYA

I don't know. Probably because she was afraid of ruining her reputation.

BUSHY-TAIL

What's that supposed to mean?

The six enter the café, which is packed and noisy. They shake snow off their coats as they remove them. It seems they are endlessly taking things off, coats, scarves, hats, gloves, mittens, until they finally get down to their beautiful, bared shoulders, bare midriffs and thighs. They take seats, read the menu, someone walks by, someone else recognizes someone and waves, someone moves in front of someone, somebody makes room for somebody else who couldn't find a seat, somebody scoots over, others bring a chair, while others move over to a table by the window and people exchange seats. Someone recognizes Snowflake and Blizzard and points a finger at them. Someone opens his mouth...

MANIAC

When you start looking for things in love, there's nothing left to find

BLIZZARD

What's dangerous is sudden moves

LENOCHKA

Why?

MANIAC

Because then the search is expanded. And there's a whole universe out there. Whatever you want to find is out there to be found.

BLIZZARD

It all happens suddenly. You don't have time to think. Any person with brains figures that out sooner or later

LENOCHKA

Love dies anyway

ORANGINA

And so fast

LENOCHKA

But why?

MANIAC

Because whatever it is, it's already been done

LENOCHKA

Who?

MANIAC

Who? Partners. Lovers. People. A human. One, two

BLIZZARD

It all comes down to sex

MANIAC

Is that before you know it's love or after?

SNOWFLAKE

And you've got to have education of some kind

SNOWSTORM

At least elementary

BLIZZARD

Basically it's a very difficult thing, all these physical signs

BUSHY-TAIL

(Approaches with a notepad and pen) Whiskey? Tequila? Two whiskeys and one tequila? One? One whiskey and two tequilas? Gold or silver?

MANIAC

(To Snowflake) What're you gonna have? To drink?

LENOCHKA

If a woman takes the time to answer, then she's already said "yes" to everything he has in mind. And that's all there is to it. It's horrible. There's nothing more horrible than that. A random affair in the making.

BLIZZARD

That's what destroys our youth

MANIAC

If only

SNOWFLAKE

Carrot juice

ORANGINA

And orange juice

MANIAC

I suggest a compromise

BUSHY-TAIL

A carrot-orange cocktail?

MANIAC

And a salad of some kind

BUSHY-TAIL

What kind?

MANIAC

Herbs

And herbal tea
LENOCHKA

Green tea
BLIZZARD

With jasmine?
BUSHY-TAIL

And orange pekoe
SNOWFLAKE

I need a vitamin boost
BLIZZARD

And dessert
SNOWFLAKE

Make that two
ORANGINA

I don't know what I want
SNOWSTORM

The fish plate's good
BUSHY-TAIL

I hate fish
SNOWSTORM

It's very good
BUSHY-TAIL

BLIZZARD
(Takes Bushy-Tail by the hand) If it's not will you have dinner with me?

BUSHY-TAIL

Try it

SNOWSTORM

I'll chance it

Volodya puts on his coat and scarf, all the while keeping a close eye on Bushy-Tail, no matter where she goes. He casts a suspicious glance at Blizzard, waves to Bushy-Tail, pointing to his watch. She nods back at

him, as if sharing with him something only they know. Volodya goes out into the snowstorm on the street. The café is filled with music, the television is tuned to BCH, on which the TV star Snowflake is seen reporting the news but without sound.

You're a lot more elegant in real life than on screen

SNOWFLAKE

The screen adds twelve pounds

LENOCHKA

Really? I didn't know that

SNOWFLAKE

Do you like my eyebrows?

ORANGINA

(Taking Snowflake's picture) Oh, yes

LENOCHKA

I bought some new boots

MANIAC

I want some just like that. Do they have big sizes?

LENOCHKA

I'll ask if you want

ORANGINA

(Smelling Snowflake) I just love the way you smell

SNOWFLAKE

(Her cell phone rings with the melody from "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg." She doesn't answer it.) With his love he pours molten copper over my head

MANIAC

If you aren't part of the solution, you're part of the problem

BUSHY-TAIL

Here's your fish plate

BLIZZARD

Why don't you join us?

BUSHY-TAIL

You haven't even tried it yet

SNOWSTORM

The smell alone is making me sick to my stomach

BLIZZARD

I love fish

SNOWSTORM

What's your name?

MANIAC

Her name's Bushy-Tail

A small book of some kind falls out of Bushy-Tail's apron. Orangina picks it up.

ORANGINA

(Photographing first the book and then Bushy-Tail) What are you reading?

BUSHY-TAIL

A biology textbook. I want to be a doctor

SNOWFLAKE

(Gagging) Are you kidding?

BUSHY-TAIL

Why?

MANIAC

You're too beautiful

BLIZZARD

Order something for yourself

BUSHY-TAIL

Another time

MANIAC

I'll take care of this

BLIZZARD

Tell me, Bushy-Tail, what do you love more than anything on earth?

BUSHY-TAIL

Macaroni and cheese

BLIZZARD

Is that bizarre? I do too.

BUSHY-TAIL

And boiled onions

BLIZZARD

You're joking

BUSHY-TAIL

No, it's true

BLIZZARD

I thought I was the only person on earth who loved boiled onions

Bushy-Tail leaves, clears something from the table, brings back another order, is always efficient and on time with everything. She seems to be everywhere at once. People are walking all around. Blizzard is seen on the TV screen.

SNOWSTORM

Do you have the sensation that the world revolves around you?

BLIZZARD

Non-stop almost

ORANGINA

And that everything around us is a lie?

BLIZZARD

I have the feeling people confuse the truth for what it's not

SNOWFLAKE

She really is a pretty girl

ORANGINA

She has such delicate wrists, slender ankles and such an androgynous figure

BUSHY-TAIL

(Appears) What kind of figure?

LENOCHKA

Two huge eyes

BUSHY-TAIL

I've never considered myself pretty. Not for five minutes

ORANGINA

You could be a trend-setter

SNOWFLAKE

God wanted to make her a handsome boy

SNOWSTORM

But changed his mind at the last minute

MANIAC

Come on, Bushy-Tail, have a drink with us

BUSHY-TAIL

(Speaks and disappears) I don't drink or smoke

LENOCHKA

(To Snowflake) Did you quit smoking?

SNOWFLAKE

I never smoked to begin with

ORANGINA

You don't know how lucky you are

SNOWFLAKE

I have lots of other flaws

BLIZZARD

(To Bushy-Tail) Where do people like you come from?

BUSHY-TAIL

(Appearing) The Far North

LENOCHKA

Just what I thought for some reason

BUSHY-TAIL

Where are you from?

MANIAC

The eternal question - whence have we come?

SNOWFLAKE

It's because she's so natural, sincere and photogenic

ORANGINA

How old are you, Bushy-Tail?

BUSHY-TAIL

Me? I'm seventeen. What about you?

ORANGINA

Me? I think I'm twenty-five. I don't remember

SNOWFLAKE

(Hands Bushy-Tail a business card) Call me this evening

BLIZZARD

Don't be afraid

ORANGINA

BCH

BUSHY-TAIL

What's that?

BLIZZARD

Don't you watch television?

BUSHY-TAIL

No

SNOWFLAKE

"Love Knows no Fear"

BLIZZARD

Definitely give it a watch

Outside. Volodya walks along the street looking in shop windows, shivering from the cold. He stops in a store, shakes the snow off his shoulders, looks over the men's clothing then moves on to look at the women's clothing. Looks at the hats, tries on one, another, a third, standing before the mirror, gazing at himself from all possible angles. Takes off the hat, puts it back in its place and walks back out onto the street.

*In the café it's warm. Someone is even dancing;
someone has walked away, another has returned. Someone
is still eating, someone is drinking. Snowflake reads
a book, Snowstorm drinks whiskey on ice, smokes and
people watches.*

SNOWSTORM

I was totally phased out by helplessness, uselessness, moneylessness - I left my wife. I went to another city to live with a friend. I wasn't doing anything at the time, just playing some music, writing some poetry, and I remember how everything just came crashing down on me. I was writing these really gruesome, depressing poems with suicidal overtones. They came under the title of "Me Searching for Glory." They were about this guy lying in a bathtub who slits his wrists and realizes that the only thing tying him to the real world is his girlfriend who he really loves and empathizes with. These poems were colored by the dramatic experiences of a friend of mine - he'd split up with his girlfriend, too. She was a ballerina. And the last line went like this:

She'll return to me, of course,
Some other Monday morn.
But today the end is my goal.
A knife is my compass,
My heart is my atlas.

And then it all ends with a lot of howling. The only things I had to my name were a towel, three books, forty rubles and 200 records. Two hundred records was the sum of my life. That's the exalted state I lived in at the time. I was a genuine maniac. A maniac of despair.

MANIAC

(Peering over Snowflake's shoulder) What are you reading?

SNOWFLAKE

I'm rereading Nabokov.

MANIAC

You break my heart. That's my favorite writer.

LENOCHKA

So what do you do when you're not working?

MANIAC

I swim. That's why I have big shoulders

ORANGINA

That's beautiful (*Takes Maniac's photo.*)

BLIZZARD

I like track and field, myself

LENOCHKA

You run fast?

BLIZZARD

I wanted to run to the sun when I was a kid

MANIAC

What is that food you're eating?

BLIZZARD

Bread, mushrooms and cheese

MANIAC

I've got greens of some sort

LENOCHKA

Vitamins

MANIAC

I wonder who the first guy to eat greens was

LENOCHKA

Our neighbors used to complain to my mother that I sniffed the grass

SNOWFLAKE

You get in trouble?

LENOCHKA

She says, what do you sniff grass for?

MANIAC

Really

SNOWSTORM

My mom still has no idea that I smoke and use psychotropics

BLIZZARD

Is that already a beer you're drinking?

SNOWSTORM

Beer and coffee

LENOCHKA

Ooh, yuck

MANIAC

What are your blinies with?

SNOWFLAKE

Kiwi and strawberries

LENOCHKA

Mine are with chocolate

ORANGINA

Mine are with honey and lemon juice

SNOWSTORM

Don't non-conformists live well?

MANIAC

But we die young

Volodya walks along the street outside, stops in front of a woman's lingerie store, goes inside, warms up his hands, looks at his watch, gets embarrassed, leaves, goes back in the opposite direction, enters the previous store, tries on hats again - one, another, a third. Finally chooses one and buys it, puts it on and goes back out on the street.

In the café the six pay their bill and prepare to leave. Someone washes his hands, others endlessly keep putting things on while somebody helps someone else put something on.

BUSHY-TAIL

(Looking over the business card. To Orangina, who takes her picture) What do you do?

ORANGINA

I'm a designer. I make everything beautiful. You know how that is?

BUSHY-TAIL

(Nodding in the direction of Maniac) What about him?

MANIAC

I have the luxury of doing nothing whatsoever at the moment.
Sometimes my friend and I (*embraces Blizzard*) hire prostitutes
and we film it on video

*Blizzard gags. Bushy-Tail's eyes get real big.
Orangina takes advantage of the moment and photographs
it.*

LENOCHKA

Ooh, yuck

SNOWFLAKE

That's his stupid idea of a joke

BLIZZARD

Want some chewing gum?

LENOCHKA

Is it strawberry?

ORANGINA

My favorite

SNOWFLAKE

My perfume is strawberry

SNOWSTORM

I've been wondering how come it smells so sweetly of
strawberries

LENOCHKA

*(Takes the chewing gum from Blizzard's hand and then takes his
hand in hers)* What an interesting hand. Now, now, now, now, now
- let's look at this in the light

MANIAC

What about me?

SNOWSTORM

Do you believe in palm readings?

MANIAC

Tell my fortune

BLIZZARD

What do you see?

MANIAC

What are you looking so hard for there?

SNOWSTORM

Careful, Lena. He's jumpy

LENOCHKA

You have a very strange life line

BLIZZARD

Why?

LENOCHKA

Because it breaks off

BLIZZARD

Okay -

SNOWSTORM

So now you live on with the weight of this painful paranoia hanging over you

MANIAC

How much time does he have left?

LENOCHKA

You have about -

MANIAC

The years are numbered

BLIZZARD

(Pulls his hand away, hugs it to him) Knock it off. I don't want to know.

LENOCHKA

I realize, you probably shouldn't do that

SNOWFLAKE

That's serious stuff

ORANGINA

You have a beautiful T-shirt. What's that written on it?

LENOCHKA

Angels don't weep

ORANGINA

What about yours?

SNOWSTORM

Masturbating is no crime

MANIAC

What do you think?

ORANGINA

I think it's a sin

Snowstorm has left, but he comes back.

SNOWSTORM

I forgot my case

BUSHY-TAIL

I thought I saw someone forgot a case

SNOWSTORM

(Picking up his case) That was me

BUSHY-TAIL

(To Snowstorm) I forgot, what's your name?

SNOWSTORM

Blizzard

BLIZZARD

Blizzard - that's me. He's Snowstorm. "There once lived two fine friends - Snowstorm and Blizzard." You know that song?

BUSHY-TAIL

No

BLIZZARD

That's about us. He wrote the lyrics. I wrote the music

SNOWSTORM

But we'll sing that for you another time

BUSHY-TAIL

How come you have such funny names?

MANIAC

Because they're homosexuals

BLIZZARD

He's joking

SNOWSTORM

Does that bother you?

BUSHY-TAIL

I don't care

SNOWSTORM

Somebody gimme a smoke

BLIZZARD

Here

MANIAC

You like to dominate?

BUSHY-TAIL

(Remaining alone. Looks over the business card) In the Far North there's never anything to do. There's nothing except theater. And in the Far North women really dress up beautifully to go the theater. It's not like here. People here just wear whatever they wore to work when they come to the theater. Where I come from, women put on evening gowns and jewelry, and they never fail to put on heels. When you walk to the theater the fresh sea air comes in and it smells like fresh-cut cucumbers. That means the fishermen are beginning to sell their day's catch of smelt - that's a kind of fish. It smells like fresh cucumbers.

The six are out on the street. They head in the direction of the office, slowly, deliberately, taking their time, chewing their gum, looking around, sometimes just stopping and standing there. Once again, someone forgot something, so they went back to get it. Someone puts on glasses, someone else takes something off and asks another to try it on. They exchange clothing and laugh, looking at their reflections in storefront windows and car windshields. Someone pulls out a make-up case, someone else steps off to the side and talks on their cell phone.

SNOWSTORM

Unlike you I simply have no talent for talking to women. For some reason I start lying immediately

BLIZZARD

You just have to think that they have nothing you want

SNOWSTORM

But that's not true

MANIAC

Just pretend it is

BLIZZARD

Coffee, ice cream with mint and don't look 'em in the eye

SNOWSTORM

I do just the opposite. I look deep into their eyes

BLIZZARD

She'll think, "how come he's not looking at me"

MANIAC

You look at 'em later

SNOWSTORM

I made a date for dinner with this one girl. I call her up and confirm and then I come to pick her up and call her and she hangs up on me

MANIAC

What the hell are you confirming? Dinner dates aren't office jobs, you know

BLIZZARD

Did you talk to her about love?

SNOWSTORM

What's there to say about love on the phone?

LENOCHKA

Women don't accept commands

ORANGINA

Women only understand presents and aromas

MANIAC

Women have to listen to everything all the time, to convince themselves and others that they are wanted 24/7. That used to be done by letters, now it's telephones and text messages

BLIZZARD

People have started hiding behind text messages

MANIAC

Orgasm. Sex only in words, only in text messages. Without that you've got a temper tantrum

BLIZZARD

Her underwear didn't match her eyes

MANIAC

And she already wore that dress last time

BLIZZARD

To another restaurant

MANIAC

And not with him

LENOCHKA

You are exceedingly cynical

MANIAC

I can't deny what's true

They ascend in a transparent glass elevator, shake off the snow, take off their gloves, mittens, caps, and scarves and wipe off their foggy glasses.

LENOCHKA

Sex for men is a sport

MANIAC

The kind of sex where you go and come - that strikes me as something savage. You kind of want something more

ORANGINA

Everyone dreams of happiness

MANIAC

Or of sex

SNOWFLAKE

Is there anything sacred in your life, Maniac?

MANIAC

No. You can't serve God and mammon. You can't sit on two chairs at once

LENOCHKA

Snowstorm, are you married?

SNOWSTORM

No

LENOCHKA

Why not?

MANIAC

When the evaluations begin - all these "are you married, I'm not married" - that's it. From there on even the slightest minus becomes a huge tragedy. Everything should be absolutely ideal

SNOWSTORM

I've got some numbers in my cell phone belonging to girls who send me messages sometimes. Most of them are exes, women I've been involved with. Sometimes I have sex with them

BLIZZARD

It can happen to anyone

ORANGINA

But not everyone

BLIZZARD

Sometimes it's really hard to jive different sex drives

ORANGINA

You've got to understand them to do that

The café. Volodya drinks an espresso. Bushy-Tail eats pistachios out of his bowl.

BUSHY-TAIL

So what was she afraid of? You were telling

VOLODYA

She was ashamed of me because she said I was just a sergeant

BUSHY-TAIL

(Impressed) You're a sergeant?

VOLODYA

First I was a junior sergeant. Then, after 14 days, I made senior sergeant

BUSHY-TAIL

That fast?

VOLODYA

For service to my country. When I was out on a mission. True, they wanted to discharge me later, 'cause I wasn't the only one who got a promotion. We were out celebrating that. And nobody ever celebrated big events like that without me. I ripped off my stripes and I said, leave me alone - I'll just be a regular soldier. But they changed their minds later. Before the army I studied agriculture in college.

BUSHY-TAIL

Isn't that something

The office. People walk around and leave. Five people sit at five desks, working at their computers. Snowstorm keeps dancing. He's wearing silver headphones. People are drinking coffee and tea, others feed the gold fish. Snowflake and Blizzard are having their make-up done. Orangina takes photos as someone is hooking wires up to something. Maniac signs pieces of paper as others come and go.

SNOWFLAKE

If a man and a woman come to an agreement, then, yes, mutual understanding of some kind is possible

MANIAC

Nobody understands anybody. Everybody only understands their own desires

BLIZZARD

Eat, drink and sleep

SNOWSTORM

It's hard for anyone to see beyond the end of his own nose

LENOCHKA

The only thing anyone knows well is what he wants

SNOWFLAKE

If someone can clearly define his desire, then something may come of it

MANIAC

What if he wants sex? Does he get it?

SNOWFLAKE

What if he wants a fairy tale?

LENOCHKA

Rules are what we want

SNOWFLAKE

We don't do things by consensus, we just follow our feelings

LENOCHKA

Irrationality is a woman's only logic

BLIZZARD

(*To Orangina*) Admit it. That's true

MANIAC

Let's go to my place and watch a movie

LENOCHKA

That's the second "yes" a woman says: If a woman agrees to go to the movies, then that's all she wrote

MANIAC

If only

BLIZZARD

For love a woman must have three things

SNOWFLAKE

What?

BLIZZARD

First, a stopwatch

LENOCHKA

Why's that?

BLIZZARD

So as not to open her mouth for more than six seconds

MANIAC

Forget all that la-la-la bla-bla-bla chicky-chicky sis-boom-bah

BLIZZARD

Remember: you have only six seconds. Men understand only short, unambiguous commands

MANIAC

And don't back a man into a corner

BLIZZARD

Family life is just like life on the job. Right-left, gimme your hand, sit, when, how much, and where. Wednesday evening, Tuesday. I can make it Wednesday, Wednesday at five, all right

LENOCHKA

What's the second?

BLIZZARD

The second is a black belt

SNOWFLAKE

Karate?

BLIZZARD

A classic black belt

ORANGINA

What's the third?

MANIAC

The third is that there is only one foreign language. And you have to learn it

BLIZZARD

That language is called the male language. You have to learn to speak to men in their own language

LENOCHKA

How do you learn it?

BLIZZARD

You simply have to forget Russian. And learn three phrases. These three phrases are very difficult to pronounce. (*Counts off on his fingers.*) I'll wait for you. I love you. I kiss you. And then in the opposite order. Kiss you. Love you. Waiting for you.

MANIAC

And no philosophical, psychological or religious conversations

LENOCHKA

Why not?

MANIAC

It's forbidden

BLIZZARD

One way or another, they lead to fights

LENOCHKA

What do you talk about then?

MANIAC

You have to understand each other without words

SNOWFLAKE

But understanding is very difficult

MANIAC

There's a lot of zeroes on the end

SNOWFLAKE

A man and a woman can understand each other on an animalistic level, that they want each other, that they want tenderness and understanding

LENOCHKA

They themselves don't know what that means

SNOWFLAKE

It's all very mystifying

Bushy-Tail and Volodya walk down the street.

VOLODYA

I was christened when I was sixteen years old. I was big. I believe everything that has anything to do with God. Do you?

BUSHY-TAIL

Yes, I do believe

VOLODYA

I went into the army and I had this cross. I lost it in combat training. I lost my cross. Basically all we did was beat each other's faces in. And then a week later at five in the morning we get into formation in the yard in full combat dress and they do the roll call and say, "You're going to Chechnya." You don't question orders. On the runway at the airport this guy approached us. He says, "You guys are going on a mission and I've got crosses for you. Only I don't have enough for everybody." It goes without saying that I didn't get one. There were 54 of us. We didn't have enough ammunition to go around. Naturally, there wasn't enough for me. They passed me over. But all I could think of is that I didn't have a cross. And with no ammo all that stuff just starts to overwhelm you. Bad, bad thoughts.

BUSHY-TAIL

How could you not have ammunition?

VOLODYA

They gave me some later. Later on there was plenty of everything. One day we were cleaning out one house. It was obvious Russians lived there. There was a small icon right where you'd expect one to be in the corner of the room. The place looked like a hurricane hit it. We went in, looked around and I sat down on a chair. I felt something poking me underneath. I stood up and looked and there was this cross lying there. So, you see? I found one. I haven't taken it off since.

BUSHY-TAIL

They say you shouldn't wear someone else's cross.

VOLODYA

Yeah, I've heard that; about taking on somebody else's sins. But I found that one there and I've had no problem. After that luck was on my side. A grenade blew up three feet from me and I didn't have a scratch. I don't know if that was a fluke or what. Everybody thought I was dead meat but it didn't even touch me. Except I went deaf for awhile. Not a scratch. And now I've met you.

Volodya and Bushy-Tail stand at the entrance to her apartment building. Bushy-Tail says goodbye and goes in. Volodya continues to stand there as if he's waiting for something.

The six stand in a parking lot. Snow is falling and all of them are gesturing in different directions as they discuss who will ride with whom in whose car. Everyone approaches his or her own car. Maniac invites everyone to pile into his; Blizzard invites all to join him in his. The women laugh as they decide which car to get in and the men try pulling them in their direction. Blizzard and Maniac clean the snow off their cars. Maniac's car is red, Blizzard's is white. The doors are now open, music can be heard from the cars and everybody is dancing in the snow as they wait for the engines to warm up. It emerges that Maniac's car is an Alpha-Romeo, Blizzard's is a Lexus. Snowflake and Lenchka get into the Alpha-Romeo, Orangina and Snowstorm get into the back seat of the Lexus. They drive off.

Bushy-Tail's apartment. Bushy-Tail pulls a box out of her closet - in it is a new pair of black shoes, a white dress and fancy earrings. She looks over Snowflake's business card. Makes a telephone call. Somewhere on the other end of the city the music from The Umbrellas of Cherbourg can be heard.

The Lexus. Blizzard, Snowstorm and Orangina.

BLIZZARD

(Turning up the music) What do you think of this?

ORANGINA

I like it

BLIZZARD

The female organism also differs from the male in that speakers affect it differently

SNOWSTORM

Women feel physical pleasure from this music

ORANGINA

I had this terrible dream that I was dancing all wrong

BLIZZARD

You dance and you dance and there's no point to it

SNOWSTORM

Except that it feels great

ORANGINA

Will you teach me how?

BLIZZARD

Just stand in front of the mirror and dance

SNOWSTORM

You have to make friends with your body. Your own. Since you've been given a body, you might as well live in harmony with it. It's so cool to be able to glide across the floor

BLIZZARD

I used to have a great body. I wanted to be a bodybuilder and compete in competitions with the Arnold Schwarzenegger technique. No anabolic steroids. I loved looking at myself in the mirror. I looked like that statue of Apollo

SNOWSTORM

It's hard to move well if you don't love yourself

BLIZZARD

And if you don't like the way you are when you dance

ORANGINA

When I dance at least I stop thinking

BLIZZARD

So what is it you think about all the time?

ORANGINA

I'm constantly haunted by thoughts that maybe I'm not living right

Snowstorm's knee accidentally comes to rest against Orangina's knee. She pulls her leg away.

The Lexus catches up with the Alpha-Romeo and begins to pass it. Orangina's knee falls against Snowstorm's knee. Blizzard sees this in the rear-view mirror and Orangina tries to pull away. As the car turns Orangina falls over into Snowstorm's lap.

BLIZZARD

(Smiling) Are we lacking excitement in our lives?

SNOWSTORM

Excitement can appear only when you don't expect it. When you chill out and just live, boldly, putting nothing into parentheses

The Alpha-Romeo. Maniac, Snowflake and Lenochka.

MANIAC

The most exhilarating moment in my life was when my brother took me up in a supersonic jet. Now that was something.

SNOWFLAKE

Wasn't it scary?

MANIAC

It was thrilling. It made me want to sing. But everything inside me was all churned upside down as if I was no longer me and my body wasn't mine. The only thought I had in my mind was - God, I hope I don't barf

SNOWFLAKE

And you call that the most exhilarating moment in your life?

MANIAC

Nothing can compare to it

LENOCHKA

Music sometimes does that to me

MANIAC

There was this time when I had just returned from a BASE jumping competition and it was my mother's birthday. She asked me to bring over a video of it to show the guests. So I do. And this one guy comes up to me and he asks, "Why do you do this?"

SNOWFLAKE

Really

LENOCHKA

Why do you?

MANIAC

Well, this is what I say to him: "See, when I come right to the edge and I look down from the top of a cliff or a skyscraper with my toes hanging over, my heart stops and my breath stops and I think - now I'm going to go and jump

SNOWFLAKE

Why would you do that?

MANIAC

That's just what he asked me

LENOCHKA

Adrenalin rushes, the psychological wounds of childhood and inferiority complexes all take on extreme forms

MANIAC

I wondered about it myself for a long time. Everybody has dreams of a material kind, hopes to achieve material prosperity. But why do you live? Take a step out there on the edge and you instantly understand why

The Lexus is caught in a traffic jam.

BLIZZARD

This world is so chaotic and futile, you have to know how to distance yourself from it. There are so many things to do in life that you waste all your energy on everything at once instead of focusing on one specific thing. But life was granted to us so we could extract the maximum enjoyment from it. Comfort is the true fetish of the 21st century. So when you fall in love you have to do it with comfort in mind. You have to be relaxed together.

ORANGINA

Every person strives for harmony in life

SNOWSTORM

Or at least for inner tranquility

BLIZZARD

The Japanese know the secret of love. It's comfort. I dream of having a Japanese woman

SNOWSTORM

Me, I like plump women with glasses and a young kid

ORANGINA

Every woman in the world wants to lose weight

The Alfa-Romeo. Also stuck in a traffic jam.

MANIAC

Look around at people. Why do you think they jump? Because the most awesome high a person can get is to rise above his own self. Lenchka, conquer that wild beast in you that arises from savage fear! The sensation you get when you jump is like turning somersaults

LENOCHKA

Where did you learn to do that?

MANIAC

I used to be really fat and I weighed 300 pounds. Blizzard and I started taking private lessons in acrobatics. We wanted to fly freely and sublimely. And I lost weight.

SNOWFLAKE

How many times have you jumped?

MANIAC

I'd guess about 80

LENOCHKA

You're kidding?

MANIAC

Oh, that's no big deal

SNOWFLAKE

Some countries have banned it as suicidal

MANIAC

Every person who jumps from four different objects gets his own number. Maybe I'll get my own number soon. By the time I get to 835...

LENOCHKA

Orangina lives in apartment number 835

MANIAC

Maybe 834

LENOCHKA

No, Blizzard lives in 834

SNOWFLAKE

You mean they're neighbors already? I didn't know that

LENOCHKA

Everything everywhere has numbers on it

MANIAC

Then maybe it's something else

SNOWFLAKE

There are so many sick people in the world

LENOCHKA

Is it true you don't have a safety chute?

MANIAC

No safety chute and no insurance

SNOWFLAKE

You must have some philosophy about that

MANIAC

My philosophy is that, sooner or later, all of us will be
smashed to death against a cliff

SNOWFLAKE

Isn't that lovely

LENOCHKA

Are you a good BASE jumper?

MANIAC

A good BASE jumper is a live BASE jumper

SNOWFLAKE

He's crazy. Did you know that even his hands glow in the dark?

LENOCHKA

Yeah, he shows that to everyone

MANIAC

Blizzard and I once got drunk on champagne and we did a two-way
jump

LENOCHKA

Together?

SNOWFLAKE

I'd never jump

MANIAC

What about with me?

SNOWFLAKE

Not in your dreams

MANIAC

Snowflake, I'm beginning to wonder if you're a conformist at heart

SNOWFLAKE

Is that so bad?

LENOCHKA

You don't have any principles at all

MANIAC

You think I don't have any principles? Man, it's you that doesn't have any principles

LENOCHKA

Yes, I don't have any principles, but that's because I get new ones every day. We live in an accelerated age. Everything is speeding up

MANIAC

Speeding up for some, slowing down for others

SNOWFLAKE

It's all so confusing

The street. Bushy-Tail rides a tram car. Looks out the window.

Maniac's apartment. An enormous amount of people in constant, chaotic motion. Smoke. Music. Someone's dancing. Someone isn't. Someone's watching a DVD. The girls are changing clothes, pulling new things out of bags, brushing their hair, rebrushing their hair, putting on make-up, redoing their make-up. Bushy-Tail enters, looks around, takes off her coat. Nobody pays her any attention. Bushy-Tail, on the contrary, misses nothing. She's transfixed by everything she sees, her eyes open wide as she looks for a familiar face in the crowd. She recognizes Blizzard, then Orangina and sees Maniac, Snowflake and Lenchka in various places. She

listens carefully to the conversations going on around her.

BLIZZARD

(In the bathroom, shaving his head bald) I'm in a mood like roulette - betting on red but the ball doesn't fall

ORANGINA

(Photographing the process) You have really sharp mood swings, up and down, up and down

BLIZZARD

Is it that obvious?

ORANGINA

It's really irritating

MANIAC

(On his telephone) Six feet? How much is it from the blast pipe to the blister fairing? Wow -

SNOWFLAKE

(On her phone) You're so cool about your decision it's absurd

SNOWSTORM

(Leafing through a magazine, going into the bathroom) Would you do me a tattoo?

BLIZZARD

I've been wanting to do one for a year

SNOWSTORM

Me for three

SNOWFLAKE

Maybe you're ready but I'm not

MANIAC

Federal? Then that's clear

SNOWSTORM

What ideas do you have?

BLIZZARD

I dream about these ideas - birds, patterns, dragons

SNOWFLAKE

Just because you want to isn't enough. Nothing can come of nothing

MANIAC

All right-all right. But where's the guarantee they don't decide at the last minute that some cosmonaut would be better?

SNOWFLAKE

Well, you can think so if you want to

MANIAC

What can I say, man? You're cool

LENOCHKA

(On her phone) Listen, I can't spend my whole life in the process of creating this thing

BLIZZARD

(In the bathroom) I had this dream about Vladimir Vysotsky. I had that dream and I said - that's it! I'll do Vyotsky's profile on my chest!

MANIAC

No, I can't say as I'm ready for that. That came out of the blue

SNOWSTORM

You gonna do Marina Vlady on your back?

BLIZZARD

Yeah, I already set aside a hundred dollars

MANIAC

How much you need? 60 thou? Yeah, I got it, I hear what you said

SNOWFLAKE

No, I'm not depressed. I've got too much to do, to be depressed. I'll give you a call if that happens

MANIAC

Can you put that in an email? Get it off to me today

LENOCHKA

You can redo it 60 times over but it still isn't going to be right! Everybody's so damn smart. Did you think I was going to go slit my wrists in the bathtub?

MANIAC

Those fighter jets are his? Holy shit! (*Laughs hysterically.*)

SNOWFLAKE

A woman can't only give with her body. She has to give with her head, too

LENOCHKA

If you like it, dig it. If you don't, get over and get on with it!

MANIAC

Is he offering anything under the table?

BLIZZARD

(*In the bathroom*) Is that a nice skull?

SNOWSTORM

You want a skull tattoo?

SNOWFLAKE

It's the eternal problem - the battle of reason and feeling

MANIAC

So what you're saying is basically everything revolves around these fighter jets

SNOWFLAKE

I have no idea what to do

MANIAC

All right, okay. There's people waiting here

BLIZZARD

This tattoo drove me wild

MANIAC

Our project was accepted on the federal level. The President just signed off on it

BLIZZARD

That's hot shit

MANIAC

It's perfectly logical

SNOWSTORM

What's the project?

MANIAC

It's secret

BLIZZARD

Then you'll read about it tomorrow in the papers

SNOWFLAKE

Are you going off into space?

MANIAC

Unlike you, when I go, I'll go on travel orders

The six walk along the street with Bushy-Tail. They duck into a night club of some sort, passing by a long line. Neon lights flicker as they pass through face-control. Lenchka shows signs of nervousness, Snowflake keeps talking on her phone. Strobe lights, a bar, the dance floor, bathrooms, sofas, pillows, the bar, dance floor, bathrooms, the street - and so it goes until morning. Orangina photographs Bushy-Tail.

SNOWFLAKE

(On her phone) Are we talking about the ideal man? All men say it doesn't happen like that

LENOCHKA

(To Bushy-Tail) You show too much of your personal self in your facial expressions

SNOWFLAKE

"Just like that," as Assol said in *Scarlet Sails*

BUSHY-TAIL

What do you mean?

ORANGINA

Signs of a good upbringing

BUSHY-TAIL

Is that bad?

LENOCHKA

It could cause problems. But it might not

BLIZZARD

(Looking at himself in the mirror) I've already tried on a coupla different kinds of crosses. I didn't want anything ostentatious, nothing with gold chains, you know

MANIAC

Well, that one's just right

SNOWFLAKE

I always sit and cry when I watch that film. God, I love it

MANIAC

Are you macho?

BLIZZARD

Macho sometimes. You gotta always be ready. I can turn on the tough-guy

SNOWFLAKE

Over 35, smart. No, I don't admit the possibility of a man without brains

BLIZZARD

Sometimes I'm as soft as a baby's kiss

LENOCHKA

(Looking at Bushy-Tail) A whole utopia of feminine innocence and female infantility

BLIZZARD

I'm a prince. Really. In fact.

MANIAC

Weak, jumpy and jaded

LENOCHKA

You have to awaken men's pity. You know? But as a child, not as a woman. Make them want to feed you, put you to bed, kiss you tenderly on the forehead and rub iodine on your banged-up knees

BUSHY-TAIL

Why?

LENOCHKA

That's what all women want

BLIZZARD

And men

MANIAC

Everybody wants back in the womb

BUSHY-TAIL

Yesterday a couple got married at our church. They were really young. They were all surrounded by little kids and then all the old women ran up to congratulate them. It was really beautiful

MANIAC

A woman's imagination is excited by a prince on a white horse and a wedding with fleurs d'orange at 20, at 30 and at 60

LENOCHKA

Which is entirely natural

MANIAC

(*Sniffing the air*) And howling winds blow the sands of Morocco past our faces

BUSHY-TAIL

It smells just like autumn leaves

LENOCHKA

Only don't start smoking here

SNOWFLAKE

If you smoke next to her you are liable to be blinded by a flash of bright light. You can be injured or burned

MANIAC

I've finally figured it out. I'm going to be a homosexual

LENOCHKA

Why do you say that?

SNOWFLAKE

Don't accept sin into your heart

MANIAC

You're not going to be jealous of men, are you?

SNOWFLAKE

(*In Maniac's direction*) Only don't be obsessive about it

BLIZZARD

We'll just try it on for size

Volodya's apartment. The alarm clock rings. Volodya gets up, washes, does his exercises. Turns on the iron, irons his shirt and his pants, checking the folds on his pants leg.

The street. Maniac, Snowstorm and Blizzard. They smoke. It's snowing. It's cold. Snowstorm has stripped off his shirt, baring his breast to the elements. Steam rises from his body.

MANIAC

(Clapping Blizzard on his bald head) Looks good on you. You're the man

BLIZZARD

That's not what's important

SNOWSTORM

What's important for you?

BLIZZARD

I myself don't know. *(Looks over his life line.)* The funniest thing about it is - my life line really does break off. It used to be really long and all normal, but now it's like there's this white spot all over my palm

MANIAC

Oh, screw that

SNOWSTORM

Go wash your hands

BLIZZARD

Easy for you to say

SNOWSTORM

Nobody's got a guarantee

BLIZZARD

You've gotta be ready for death at any moment

MANIAC

Now that's my warrior, that's my samurai

BLIZZARD

What if Lenchka's a sorceress? She's got a really heavy eye

MANIAC

Have you ever noticed her eyes are different colors?

SNOWSTORM

Like David Bowie

BLIZZARD

Come on, get off it. It's time to get back to the grindstone
(*Heads back in the other direction.*)

MANIAC

Only please don't be late

BLIZZARD

(*Digs through Snowflake's purse, spritzes on her perfume*) I'm
going to make one more strategic move

SNOWFLAKE

Just don't drown yourself in that stuff

ORANGINA

Who are you doing that for?

BLIZZARD

I have an interview

SNOWFLAKE

Be careful. Never say what you really think

BLIZZARD

Why not?

SNOWFLAKE

Because everything changes so fast

BLIZZARD

(*He's all dressed. Tosses keys to Snowstorm*) I'll be back around
10 or 12. (*To Orangina.*) Will you get Snowstorm back to my
place?

ORANGINA

All right.

MANIAC

Lemme give you a kiss on the forehead

SNOWSTORM

Come on, let's hit it!

BLIZZARD

This is called taking a leap into reality

PART TWO

AWE

Blizzard walks out onto the street. Breathes in the fresh air. Claps himself on the pockets and realizes he forgot his cell phone. Thinks. Decides not to go back. Pulls eye drops out of his pocket and releases drops into his eyes. Wipes off the tears and goes looking for his car. He vaguely remembers where he parked it. Puts on his Gucci sunglasses and checks out the people walking by, hurrying to work in the morning. He smiles at everyone, delights at a simple sunbeam as if he were a paragon of virtue who loves all people and nature too. Big, fat snowflakes hit him in the face.

BLIZZARD

We live in a very severe country. Wherever nature has beauty, it's a severe beauty. Very severe. If there is friendship, it's severe. Too. Our people are genuine heroes who live - by living their lives. They are very severe people, I would say they are severe in the extreme. Their life journeys - are very severe. And exalted. No sentimentality. No indulgences. People here have always had hard lives. The guy who founded Moscow. And the guy who founded St. Petersburg. (*Smokes. Thinks.*) Want me to tell you a story about my life? A real, severe life story. A tale of grief, despair, manic-depressive psychosis, sin, debilitating passions and addictions that have come to us from infernal hell itself. Write it down, give people a chance to read it, a tale of weakness and strength, of tears, my heart, fears, love, Adam and Eve, warmth and cold, black and white. I'll tell you what real whiteness is; when a man no longer sees his own arms and legs, when the whiteness blinds his eyes and he goes blind, goes blind forever. In order to die right here and be reborn. Pure and innocent. Like the white, newly driven snow.

Blizzard is covered in snow. He comes out of his reverie but can't find his car. He has no idea where he left it. Keeps looking, finally finds it. Standing next to his Lexus is Volodya. He carefully looks over the license plate then carefully looks over Blizzard.

VOLODYA

This your Lexus?

BLIZZARD

Yes

VOLODYA

(Shows his badge) May I see your ID?

BLIZZARD

Sure. My pleasure

VOLODYA

(Looking over Blizzard's ID) Open up your trunk

Blizzard opens his trunk.

Orangina, Lenochka, Snowflake, Maniac and Snowstorm with Bushy-Tail. They lie around on rugs and pillows, drink tea from China tea cups and smoke a hookah. The girls' bared shoulders sparkle with glitter, Snowstorm's head lies on Orangina's stomach, she combs his long locks with her fingers.

ORANGINA

No matter what you say I'm always the man in relationships. I always make the decisions because men are weak, regardless of how physically imposing they might be

LENOCHKA

They're all a bunch of unflappable wolves

SNOWFLAKE

They are utter babes

LENOCHKA

They play with their toys and think they are the center of the universe

ORANGINA

A man is a babe is a babe is a babe and then, suddenly, he's an old geezer

SNOWFLAKE

They are incurably infantile

LENOCHKA

No, I don't need men at all. I can't even think about men any more

SNOWFLAKE

Men should not be thought about at all

BUSHY-TAIL

What's that supposed to mean?

SNOWFLAKE

You have to play with them. If you think they are thinking, think again - they are thinking something else entirely

LENOCHKA

Or they aren't thinking at all

SNOWFLAKE

A man is not susceptible to being remade. You've got to take him in the bag he comes in and then just put him where you need him

ORANGINA

On the other hand, how can you do without a man?

SNOWFLAKE

You can become a lesbian

LENOCHKA

You can give yourself up to total nihilism

SNOWFLAKE

But that's carrying it too far

Lenochka's phone rings but she doesn't answer it.

MANIAC

Husband?

LENOCHKA

He's no husband. He's a cad. A maniac.

SNOWFLAKE

How many times have I warned you? Don't ever admit anything. We deny everything.

LENOCHKA

But he's the one who said only the truth can save our relationship (*Cries.*)

ORANGINA

Lenochka - fresh air and fresh fruit

SNOWFLAKE

Here, I can give you a pill

LENOCHKA

What is it?

SNOWFLAKE

Why can't a person just have a regular pill, a tranquilizer?

LENOCHKA

Will it help?

SNOWFLAKE

In twenty minutes

MANIAC

(*To Bushy-Tail*) People suffer from a lack of understanding of their own sexuality and by the age of 30 they lose their mind incontrovertibly

SNOWFLAKE

Every person thinks in his or her own box

MANIAC

A hotbed of psychic ailments

LENOCHKA

A global failure to communicate

MANIAC

This is horrible, what they're saying here. Just horrible

ORANGINA

It's incontestable

MANIAC

A bunch of old wives' tales and laundromat philosophy. A gaggle of amateurs!

BUSHY-TAIL

(Distracted, looking out the window) They predicted it would snow by late morning and, sure enough, it began snowing late in the morning.

SNOWFLAKE

Snow white white

ORANGINA

As white as white can be

LENOCHKA

I have the sensation we are flying upwards

BUSHY-TAIL

Where I come from in Siberia nobody ever clears the snow away. They just clear out narrow passages. The snow drifts stand higher than a person's head. And people there don't walk like they do here. There they kind of shuffle their feet. Because they are used to spending so much time walking on ice. It's always cold and dark and people light fires and they don't ever complain to anyone. That's because they think it's like that the whole world over. Life there's hard.

The street. Volodya and Blizzard stand by the Lexus. Volodya looks through the trunk. Blizzard looks at his watch and at Volodya. He clearly has begun to be nervous.

VOLODYA

You can close it now

Blizzard closes the trunk.

Take off your glasses

Blizzard takes off his sun glasses. They stare each other in the eye.

(Putting Blizzard's ID into his pocket.) You're coming with me down to the station.

They go.

Lenochka, Maniac, Snowflake, Orangina, Bushy-Tail and Snowstorm. They meandered and danced and talked but they never got tired. Finally they begin collecting

*their things, putting on their coats, paying the bill,
looking at their watches.*

MANIAC

(*To the girls*) Want some candy?

LENOCHKA

Is it good?

ORANGINA

The colored ones taste better than the solids

MANIAC

(*Studying the wrapper*) The colored ones are more interesting

SNOWFLAKE

It's all chemicals and nothing else

MANIAC

What is benzoate nitrate?

ORANGINA

What is modified starch?

SNOWSTORM

Just what I wanted

LENOCHKA

The first time I ever ate these things I nearly gagged on all the sugar, I just gagged on it

MANIAC

And if you leave them out a little bit then they really get like rubber

SNOWSTORM

I had these friends who were taking some concoction for bodybuilding and they mixed something else in there, too. You'd drink that stuff and, man, you'd instantly love everybody, 'cause everybody was suddenly so smart and so cool

SNOWFLAKE

Try drinking that alone

LENOCHKA

I can't do it

MANIAC

I did and I threw up

SNOWSTORM

Everybody throws up at first

MANIAC

Basically, there is no reason to love people

LENOCHKA

Yeah, but you have to

MANIAC

By nature people are vile and greedy

BUSHY-TAIL

I love people, though

ORANGINA

Those are your rose-colored glasses talking

MANIAC

My friends would take those tranquilizers they give cats before taking them on a trip. Turns out those things are really strong psychotropics

SNOWFLAKE

Man, what people won't take

LENOCHKA

And why, is what I want to know

ORANGINA

I read about this one guy who specially raised jellyfish in an aquarium and then he'd dry them and eat them

SNOWSTORM

This other guy would catch scorpions, rip off their tails, dry them and smoke them

LENOCHKA

The historical record shows that there were people who ate nothing but clay

SNOWFLAKE

Or nothing at all

LENOCHKA

I've read that clay is teeming with life

MANIAC

Everything is teeming with life

ORANGINA

I used to eat dirt when I was a kid. To win bets

MANIAC

I still do that all the time

SNOWSTORM

We're all of us all just the same

The police station. Blizzard is being searched. They unzip his pants and search down his underwear. They pull out a small packet, call over witnesses, run tests, take fingerprints, collect a urine sample - in short, they found drugs.

BLIZZARD

(For the hundredth time) I'm a musician. I'm not an addict. I'm a good guy. I don't deal. It's for my own personal use. I bought it off an Armenian. I'll give you a written pledge not to leave town

VOLODYA

A musician you say

BLIZZARD

I'm just a DJ

VOLODYA

A DJ you say

BLIZZARD

Well, a VJ, actually

VOLODYA

(Sighs) A VJ

BLIZZARD

If you let me go I swear I'll never do it again

VOLODYA

But maybe you will

BLIZZARD

No, I won't. I mean, I don't know if I will or I won't. But I don't want to

VOLODYA

We're going to have to search you

BLIZZARD

I don't have anything on me

VOLODYA

You know for sure you don't?

BLIZZARD

(Thinks) For sure

VOLODYA

If you don't then maybe I'll let you go

Maniac's apartment. Snowflake and Maniac enter and walk around. They lie down on the bed without taking off their coats or shoes. They are very far from each other. And silent. Snowflake closes her eyes, it's like she's already asleep. Maniac gets up, turns on the television.

SNOWFLAKE

(Opening her eyes) Oh God, only not that

MANIAC

(Turns off the television) What then?

SNOWFLAKE

Well do something. You're the jaded one. You know what to do in moments like this. You have such intelligent eyes *(Smiles. Begins to laugh.)*

MANIAC

It's cold. Listen, it's cold in here *(Wraps himself in a blanket and walks around the room.)*

SNOWFLAKE

Want something to drink?

MANIAC

No

SNOWFLAKE

Eat?

MANIAC

No

Cell phones ring. Maniac gathers them up and turns them off.

I'm just not ready to communicate with anyone right now (Walks around, looks through the compact discs and picks one. Turns on some music.)

SNOWFLAKE

Oh, that's nice. That's nice

Maniac lies on the bed. They both lie on the bed listening to music. Silence.

MANIAC

Transcendental meditation. Quasi-physical state

Snowflake smiles, eyes closed.

Almost like we're floating. Such clear thoughts. And so noble. Next to that all these body movements don't mean a thing.

SNOWFLAKE

More illusions

MANIAC

It's been like that for ages. People have known that forever. Our feeble minds can't get a grasp

SNOWFLAKE

Beethoven?

MANIAC

Beethoven

SNOWFLAKE

He's so good

They lie there listening to Beethoven.

Blizzard and Volodya riding in a police car. They look at each other.

BLIZZARD

What's your name?

VOLODYA

Volodya

BLIZZARD

How old are you?

VOLODYA

Twenty-five

BLIZZARD

Say, Volodya, why did you single me out?

VOLODYA

Your eyes

They look each other in the eyes.

BLIZZARD

I've seen you somewhere, but I don't remember where

VOLODYA

Your face is familiar, too, for some reason

BLIZZARD

Maybe on TV?

VOLODYA

I don't watch TV

BLIZZARD

Why not?

VOLODYA

Why should I?

The street. Orangina and Snowstorm get out of a taxi, go up the stairs, get into the elevator. Their bodies frequently touch - knees, hands - but it's always by accident. This continues to embarrass Orangina as they approach her apartment. Orangina is in the full bloom

of a crush. She blushes constantly. Snowstorm is sweeping her, sweeping her, sweeping her off her feet.

SNOWSTORM

I once rented an apartment next to St. Isaac's Cathedral. We dropped a couple of tabs. Basically, popped one or two tabs too many. I headed into the shower but it turned out to be a window. I wasn't used to the place, you know. Fortunately it was on the first floor. I busted out the window and I'm walking around naked, dripping blood. I went out on the square and struck up a conversation with God. We had a long talk there that day.

ORANGINA

And then what?

SNOWSTORM

What else? They locked me up.

ORANGINA

So what did God have to say?

SNOWSTORM

You ought to knock that shit off, Snowstorm.

They're silent. Orangina continues to blush from embarrassment.

You know what was drawn on those tabs?

ORANGINA

What?

SNOWSTORM

Milli Vanilli

ORANGINA

Oh get off it!

SNOWSTORM

It's true. There was this one time they came up to me after a concert and they said, "Listen, Snowstorm, explain psychedelic trances to us and how to become psychedelic trance stars. We want to know."

ORANGINA

And what did you say?

SNOWSTORM

Listen up, dudes. The job's already taken.

ORANGINA

By you?

SNOWSTORM

You'll see that soon enough.

Orangina stands in front of apt. No. 835. Snowstorm pulls out his keys and opens apt. No. 834. Puts down his yellow suitcase. Orangina is nervous, she fumbles with her keys. Snowstorm helps her open the door. Orangina is embarrassed, she doesn't know whether to invite Snowstorm in with her or not. They aren't finding it easy to part, even though she doesn't know what to say.

Remember that guy we were drinking with yesterday?

ORANGINA

Which one was that?

SNOWSTORM

The one with AIDS.

ORANGINA

No, I don't.

SNOWSTORM

I drank vodka out of his beer mug. I only realized later I shouldn't have done that.

ORANGINA

I could have been a lot worse

SNOWSTORM

This is no laughing matter

ORANGINA

God forbid

SNOWSTORM

I probably ought to have a blood test

ORANGINA

It's too early for that

SNOWSTORM

Maybe I can still be cured?

ORANGINA

Your sample will blow people away

SNOWSTORM

They'll turn it over to the cops. The chemical make-up of my blood is irreversibly altered

ORANGINA

And your brain

SNOWSTORM

Yeah. I've got to clean up. Start working out

ORANGINA

Take vitamins

SNOWSTORM

What if they have additives or something?

ORANGINA

Hallucenogenics

SNOWSTORM

Exactly

ORANGINA

Suffering fortifies the soul

SNOWSTORM

I'm a sinner. I don't like suffering

Bushy-Tail's apartment. Bushy-Tails walks about her apartment in a long night-shirt reminiscing about the evening spent with her new friends.

BUSHY-TAIL

It's like I was thrust into a new country where nothing has names yet. Or somebody invited me into a fairy-tale, a real magic kingdom

Volodya and Blizzard stand before the door of Apt. 834.

VOLODYA

This yours?

BLIZZARD

Yes.

Volodya approaches Apt. 835. Music is heard coming from there. Volodya rings the doorbell. Orangina opens the door. Blizzard is rather surprised to see Snowstorm.

VOLODYA

(*Showing his badge*) Police. I need two witnesses

ORANGINA

Where?

VOLODYA

Here

ORANGINA

What happened?

VOLODYA

I have to conduct a search

Orangina, Snowstorm, Blizzard and Volodya enter Apt. 834.

(*Walking about the apartment.*) Let's get to it

Maniac's apartment. Maniac and Snowflake are still lying on the bed with their eyes open.

MANIAC

You sleeping?

SNOWFLAKE

You can sleep in this state?

They are silent.

MANIAC

Somebody told me you went to confession

SNOWFLAKE

Yeah

MANIAC

What did you confess?

SNOWFLAKE

My passionate desire to be liked and to entice and embarrass others. My penchant for listening to narcotic music, for wild dancing, for provocative, voluptuous feelings and for spiritual and psychological obscurantism

MANIAC

Did you explain that that's your job?

SNOWFLAKE

And lots, lots, lots more

MANIAC

And how do you feel now? Did you like it?

SNOWFLAKE

I counted off every man I've been with for the last six months. I remembered every one of their names

MANIAC

They all ought to assemble right here in this room. And hold their silence. With this music playing

SNOWFLAKE

They're all wonderful. I loved every one of them

MANIAC

But the fact is - there are a lot of them and only one of you

SNOWFLAKE

He told me you assimilate into yourself all the people your partners have slept with

MANIAC

You know what telegony is?

SNOWFLAKE

Something to do with television?

MANIAC

You're better off not knowing

They are silent.

SNOWFLAKE

I miss being bold and spontaneous like I used to be

MANIAC

Purse-mascara-lipstick-shoes?

SNOWFLAKE

Well, something like that

MANIAC

What else did he say?

SNOWFLAKE

He said a lot and I cried a lot and I was so confused, the whole room was swimming in tears

MANIAC

What was to cry about?

SNOWFLAKE

I cried because I was so sad, from a sensation of being absolutely alone and abandoned in the world, a complete vacuum, shame, repentance, cold, horror and repulsion

MANIAC

Women are such pious people

SNOWFLAKE

And then he says, "Forget your dream of yourself. God is a jealous God." And my tears dried up. They dried up instantly. And I say, "What did you say? Forget my dream of myself? How do you do that!?"

Blizzard's apartment. Volodya opens and closes desk drawers and closet drawers. He looks everything over at length. Blizzard's entire life is pulled out for everyone to see. Condoms rain down, CDs, vinyl records, guitars, clothing, a synthesizer and miles of cords tumble out and roll on the floor. Speakers, cognac and whiskey bottles, cigarettes, incense, business cards, photos of Blizzard with Alla Pugachyova and Arnold Schwarzenegger, and a photo of a ballerina. Volodya picks up the photo of the ballerina in his hands, looks it over at length. Puts it back in its place. Volodya sees a yellow suitcase. Approaches it. Snowstorm buries his face in his hands. Volodya

opens the case. From it he removes a towel (puts it on the table), three books (puts them on the table one by one), 200 vinyl records (looks them over carefully), 40 rubles (puts the money on the table). Picks up the books. Leaf through them.

VOLODYA

Mikhail Chekhov. Anna Akhmatova. Shakespeare.

A small packet of tablets lies in the Shakespeare volume. Blizzard looks at Snowstorm, Snowstorm at Blizzard.

Wait a minute.

All sit quietly. All are silent.

BLIZZARD

Okay. If I throw all that stuff out the window right now he'll never prove I ever possessed it. These guys will back me up. So I go like this... *(Slowly reaches for the tablets.)*

VOLODYA

In your place. Sit still.

BLIZZARD

I have a face like a monkey. I've got the shakes. Oh my fucking God I'm in shock.

Blizzard leaps up, grabs the packet off the table, opens the window and tries to throw the tablets out the window. They fall on the windowsill and bounce all over the floor. Volodya shoves Blizzard back onto the sofa, pulls his revolver and points it at Blizzard's head.

VOLODYA

What are you doing? Why would you do that? You want a buzz, drink vodka. What is wrong with you junkies? You smoke yourself into oblivion and then you're at each other's throats

Removes his belt and ties Blizzard's hands with it. Gathers the tablets off the floor, counts them and carefully puts them back on the table.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen,

eighteen, nineteen, twenty... twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight... twenty-nine, thirty... one... thirty-two... thirty-three
-

Maniac's apartment. Maniac and Snowflake.

SNOWFLAKE

There's a golden Buddha in your window

MANIAC

That's a Buddhist cathedral

SNOWFLAKE

I thought it was a restaurant

MANIAC

You see nothing but restaurants

SNOWFLAKE

Do you go there?

MANIAC

That's all we need now is Buddhism

SNOWFLAKE

Ooh, look! I can see him sitting there! Is that why you rented this apartment?

MANIAC

Naw, I thought it was a restaurant at first, too

They are silent.

You know, someday I'm going to slip some crushed glass in your food. I'll make you a milkshake for breakfast and I'll slip crushed glass in there. And then I'll freeze you up in a block of ice.

SNOWFLAKE

I'm fasting right now. I can't have milk.

MANIAC

You're fasting, are you?

They are silent.

I should probably fast, too. I'm so totally lacking in energy.

Blizzard's apartment.

BLIZZARD

Don't tie my hands. I won't do it again. (*To the witnesses.*)
Would you guys step out, please.

*Orangina and Snowstorm leave. Volodya unties
Blizzard's hands.*

(*Pulling out a \$100 bill*) Volodya, please. Take this and don't do what you were going to do. You want me to, I'll get down on my knees. I don't have anything more today, but I'll get more tomorrow. I'm a famous musician. I can get a lot of money.

VOLODYA

No deal. I couldn't care less what you're trying to say to me. Put on your coat. I'm locking you up. You can take off your shoestrings right now.

BLIZZARD

I'm taking off my shoestrings. I'm putting on long-sleeve sailor's shirt. My raspberry red velvet pants. And my beret on my head. (*Blizzard wants to put on a record.*) And all this shake, rattle and roll -

VOLODYA

What are you doing?

BLIZZARD

I just want to put on some music

VOLODYA

How come you let me down? Why did you lie to me like that?

BLIZZARD

(*Smiling blissfully*) Forgive me.

The witnesses return and leave the door open. Blizzard sees that the door to Orangina's apartment is open, too. As is the door to the balcony. Blizzard suddenly races across to Orangina's apartment and throws himself off her balcony.

He falls downward as if flying. As if in slow-motion his entire life flashes before his eyes. Blizzards

thinks he is flying and, as honest, sad, exhausted and utterly free as he now is, he never wants to return to earth again. Free of everything and believing only in God, he is a true saint, a true freak.

Maniac's apartment. The following conversation occurs simultaneously to Blizzard's flight.

MANIAC

There are certain sensations that make you super-aware. And you ride along on them like you're surfing, skimming over the surface, never sinking below the surface, never stopping

SNOWFLAKE

I used to skim over the surface, too

MANIAC

And now?

SNOWFLAKE

I don't skim now

MANIAC

Why not?

SNOWFLAKE

Because you can't skim over the surface all the time

MANIAC

Yeah, you've got to shake things up. You've gotta jump and fall, too

SNOWFLAKE

And jump back up again

MANIAC

There's nothing to skimming over the surface

SNOWFLAKE

It's really supercool

MANIAC

But it's pointless if you do it all the time

Blizzard flies, doing somersaults in the air.

SNOWFLAKE

Where do you fall when you jump?

MANIAC

Doesn't make a bit of difference. It's the action itself that has meaning, of course. But you can't attach meaning to it
(*Smiles.*)

SNOWFLAKE

Do you have a goal?

MANIAC

Everybody has a goal. Even if you have no idea what it is, you still have one nonetheless. But if you don't define it yourself, somebody else will do it for you. Whoever comes up with the best definition

Blizzard flies. A dog walking on the street sees him flying, raises up his head and watches in amazement. Somewhere in the distance his owner calls:

VOICE

Yo-Yo! Yo-Yo! Yo-Yo!

MANIAC

You want to relay a message of some kind, you want to have some impact

SNOWFLAKE

Why's that?

MANIAC

To fill in the world void. Don't you want to?

SNOWFLAKE

Me? No. I already lost my optimism, my youthful sincerity, my faith in people, my ability to think sober thoughts, to properly evaluate situations, to love my brother and orient myself in space

Blizzard flies and the dog's eyes grow bigger and bigger.

The only thought that ever comes to me when I wake up in the morning hours is to commit suicide. But now I can't even do that.

MANIAC

Why not?

SNOWFLAKE

Because you can't do that

Orangina's apartment. Snowstorm, Blizzard and Orangina stand just as they had been standing, as though not a second has passed and, indeed, nothing has happened. Volodya runs out onto the balcony; a visceral, bloodcurdling scream is heard. Orangina's eyes go dark and she falls in a faint.

VOICE

Yo-Yo! Yo-Yo! Yo-Yo!

On the ground beneath the balcony a dog lies dead in a pool of blood.

Blizzard runs down one street, another, a third, covered in Yo-Yo's blood. He runs past red walls, fences, houses of some kind, and indeterminate people. The red ball of the sun, slipping beneath the horizon, reflects in his eyes. Blizzard runs to meet it, faster, faster, in order to reach out to it, to touch it with his hand, to catch it before it hides. It seems to him that he succeeds, that he made it in time.

Having reached the horizon, he slips down below the earth, not thinking, asking why or whether this leads anywhere. He goes down, down, down, passing trains resounding in his head. He races into the first open door he sees, pushes his way through a crowd into a corner, sits down in an empty spot, closes his eyes, takes the beret off his head, wipes off his red, wet face, smearing it with blood. He is riding somewhere, racing somewhere on this train so as to have time to think what he should do next in order to catch his breath and get hold of himself.

Snowstorm reads a poem to Bushy-Tail.

SNOWSTORM

There once lived a boy, a timid genius, who lived on the back lot of life

His daddy drank, his momma stank - the family was like that
But the boy was a romantic. He escaped life in dreams

Smelling his bubblegum wrapper he would fly away
From the wrong side of town and the back lot of life
To a light, quiet, cozy world, a land of starry dreams
And this timid little boy swore one day he would leave the
back lot of life,
Jump on the trolley of dreams and ride away forever

*Blizzard in the subway. Eyes closed, as if in a
trance, Blizzard thinks Vladimir Vysotsky and Marina
Vlady are smiling at him from a black-and-white
photograph. A cry is heard in a dream, as if it has no
connection to reality. But the cry gets louder and
louder. Blizzard thinks someone his shouting at him:
"Atten-shun! Atten-shun!"*

*Blizzard opens his eyes. A soldier stands over him,
screaming at him as if in a horror film.*

SOLDIER

Atten-shun!

BLIZZARD

(Making to leave) Attention what?

SOLDIER

Atten-shun!

BLIZZARD

(Tired of smiling) I'm out here. This is my stop.

*Blizzard looks around. The entire subway car is filled
with bald, young men, new army recruits, just like
himself.*

SOLDIER

Atten-shun!

*The doors open. Blizzard runs out, two soldiers
following in hot pursuit.*

Street, walls, fences: déjà vu.

*Somewhere very near, one or two streets over,
Snowflake is walking and people are turning to look at
her. They point at her, but she ceased noticing this
long ago.*

SNOWFLAKE

The street is dirty. People try as they may, laying out white rugs beneath their feet. But everything is pointless in this city. Everything is pointless.

The soldiers catch up with Blizzard, a fight starts. Blizzard falls. They kick him viciously in the sides and stomach. He has stopped putting up a fight. Lies limply on the asphalt. Blood trickles out his mouth. The soldiers leave. Blizzard wipes off the blood with his hand, his hands are all bloody. He smiles exhaustedly. Gets up.

Volodya stands in front of Blizzard.

BLIZZARD

What are you, Volodya, James Bond or something?

Volodya hand-cuffs Blizzard.

VOLODYA

You can't run from yourself

They get into a police car.

BLIZZARD

I don't understand anything at all. I'm screwed now. I'm already on two years parole. What is happening. Why? I must have a concussion. I'm sick to my stomach. They're probably going to put me in prison. What about my job? What about everything? What about my dreams? My Lord, how did this happen to me? A complete and total breakdown. What I'd really like is to wrap myself in a blanket and go to sleep. So that when I wake up, all of this will be yesterday and not today

Blizzard looks at his bloody hand, sliced in the fight. His lifeline has now been extended. He closes his eyes and slips into an indifferent sleep.

The Office. Maniac, Snowflake, Lenchka and Snowstorm. Blizzard's face has been replaced everywhere by Snowstorm's.

MANIAC

We all stand neck-deep in darkness. The only difference is that some of us look in the direction of the light. Others look to the dark

SNOWFLAKE

(On the phone) Forty days without sex?!

LENOCHKA

That's unfeasible

MANIAC

Like during the war. You huddle under a flag and defenders appear at your side. You know who you're fighting for and against. With the whites or the reds. For good or for evil

SNOWSTORM

Most of the time I spend in the space between black and white. It's rather gray, of course, but at least there's movement. I know who's sleeping with who. I know who does what where when and why and I appreciate every one of them equally

MANIAC

It's nothing more than a mask

SNOWFLAKE

Fifty?!

LENOCHKA

Strange

SNOWFLAKE

I don't think that's my style

SNOWSTORM

I don't use masks at all. I win people over with my extreme sincerity. I achieve results by means of the utmost candor. Basically, I never hide a thing. I don't fear my emotions

MANIAC

I lead a double life.

LENOCHKA

Really?

MANIAC

I keep my manias and phobias in check. And I've got those babies up the ying-yang. Both manias and phobias

SNOWFLAKE

I didn't know that; that you can't. I realize that doesn't justify me

SNOWSTORM

Hey you phobias of mine, you manias, you late anxieties and early fears

SNOWFLAKE

It's just I'm a very emotional person

LENOCHKA

I confessed for three days

MANIAC

I did two

LENOCHKA

And he looked me so hard in the eyes, with that same kind of insolence I have when I'm showing off, and he had this two-faced smile

MANIAC

He can't be two-faced

SNOWSTORM

You don't even have the right to look him in the eye

MANIAC

You're supposed to lower your gaze

SNOWSTORM

At least bow your head

SNOWFLAKE

This weather is oppressive

LENOCHKA

And he says, "At least bow your head."

SNOWFLAKE

I'm sick and tired of this black-and-white film

MANIAC

All this Adam and Eve and the apple

LENOCHKA

I mean it wasn't us that picked it

SNOWSTORM

Well, it's time to pay up now

SNOWFLAKE

Could it be because I spent so much time on tranquilizers?!

MANIAC

That's all really useful when you have to define all your shortcomings

LENOCHKA

You know what you're supposed to do but you don't do it

ORANGINA

After that it's a matter of will power

MANIAC

You've got to make sense of your will power

SNOWSTORM

See if you have any or not

LENOCHKA

I don't

SNOWFLAKE

Whenever it's cold my mood and character go sour

SNOWSTORM

We are really lucky we live in a climate like this

MANIAC

It helps calm us, calm our flesh

LENOCHKA

Which is almost impossible to do in the more southerly countries

SNOWFLAKE

(Hangs up the phone. Sighs) Maybe we ought to fly somewhere, huh? Like Bali

MANIAC

It's a good idea, though

The jail cell.

BLIZZARD

I've changed lately. I haven't exactly figured out how yet. All my thoughts on it are still at loose ends. Basically everybody just goes along paying no attention to where they're going. What the hell is the meaning of life? Career? Fame? Money? I mean, in my mind I know that's not what's important. But what is important - I don't know. But I think about it. Why? Because that's what everybody talks about. And I know there is love.

Blizzard thinks about Orangina. Orangina walks down the street, as beautiful as a character from a Bergman movie. Men look her in the eye and watch her pass; she lowers her eyelashes.

ORANGINA

When will I achieve perfection? When will this sin leave me? When will I quit having all these voluptuous dreams? When will I quit dreaming? When will I become more pure spiritually? When? Lord, purify me of all this filth. Lord, absolve me of my youthful sins.

The bar at a café. The television is on, showing the BCH news with the sound turned off. The star presenter Snowflake (no longer smiling) reports on a war. Volodya looks her over carefully, drinks beer, chews pistachios.

VOLODYA

The only thing I can't figure out is why people wage war. Man, they're always at war... For what? Why? Money? Principles? I don't get it. I mean, with Hitler it made sense. But what's this going on now? Man, live and let live. I just really don't know. I don't get this politics. I mean, have these people never felt pain or something?

"BCH" station identification and an ad for "Eternity is Ahead! Infinity is no Limit!" Bushy-Tail appears on screen, says something and smiles. She is framed by the words "Icon of the Season." Volodya turns on the sound.

BUSHY-TAIL

In the Far North we have icicles like you've never seen here. Our icicles flow off the roof over the windows and it's like the houses are encased in ice. Icicles like that are really dangerous. If an icicle like that falls on your head, it's all over.

"BCH" station identification and an ad for "No Fear in Love."

VOLODYA

What a stupid death

Snowstorm and Orangina drink coffee at the next table. Orangina wears a black dress and has a pure expression on her face. She wears no make-up and her hair is pulled back simply. She holds a big Book.

SNOWSTORM

Look, I have everything. I've achieved everything I wanted to achieve. What is there for me to ask of God? I don't know. I have everything I've ever wanted. You see my eyes?

ORANGINA

You have blue, blue eyes

SNOWSTORM

Look into my retinas. What do you see there? Do you even see a hint of sorrow?

ORANGINA

No, there's no sorrow in them

SNOWSTORM

What about fear?

ORANGINA

No, there's no fear in them

SNOWSTORM

Love?

ORANGINA

No

SNOWSTORM

Come on, look closer. What do you see there?

ORANGINA

There's nothing there at all

SNOWSTORM

I even bought the exact car I wanted to have

ORANGINA

What kind?

SNOWSTORM

A Peugeot. Convertible.

*Jail cell. A sunbeam comes through the window and hits
Blizzard right on the crown of the head.*

BLIZZARD

But love turned out to be something else altogether. Not connected to what I wanted to have. I had hope, I lived in constant expectation of something. But it turns out love is bound up only with whatever you hope to give. You can count on requited love only if fortune smiles on you. But I understand now that's not essential. It's as if my tears help me thaw out. I always prayed and I always pray. I've begun to believe in God. When I was born I was such a beautiful baby and then stuff got in the way. My head got chock full of filth and I set off down the wrong road -

The café. Snowstorm looks at Orangina. Tears run down Orangina's cheeks.

SNOWSTORM

You're beautiful. Laid-back and deliberate. I love watching you bring a cigarette up to your mouth

ORANGINA

I simply cannot quit smoking

SNOWSTORM

There's a dreaminess in your eyes

ORANGINA

Oh, I can't listen to that anymore

SNOWSTORM

And indifference. To everything happening this very moment

ORANGINA

(Puts out her cigarette) In order to quit smoking you just have to not smoke

SNOWSTORM

What are you reading?

ORANGINA

A new book

SNOWSTORM

I had one like that

ORANGINA

I don't read fiction at all anymore

SNOWSTORM

(Taking a call on his cell) Hello. I'm mainstream. Yes, I currently am in demand as never before. *(Looks at his image on the television.)* Your call has confirmed that once again

Jail cell.

BLIZZARD

It's like my heart iced over and turned to stone. It's numb, but that's normal, they say. They say that's natural. It happens to 94 percent of human beings. Now, of course, I realize I have never loved anyone, that all I ever had was a nagging desire for everyone to love and admire me. I wanted to find that one person who would love me. It's like I was preparing myself as a gift for someone. I tanned myself in a salon. I love nothing but my own body, never even guessing that love was passing me by at that very moment. We shared nothing but temporary physical pleasures, which we all mistakenly call by one and the same name

Lenochka, Maniac and Snowflake enter the café and take off their coats. The girls kiss Orangina, take off their coats and other items, taking more and more and more clothing off.

LENOCHKA

After that I immediately went and had a glass of wine. Then I went and indulged in the seven deadly sins

SNOWFLAKE

How was that?

LENOCHKA

In my thoughts, I mean

MANIAC

I went out and immediately lit up

ORANGINA

When you smoke, your prayers do not reach God

LENOCHKA

Why's that?

ORANGINA

Because they cling to the earth like smoke

SNOWFLAKE

Angels come flying when you make the sign of the cross

MANIAC

And when you swear they fly away

SNOWFLAKE

A very bad hangover and deep depression

LENOCHKA

You'd think somebody could at least call, some guy of some sort

ORANGINA

You're off limits. You're married

SNOWFLAKE

Two men told me they love me today

MANIAC

And you want more, don't you?

LENOCHKA

(Nods towards Orangina) Can somebody get her out of her trance?

ORANGINA

I downed a vodka and it had no effect at all. Stone cold sober

LENOCHKA

How can you possibly drink vodka?

SNOWFLAKE

You can't

MANIAC

Vodka? There ain't nothin' better

SNOWFLAKE

God, what I didn't drink yesterday

They all look over the menu.

SNOWSTORM

Green tea?

LENOCHKA

Jasmine

ORANGINA

And Coca-Cola

SNOWFLAKE

I drank whiskey and martinis yesterday

LENOCHKA

They even have parmesan carpaccio with mushrooms

MANIAC

Parmesan is a no-no

SNOWSTORM

I don't eat mushrooms

LENOCHKA

Why not?

SNOWSTORM

They make me want to vomit

MANIAC

They remind him of other mushrooms that he can't eat anymore

LENOCHKA

People who have ingested a lot of mushrooms usually can't even talk about it

SNOWFLAKE

Let alone eat them

MANIAC

I know

LENOCHKA

Is fish out, too?

ORANGINA

Out

SNOWSTORM

I don't eat broccoli and I don't eat carrots and I don't eat sauerkraut

MANIAC

It's easy for me, I'm a vegetarian. I don't even touch meat

ORANGINA

I absolutely love carrots

SNOWFLAKE

You've lost weight

ORANGINA

Ten pounds in a week. I keep getting skinnier and skinnier

LENOCHKA

There's something criminal about that

MANIAC

You just have a complex about it

SNOWSTORM

But a nun's habit would become you

LENOCHKA

What about me?

MANIAC

You too

SNOWFLAKE

And me?

ORANGINA

It would become anyone

LENOCHKA

And a salad

SNOWFLAKE

How about shrimp?

MANIAC

That's cheating then

LENOCHKA

Can't have café glacé

SNOWFLAKE

Should I have a martini?

MANIAC

Against the rules

LENOCHKA

But you know, there's something to that - abstaining for forty days

SNOWFLAKE

Fifty

MANIAC

(Closing the menu) Okay, that's it. Mineral water and black bread for everybody.

SNOWFLAKE

Only let's not be fanatics about it.

The street. Snowstorm leaves the café.

SNOWSTORM

Today I'm so frivolous,
Gracious and careless.
Melancholically dissatisfied with everything
I sail to meet my fate at midstream

Bushy-Tail comes walking down the street, leading a dog on a leash. She carries a glossy magazine with her photo on the cover.

Snowstorm heads toward her; stops by his new car.

Hey

BUSHY-TAIL

I didn't recognize you right away in that cap

SNOWSTORM

That's a pretty coat you've got. You remember that movie *A Man and a Woman*?

BUSHY-TAIL

No

SNOWSTORM

He's a race car driver and she goes around in this coat

BUSHY-TAIL

How're you doin'?

SNOWSTORM

I want to buy myself a T-shirt. I want to print a prayer on the back for everybody to read. I'll write, "Lord, thank You, Lord, for all the beautiful things You have given me."

BUSHY-TAIL

That's cool

SNOWSTORM

(Looking at the dog) That's a pretty dog. Boy or girl?

BUSHY-TAIL

Boy

SNOWSTORM

Yeah... Women are more sexy than men, of course

BUSHY-TAIL

I don't know about that -

SNOWSTORM

Men are more horny, but they're not as sexy

BUSHY-TAIL

Animals are smarter than we are

SNOWSTORM

They don't get hung up thinking

BUSHY-TAIL

Yeah

SNOWSTORM

I love animals. Like Churchill

BUSHY-TAIL

Me too. Like Bridget Bardot

SNOWSTORM

(Leads Bushy-Tail over to his car. Opens the door for her) If I was an animal I'd be a bear. That's the perfect lifestyle. You sleep half the year.

Volodya comes out of the café. Looks around. Looks at his watch. Looks at Bushy-Tail, Snowstorm, the Peugeot.

BUSHY-TAIL

Those little bear cubs are so cute -

SNOWSTORM

Basically, you've got to love each other and be cool about it. Main thing is that nobody start a war

Volodya sees Bushy-Tail get into the Peugeot convertible. He takes out his pen and writes down the license plate.

He stands and watches the car disappear into the distance as if he has gone blind and deaf and keeps going over something in his mind that he experienced long ago.

VOLODYA

Bones lay in the ground
Gloom covers the earth
Everything there was between us
Has drowned in my heart

The café.

LENOCHKA

(To Orangina) When are you coming back to work?

ORANGINA

I'm not

LENOCHKA

Why?

ORANGINA

Do you really want to keep doing all this?

LENOCHKA

(Thinks) Well, yes

SNOWFLAKE

Of course we do

MANIAC

As if there were any other choice -

Kissing, Bushy-Tail and Snowstorm race down the road at a break-neck speed.

Blizzard in his jail cell. He's drawing a tattoo on his shoulder - the face of Jesus Christ in a crown of thorns.

Dressed in a space suit, Maniac slips an engagement ring on Snowflake's finger.

Snowflake in a rose dress, peonies in her hair.

Lenochka is pregnant, she rubs her big belly.

Orangina in a nun's habit.

Volodya still stands there by the café.

With a horrendous crash a huge chunk of ice crashes to the ground just inches from him.

Volodya lifts his head.

The sun is warm.

Snow is melting.

Spring has come.

THE END

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Contact for author and translator: jfreed16@gmail.com