



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

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**DRAMA**

**0411/01/T/PRE**

Paper 1 Set Text

**May/June 2009**

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL

**To be given to candidates on receipt by the Centre**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the three stimuli and on the extract from Václav Havel's play *The Memorandum* provided in this booklet.

You may do any preparatory work that is considered appropriate.

You will **not** be permitted to take this copy of the text **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination.

A clean copy of the text will be provided with the Question Paper.



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This document consists of **27** printed pages and **1** blank page.



**STIMULI**

You are required to produce a short piece of drama on each stimulus in preparation for your examination. Questions will be asked on **each** of the stimuli and will cover both practical and theoretical issues.

- 1 The athletics championship
- 2 Doing our bit to save the planet
- 3 We unite under our flag

## EXTRACT

Taken from *The Memorandum* by Václav Havel

## CHARACTERS

JOSEF GROSS, *Managing Director*

JAN BALLAS, *Deputy Director*

OTTO STROLL, *Head of the Translation Centre*

ALEX SAVANT, *Ptydepist*

HELENA, *Chairman*

MARIA, *Secretary at the Translation Centre*

HANA, *Secretary to the Managing Director*

MARK LEAR, *Teacher of Ptydepe*

FERDINAND PILLAR

GEORGE, *Staff Watcher*

PETER THUMB, *A clerk*

THREE CLERKS

The action takes place in three office rooms within one large organization. Each office differs from the other in its particulars (placement of furniture, office equipment, etc.), but they all exude the same atmosphere and thus resemble each other. In each, there are two exits: a back door and a side door.

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

Václav Havel wrote *The Memorandum* in 1965 at a time when the then Czechoslovakia was under Communist rule; the play was first produced in Prague. The play is a political comedy and Havel's style is influenced by the genre known as Theatre of the Absurd.

Josef Gross is the Managing Director of a large bureaucratic organization. At the start of the play, he finds among his mail a memorandum that he cannot understand. It turns out to be written in a new language called Ptydepe (pronounced tie – depp – ay) and its usage has been authorized across the organization by Gross's deputy, Jan Ballas, without the knowledge of his boss. The new language is so complicated that no-one can read it and the attempts to try to understand it create much of the humour of the play. A classroom run by Mark Lear has been introduced for employees to learn the new language. For those who cannot understand it, permission has to be granted by Otto Stroll's Translation Unit before any translations can be made.

Gross goes to the translation unit to ask Otto Stroll to have his memorandum translated. Despite being the Managing Director, Gross has no authorization and the request is turned down until approved by the Ptydepist, Alex Savant, an unpleasant man who is the world expert on Ptydepe. But Gross has first to present identification papers and these have to be granted by Helena, who mysteriously describes herself as the Chairman and can only grant identification papers to those who have not already received a memo in Ptydepe! Ballas uses the control of Ptydepe as a means of manoeuvring Gross's ultimate sacking from the organization at the end of Act One by blackmailing him and threatening to reveal a very minor offence. During all this, the office staff appear obsessed with getting whatever food is available and the constant references to it reflect the shortages experienced in Czechoslovakia at the time Havel wrote the play.

The exact pronunciation of words in Ptydepe is not specified by Havel. Candidates are at liberty to pronounce the Ptydepe words in the extract as they wish, but the style they adopt should be consistent.

## ACT ONE

## SCENE 1

*The Director's office. Large office desk, small typist's desk, a fire extinguisher on the wall, a coat rack in the background. The stage is empty. Then GROSS enters by the back door, takes off his coat, hangs it on the rack, sits at his desk and begins to go through his morning mail. He skims each letter, then puts it either into the waste-paper basket or into the out tray. One letter suddenly arrests his attention. He glares at it and then starts to read it aloud.*

- GROSS: (Reads) Ra ko hutu d dekotu ely trebomu emusohe, vdegar yd, stro reny er gryk kendy, alyv zvyde dezu, kvyndal fer tekynu sely. Degto yl tre entvester kyleg gh: orka epyl y bodur depty-depe emete. Grojto af xedob yd, kyzem ner osonfterte ylem kho dent de det detrym gynfer bro enomuz fechtal agni laj kys defyj rokuroch bazuk suhelen. Gakvom ch ch lopve rekto elkvestrete. Dyhap zuj bak dygalex ibem nyderix tovah gyp. Ykte juh geboj. Fyx dep butrop gh – (GROSS does not notice that meanwhile BALLAS and PILLAR have quietly entered by the side door. BALLAS coughs discreetly.) Are you here? 5
- BALLAS: Yes, we are. 10
- GROSS: I didn't hear you come.
- BALLAS: We entered quietly.
- GROSS: Have you been here long? 15
- BALLAS: Not long.
- GROSS: What is it? 20
- BALLAS: We've come to ask your advice, Mr Gross.
- GROSS: Go on.
- BALLAS: Where should Mr Pillar record the incoming mail?
- GROSS: Couldn't be more obvious, Mr Ballas. In the incoming-mail book.
- BALLAS: It's full, isn't it, Mr P? 25
- (PILLAR nods.)
- GROSS: So soon?
- BALLAS: I'm afraid so.
- GROSS: Good gracious! Well, he'll have to get a new one.
- BALLAS: We've no funds to get a new one, have we, Mr P? 30
- (PILLAR shakes his head.)
- GROSS: What do you mean no funds? As far as I recall a purchase of two incoming-mail books was budgeted for this quarter.
- BALLAS: It was. But in accordance with the new economy drive all budgeted expenditures were cut by half, with the result that we were able to purchase only one incoming-mail book which is, as I've just mentioned, full. Isn't it, Mr P? 35
- (PILLAR nods.)
- GROSS: (Hands PILLAR some money.) Here. Buy yourself a new one. (PILLAR pockets the money. Both bow respectfully.) 40
- BALLAS: We thank you, Mr Gross. Thank you very much. (They leave by the side door. GROSS picks up his letter and examines it with curiosity. HANA enters by the back door, wearing a coat and carrying a vast shopping bag.) 45
- HANA: Good morning. 50
- GROSS: (Without looking up) Good morning.

(HANA hangs her coat on coat rack, sits down at the typist's desk, takes a mirror and a comb out of her bag, props the mirror against the typewriter and begins to comb her hair. Combing her hair will be her main occupation throughout the play. She will interrupt it only when absolutely necessary. GROSS watches her stealthily for a moment, then turns to her.)

Hana –

- HANA: Yes, Mr Gross?
- GROSS: (*Shows her the letter*) Any idea what this is?
- HANA: (*Skims the letter*) This is a very important office memorandum, Mr Gross. 60
- GROSS: It looks like a hodgepodge of entirely haphazard groups of letters.
- HANA: Perhaps, at first glance. But in fact there's method in it. It's written in Ptydepe, you see.
- GROSS: In what? 65
- HANA: In Ptydepe.
- GROSS: In Ptydepe? What is it?
- HANA: A new office language which is being introduced into our organization. May I go and get the milk?
- GROSS: There's a new language being introduced into our organization? 70  
I don't remember having been informed.
- HANA: They must have forgotten to tell you. May I go and get the milk?
- GROSS: Who thought it up?
- HANA: It seems to be a full-scale campaign. Elsie said it's being introduced into their department, too. 75
- GROSS: Does my deputy realize what's going on?
- HANA: Mr Ballas? Of course he does. May I go and get the milk?
- GROSS: Run along.  
(HANA takes an empty bottle from her shopping bag and hurries out by the back door. GROSS paces thoughtfully up and down. Again does not notice when BALLAS and PILLAR enter by the side door. BALLAS coughs.) 80
- BALLAS: Are you here again?
- BALLAS: We've come to tell you that we've just purchased a brand new incoming-mail book. It's lying on Mr Pillar's desk. Isn't it, Mr P? 85  
(PILLAR nods.)
- GROSS: Good.
- BALLAS: But the Department of Authentication refuses to authenticate it.
- GROSS: Why?
- BALLAS: The new book hasn't been registered by the Purchasing Department on account of its not having been purchased with the department's funds. So, legally, it doesn't exist, does it, Mr P? 90  
(PILLAR shakes his head.)
- GROSS: Say I ask them to authenticate it on my personal responsibility. My position's solid now, I think I can go so far. 95
- BALLAS: Excellent! Would you mind giving it to us in writing? It'll simplify things a great deal.
- GROSS: I would. I don't mind taking risks, but I'm not a gambler. A verbal order will have to do.
- BALLAS: Well, then we must try to talk them into accepting it. Mr P, let's go. 100  
(*They turn to leave. GROSS stops them.*)
- GROSS: Just a moment, Mr Ballas.
- BALLAS: Yes, Mr Gross?
- GROSS: Do you know anything about a new language?
- BALLAS: I think I've heard about it. I seem to recall Mr Pillar told me about it some time ago, didn't you, Mr P? 105

- (PILLAR *nods.*)  
 GROSS: Do you also recall who ordered its introduction into our organization?  
 BALLAS: Who was it, Mr P, do you know?  
 (PILLAR *shrugs.*)  
 GROSS: Mr Ballas. You are my deputy, aren't you?  
 BALLAS: Yes.  
 GROSS: Well then. I didn't order it. So it could only have been you.  
 BALLAS: One gives so many orders every day, one can't be expected to remember them all. 115
- GROSS: Don't you think you ought to consult me on such matters?  
 BALLAS: We didn't want to bother you with trifles.  
 GROSS: Actually, why is it being introduced?  
 BALLAS: As a sort of experiment. It's supposed to make office communications more accurate and introduce precision and order into their terminology. 120  
 Am I putting it correctly, Mr P?  
 (PILLAR *nods.*)  
 GROSS: Was it ordered from above?  
 BALLAS: Not directly –  
 GROSS: To tell you the truth, I'm far from happy about it. You'll have to find a way to stop the whole thing at once. We don't want to be somebody's guinea-pig, do we? 125  
 (HANA *re-enters by the back door with a bottle of milk.*)  
 HANA: (To BALLAS) Good morning.  
 (She puts the bottle on her desk, opens it, drinks, then continues combing her hair.) 130
- BALLAS: All right, I'll cancel my directive, and try to retrieve all the Ptydepe texts sent out so far, and have them translated back into natural language.  
 (To HANA) Good morning.  
 GROSS: Kindly do that. 135  
 BALLAS: We don't want to be somebody's guinea-pig, do we?  
 GROSS: Exactly.  
 BALLAS: Mr P, let's go.  
 (They leave by the side door. GROSS crosses to HANA's desk, reaches for her milk bottle.) 140
- GROSS: May I?  
 HANA: Yes, of course, Mr Gross.  
 (GROSS *drinks, returns to his desk, sits down. Pause. Again stares at his letter. Then turns to HANA.*)  
 GROSS: Thank God, I've nipped it in the bud. Did they seriously think anybody would want to learn this gibberish? 145
- HANA: Special Ptydepe classes have been set up for all departments.  
 GROSS: Indeed! Anybody joined them?  
 HANA: Everybody except you, Mr Gross.  
 GROSS: Really? 150  
 HANA: It was an order.  
 GROSS: Whose order?  
 HANA: Mr Ballas's.  
 GROSS: What! He didn't tell me anything about that! (*Pause.*) Anyway, I fail to see how our staff could be expected to use this Ptydepe when most of them couldn't possibly have learned it yet. 155
- HANA: That's why a Ptydepe Translation Centre has been set up. But it's supposed to be only temporary, until everybody has learned Ptydepe. Then it'll become the Ptydepe Reference Centre. May I go and get the rolls?  
 GROSS: Well, well! A Translation Centre! Where on earth did they find room for it all? 160

- HANA: The Translation Centre is on the first floor, room 6.  
 GROSS: But that's the Accounts Department!  
 HANA: The Accounts Department has been moved to the cellar. May I go and get the rolls?  
 GROSS: Also on his order?  
 HANA: Yes.  
 GROSS: That's the limit!  
 HANA: May I go and get the rolls?  
 GROSS: Run along. 170  
*(HANA pulls a string bag from her shopping bag and leaves by the back door. GROSS again does not notice when BALLAS and PILLAR enter by the side door. BALLAS coughs.)*  
 Now what?
- BALLAS: Mr Gross, I'm afraid you'll have to give us the order in writing, after all. 175  
 GROSS: I'll do nothing of the sort.  
 BALLAS: It'd be in your own interest.  
 GROSS: What do you mean – in my own interest?  
 BALLAS: If you'll give it to us in writing, you'll greatly simplify the work of our clerical staff. They won't have to fill out a special voucher to go with each incoming letter, you see. And in view of the rumours which have lately been circulating among them, it would certainly be a good tactical move on your part. Am I not right, Mr P? 180  
*(PILLAR nods.)*
- GROSS: What rumours? 185  
 BALLAS: Oh, about that unfortunate rubber stamp.  
 GROSS: Rubber stamp? What rubber stamp?  
 BALLAS: Apparently during the last audit it transpired that you're in the habit of taking the bank endorsement stamp home for your children to play with. 190
- GROSS: That's ridiculous. Of course I have taken that particular rubber stamp home a few times. But not as a plaything. There are nights when I have to take my work home to get it all done.  
 BALLAS: You don't have to explain it to us, Mr Gross. But you know how people are! 195
- GROSS: And you think this bit of paper you want would smooth things over?  
 BALLAS: I'll guarantee you that.  
 GROSS: All right then. As far as I'm concerned, have it typed, and I'll sign it. *(BALLAS at once produces a typed sheet of paper, unfolds it, and places it on GROSS's desk.)* 200
- BALLAS: Here you are, Mr Gross.  
*(GROSS signs.)*  
*(BALLAS snatches the document and quickly folds it.)* Thank you, Mr Gross. We thank you very much in the name of the entire organization. *(BALLAS and PILLAR are about to leave.)* 205
- GROSS: Mr Ballas.  
 BALLAS: Yes, Mr Gross?  
 GROSS: Have you cancelled the introduction of Ptydepe?  
 BALLAS: Not yet.  
 GROSS: Why not? 210  
 BALLAS: Well, you see, we've been waiting for the right moment. There doesn't seem to be the right sort of atmosphere among the authorities for this move just now. We wouldn't like it to be used against us in any way, would we, Mr P?  
*(PILLAR shakes his head.)* 215
- GROSS: That's just an excuse.

- BALLAS: Mr Gross, you don't believe us and we're hurt.
- GROSS: You've bypassed me. You've moved the Accounts Department to the cellar.
- BALLAS: That's only half the truth!
- GROSS: What's the other half?
- BALLAS: That I've ordered a ventilator to be installed in the cellar next year. Mr P, speak up, didn't I give such an order?  
(PILLAR *nods.*)
- GROSS: What about the light? 225
- BALLAS: The Temporary Accountant has brought a candle from her home.
- GROSS: Let's hope so!
- BALLAS: Mr P, speak up! She did bring a candle, didn't she?  
(PILLAR *shrugs.*)
- Mr P doesn't seem to know about it. But she did! You can go and see for yourself. 230
- GROSS: Be that as it may, you bypassed me. You organized Ptydepe classes, you set up a Ptydepe Translation Centre, and you made the study of Ptydepe obligatory for all staff members.
- BALLAS: Outside their working hours! 235
- GROSS: That's beside the point.
- BALLAS: Mr Gross, I fully agree that I may not bypass you in things concerning the activity of our staff during their working hours. But as for anything outside those hours, I believe I can do as I please.
- GROSS: I don't quite know what answer to give you at this moment, but I'm sure there is a fitting one somewhere. 240
- BALLAS: Perhaps there is, perhaps there isn't. In any case, at this point we're not concerned with anything but the good of our organization. Are we, Mr P?  
(PILLAR *nods.*) 245
- Naturally, we hold the same critical attitude towards Ptydepe that you do, Mr Gross. Only we think that if, before the inevitable collapse of the whole campaign, we can manifest certain limited initiative, it'll be of great help to our whole organization. Who knows, this very initiative may become the basis on which we might be granted that snack bar which we have been trying to get for so long. Imagine that our staff would no longer have to travel all that way on their coffee break. 250
- GROSS: All right. It's quite possible that in this way we might indeed get the snack bar. This, however, in no way changes the fact that you've bypassed me a number of times and that, lately, you've been taking far too many decisions on your own authority. 255
- BALLAS: I? I beg your pardon! Haven't we just been consulting you about such a trifle as a new incoming-mail book? You're not being fair to us, Mr Gross. You're not at all fair.
- GROSS: Mr Ballas, let me make a suggestion. 260
- BALLAS: Yes?
- GROSS: Let's be quite blunt with each other for a while shall we? It'll simplify the situation a great deal and speed up the clarification of our points of view.
- BALLAS: Shall we accept, Mr P? 265  
(PILLAR *nods.*)  
I accept.
- GROSS: Why did you say that you hold a critical attitude towards Ptydepe and that you're only interested in the snack bar, when in fact you believe in Ptydepe and do everything you can to get it quickly introduced? 270
- BALLAS: Matter of tactics.



- GROSS: A little short-sighted.
- BALLAS: I wouldn't say so.
- GROSS: It never occurred to you that sooner or later I'd see through your tactics?
- BALLAS: We knew you'd create obstacles and therefore we arranged it so you wouldn't see what we were after until we were strong enough to surmount your obstacles. There's nothing you can do to stop us now. The overwhelming majority of our staff stands resolutely behind us, because they know that only Ptydepe can place their work on a truly scientific basis. Isn't that so, Mr P? 280  
(PILLAR *nods.*)
- GROSS: You seem to forget that it is I who bear the full responsibility for our organization, I in whom the trust has been placed. Thus, it is up to me to judge what is good for our organization, and what is not. So far it is I who am the Managing Director here. 285
- BALLAS: We cannot ignore the stand of the masses. The whole organization is seething and waiting for your word.
- GROSS: I won't be dictated to by a mob.
- BALLAS: You call it a mob, we call it the masses. 290
- GROSS: You call it masses, but it is a mob. I'm a humanist and my concept of directing this organization derives from the idea that every single member of the staff is human and must become more and more human. If we take from him his human language, created by the centuries-old tradition of national culture, we shall have prevented him from becoming fully human and plunge him straight into the jaws of self-alienation. I'm not against precision in official communications, but I'm for it only in so far as it humanizes Man. In accordance with this my innermost conviction I can never agree to the introduction of Ptydepe into our organization. 295
- BALLAS: Are you prepared to risk an open conflict? 300
- GROSS: I place the struggle for the victory of reason and of moral values above a peace bought by their loss.
- BALLAS: What do you say to this, Mr P?  
(PILLAR *shrugs in embarrassment.*)
- GROSS: I suggest to you that we all forget what has just happened between us and that we part in peace before I'm forced to take the whole matter seriously. 305  
(A short pause. HANA enters by the back door, carrying a string bag full of rolls, puts it into her shopping bag, sits down and begins to comb her hair.)
- BALLAS: (Turns to PILLAR) It seems he's not yet ripe for realistic discussion. We've overrated him. Never mind. Let's give him – (looks at his watch) – what do you say, an hour?  
(PILLAR *nods.*) 310
- GROSS: Unheard of! (Sits down, notices his memorandum, stares at it, turns to HANA.) Hana! 315
- HANA: Yes, Mr Gross?
- GROSS: Do you know Ptydepe?
- HANA: No.
- GROSS: Then how did you know this was an official memorandum?
- HANA: They say that in the first stage Ptydepe was used only for important official memoranda and that these are now being received by some of the staff. 325

- GROSS: What are these memos about?  
 HANA: They are supposed to inform the recipients about decisions based on the findings of the last audit in their departments.  
 GROSS: Indeed? What sort of decisions?  
 HANA: All sorts, it seems. Very positive and very negative ones.  
 GROSS: Damn that rubber stamp! Where on earth did you learn all this?  
 HANA: Oh, in the dairy shop this morning.  
 GROSS: Where did you say the Translation Centre is?  
 HANA: First floor, room 6. To get to it one must go through the Ptydepe classroom. 335  
 GROSS: Ah yes! Former Accounts Department. Well, I'm off to lunch.  
*(He takes his memorandum from his desk and hurries out through the back door.)*  
 HANA: *(Calls after him)* You'll like it, Mr Gross. They have goose in the canteen today! 340

## SCENE 2

*The Ptydepe classroom. Teacher's desk in the background; in the foreground five chairs. LEAR is standing behind his desk, lecturing to four clerks who are seated with their backs to the audience. Among them is THUMB.* 345

- LEAR: Ptydepe, as you know, is a synthetic language, built on a strictly scientific basis. Its grammar is constructed with maximum rationality, its vocabulary is unusually broad. It is a thoroughly exact language, capable of expressing with far greater precision than any current natural tongue all the minutest nuances in the formulation of important office documents. The result of this precision is of course the exceptional complexity and difficulty of Ptydepe. There are many months of intensive study ahead of you, which can be crowned by success only if it is accompanied by diligence, perseverance, discipline, talent and a good memory. And of course, by faith. Without a steadfast faith in Ptydepe, nobody yet has ever been able to learn Ptydepe. 350  
 And now, let us turn briefly to some of the basic principles of Ptydepe. As far as official communications are concerned, the most serious deficiency of the natural languages is their utter unreliability, which results from the fact that their basic structural units – words – are highly equivocal and interchangeable. You all know that in a natural language it is often enough to exchange one letter for another (goat–boat, love–dove), or simply remove one letter (fox–ox), and the whole meaning of the word is thus changed. 355  
 The significant aim of Ptydepe is to guarantee to every statement, by purposefully limiting all similarities between individual words, a degree of precision, reliability and lack of equivocation quite unattainable in any natural language. To achieve this, Ptydepe makes use of the following postulation: if similarities between any two words are to be minimized, the words must be formed by the least probable combination of letters. This means that the creation of words must be based on such principles as would lead to the greatest possible redundancy of language. 370  
*(GROSS enters by the back door, his memorandum in his hand, crosses the room and leaves by the side door.)* 375

- How does, in fact, Ptydepe achieve its high redundancy? By the consistent use of the so-called principle of a 60 per cent dissimilarity, which means that any Ptydepe word must differ by at least 60 per cent of its letters from any other Ptydepe word of the same length (and, incidentally, any part of such a word must differ in the same way from any Ptydepe word of this length, that is from any word shorter than is the one of which it is a part). Thus, for example, out of all the possible five-letter combinations of the 26 letters of our alphabet – and there are 11,881,376 – only 432 combinations can be found which differ from each other by three letters, i.e., by 60 per cent of the total. From these 432 combinations only 17 fulfil the other requirements as well and thus have become Ptydepe words. Hence it is clear that in Ptydepe there often occur words which are very long indeed. 385
- THUMB: (*Raising his hand*) Sir – 390  
 LEAR: Yes?  
 THUMB: (*Gets up*) Would you please tell us which is the longest word in Ptydepe? (*Sits down.*)  
 LEAR: Certainly. It is the word meaning 'a wombat', which has 319 letters. But let us proceed. Naturally, this raises the question of how Ptydepe solves the problem of manageability and pronounceability of such long words. Quite simply: inside these words the letters are interspersed with occasional gaps, so that a word may consist of a greater or smaller number of so-called 'sub-words'. But at the same time the length of a word – as indeed everything in Ptydepe – is not left to chance. You see, the vocabulary of Ptydepe is built according to an entirely logical principle: the more common the meaning, the shorter the word. Thus, for example, the most commonly used term so far known – that is the term 'whatever' – is rendered in Ptydepe by the word 'gh'. As you can see, it is a word consisting of only two letters. There exists, however, an even shorter word – that is 'f' – but this word does not carry any meaning. I wonder if any of you can tell me why. Well? 400  
 (*Only THUMB raises his hand.*)  
 LEAR: Well, Mr Thumb? 405  
 THUMB: (*Gets up.*) It's being held in reserve in case science should discover a term even more commonly used than the term 'whatever'. 410  
 LEAR: Correct, Mr Thumb. You get an A.

## SCENE 3

- The Secretariat of the Translation Centre. It is something between an office and a waiting room. A large desk, a typist's desk, a few straight chairs or armchairs, a small conference table. STROLL is seated on it, a paper bag full of peaches in his lap. He is consuming them with gusto. GROSS enters by the back door, his memorandum in his hand.* 415
- GROSS: Good morning.  
 STROLL: (*With his mouth full*) Morning. 420  
 GROSS: I've dropped in to get acquainted with the activities of the Translation Centre. I'm the Managing Director.  
 STROLL: (*With his mouth full*) So you're the Managing Director?  
 GROSS: Yes. Josef Gross.  
 (*STROLL slowly lets himself down from the table, finishes his peach, wipes his hands on his handkerchief and walks over to GROSS.*) 425

- STROLL: Very glad to meet you. Sorry I didn't recognize you. I've been here only a very short time and so I still haven't met everybody. My name is Stroll. Head of the Translation Centre. Do sit down.  
(STROLL *folds his handkerchief and shakes hands with GROSS. Both sit down. STROLL lights a cigarette. GROSS tries all his pockets, but cannot find his.*)  
Everything here is still so to speak at the nappy stage.
- GROSS: I understand.
- STROLL: We're still grappling with a great many teething troubles. 435
- GROSS: That's clear enough –
- STROLL: It's no easy matter, you know.
- GROSS: No, quite.
- STROLL: Tell me, exactly what would you like to find out?
- GROSS: I'd like to see how you've organized the process of making translations. 440  
Do you do them while one waits?
- STROLL: We'll make a translation from Ptydepe while you wait for any member of our organization who is a citizen of our country and has an authorization to have a Ptydepe text translated.
- GROSS: Does one need a special authorization? 445  
(SAVANT *enters by the side door.*)
- SAVANT: Morning, Otto. Have you heard that there's goose for lunch today?
- STROLL: (*Jumps up*) What! Did you say goose?
- SAVANT: That's what the chaps in the Secretariat said. Pick you up on the way to the canteen, right? 450
- STROLL: Right! The sooner the better!  
(SAVANT *leaves by the side door.*)  
I love goose, you know! Now, what were we talking about?
- GROSS: You were saying that one needs an authorization to get a translation made. 455
- STROLL: Right. Well now, look here. We, the staff, do use Ptydepe, but we're no experts. Let's face it, we're no linguists, are we? So, naturally, the exploitation and development of Ptydepe cannot be left in our hands alone. If it were, it might lead to unwelcome spontaneity and Ptydepe might quite easily change under our very noses into a normal natural language and thus lose its whole purpose. 460  
(*Suddenly he halts, becomes preoccupied, then quickly gets up.*)  
Excuse me.  
(*He hurries out by the side door.*)  
(GROSS *stares after him in surprise, then begins another search through his pockets, but finds no cigarettes. Pause. HELENA enters by the side door.*)
- HELENA: Was Alex here?
- GROSS: I don't know who that is.
- HELENA: You're not part of this shop, sweetie? 470
- GROSS: On the contrary. I'm the Managing Director.
- HELENA: Are you, sweetie? Well, you must do something about this snack bar, I mean it! It's a damned shame to see our girls traipse miles for a cup of tea, it really is. Does anybody think about people in this shop?
- GROSS: And who, may I ask, are you? 475
- HELENA: I'm the Chairman. But you can call me Nellie.
- GROSS: The chairman of what, if you'll forgive my asking?
- HELENA: Of what? Don't know of what just yet. As a matter of fact we're having a meeting about that very thing this afternoon. But I'm already so damned busy I don't know which way to turn. They don't give you time to have a proper look around and they expect you straight away to 480

start cleaning up their smelly little messes. See you later, sweetie.

*(She leaves by the side door.)*

*(Pause. GROSS again tries his pockets. Then looks at his watch. Waits. Pause. STROLL at last returns by the side door. Walks slowly. Buttons up his trousers while walking.)*

STROLL: You don't like goose?

GROSS: I do. You were saying that Ptydepe cannot be left in your hands alone.

STROLL: Right. That's why every department which starts to introduce Ptydepe is assigned a special methodician, a so-called Ptydepist, who, being a specialist, is supposed to ensure that Ptydepe gets used correctly.

490

*(MARIA enters by the back door, carrying a string bag full of onions.)*

MARIA: *(Walking towards the side door.)* Good morning.

GROSS: Good morning.

*(MARIA leaves by the side door.)*

495

STROLL: Our Ptydepist fulfils this task by issuing a special authorization for every translation –

MARIA: *(Offstage)* Here are the onions, Miss Helena.

STROLL: Which enables him to record all outgoing translations from Ptydepe.

HELENA: *(Offstage)* Would you mind putting them over by the filing cabinet, that's a good girl.

500

STROLL: Thus he obtains all the necessary material for various statistics, on the basis of which he then directs the use of Ptydepe.

*(MARIA returns by the side door, carrying an empty string bag, puts it in the drawer, sits at typist's desk and begins to work.)*

505

GROSS: So, if I've understood you correctly, you'll give a translation only to those staff members who can produce an authorization from your Ptydepist.

STROLL: Right.

*(SAVANT enters by the side door, knife and fork in hand.)*

510

SAVANT: Are you ready?

STROLL: *(To MARIA)* Where's my cutlery?

*(MARIA takes a knife and fork from a drawer and hands them to him.)*

GROSS: Who is your Ptydepist?

STROLL: Has it been washed?

515

MARIA: Of course.

STROLL: *(To GROSS)* What did you say?

GROSS: Who is your Ptydepist?

STROLL: Dr Savant here.

GROSS: *(Shakes hands with SAVANT.)* How do you do. I'm Josef Gross, the Managing Director.

520

SAVANT: How do you do. I'm Alex Savant, the graduate Ptydepist. My degree is like a doctorate, you know.

GROSS: I'd like a word with you, Dr Savant.

STROLL: Are you going to ask for breast?

525

SAVANT: Sorry, Mr Gross, but we really must go and have our lunch now. Shouldn't want to miss it. *(To STROLL)* I prefer a leg.

*(SAVANT and STROLL leave by the back door. GROSS stands for a while in surprise, then slowly sits down. Pause. He looks at his watch. Waits. Again looks at his watch, puts it to his ear. Then tries all his pockets.)*

530

GROSS: Have you a cigarette, by any chance?

MARIA: I'm sorry, I don't smoke.

*(Pause. GROSS again looks at his watch. Then he notices a box on the desk.)*

535

GROSS: What's that?

MARIA:	Cigars.	
GROSS:	May I take one?	
MARIA:	Oh no! They belong to Mr Stroll. He's counted them. He'd be very angry if you did. <i>(Long pause. GROSS stretches, looks at his watch, finally gets up, slowly approaches MARIA and peers over her shoulder to see what she is doing.)</i>	
GROSS:	Reports – Mmnn – <i>(GROSS slowly walks around the office, examining everything, then again sits down. HELENA quietly enters by the side door. GROSS sits with his back towards her. HELENA gestures to MARIA to keep quiet. Tiptoeing, she creeps up to GROSS and from behind puts her hands over his eyes. GROSS starts.)</i>	545
HELENA:	<i>(Changing her voice to make it sound like a man's)</i> Peep-bo!	
GROSS:	I beg your pardon!	
HELENA:	Guess who!	
GROSS:	Take your hands off at once!	
HELENA:	First you must guess!	555
GROSS:	<i>(Hesitates a moment)</i> The District Inspector.	
HELENA:	No.	
GROSS:	The Regional Inspector.	
HELENA:	No.	
GROSS:	The Inspector General.	560
HELENA:	No.	
GROSS:	Ilon.	
HELENA:	No.	
GROSS:	Then it's Karel.	
HELENA:	No, no, no.	565
GROSS:	Do stop it, Ilon! You're being very silly!	
HELENA:	Shall I tell you?	
GROSS:	Would you, please! <i>(HELENA takes her hands away. GROSS turns.)</i>	
HELENA:	You're not Alex? Sorry, sweetie. I thought it was Alex Savant. Hasn't he showed up yet?	570
GROSS:	Charming manners!	
MARIA:	He's gone to lunch.	
HELENA:	<i>(To GROSS)</i> Starchy, aren't you? What the hell! It was just a bit of fun, that's all. See you later, sweetie. <i>(She leaves by the side door. Pause. GROSS once more tries his pockets.)</i>	575
GROSS:	Have you a cigarette, by any chance?	
MARIA:	You've already asked, Mr Gross.	
GROSS:	I'm sorry, I must have forgotten. <i>(GROSS looks at his watch, puts it to his ear, begins to be impatient. Again the same search, then gets up and wanders about the office. Stops behind MARIA and peers over her shoulder to see what she is doing.)</i>	580
MARIA:	Reports –	585
GROSS:	Mmnn – <i>(Pause. GROSS again notices Stroll's box, slowly approaches, looks at it for a while, opens it quietly, takes a cigar, smells it. MARIA watches him. GROSS realizes he is being watched, replaces the cigar and returns to his seat. Pause.)</i>	590
	<i>(Loudly)</i> Good God! It wouldn't hurt him, would it?	

- (STROLL and SAVANT are returning by the back door in the conversation. They hand their knives and forks to MARIA, then sit down.)
- STROLL: That was simply delicious. The way it was cooked! Straight through! And yet so crispy!
- SAVANT: I think it was better last time.
- STROLL: Not juicy enough. The very best was the time before last.
- GROSS: Dr Savant –
- STROLL: (To MARIA) Would you go and see if Mr Langer is having his lunch today? If not, ask whether he'd mind sending me his voucher. 600
- GROSS: Dr Savant –  
(MARIA quickly walks out by the back door. SAVANT watches her with greedy appreciation.)
- SAVANT: (Turning to GROSS) Not bad, eh?
- GROSS: Rather pleasant. 605
- SAVANT: Sexy little thing, isn't she?
- GROSS: Dr Savant –
- STROLL: Her? Sexy? Come off it!
- SAVANT: (To GROSS) Yes?
- GROSS: I understand you can authorize the making of a translation from Ptydepe. 610
- SAVANT: Yes, for those who bring me their documents.
- GROSS: What sort of documents?
- SAVANT: Personal registration.  
(STROLL offers a cigarette to SAVANT.) 615  
(Taking it) Ta.  
(STROLL and SAVANT light their cigarettes. GROSS again tries his pockets, hesitates, then speaks up.)
- GROSS: I'm sorry – er – could you sell me a cigarette?
- STROLL: I wish I could, but I've only three left. 620
- GROSS: Oh, I see. I'm sorry. (To SAVANT) Why do you actually need the personal registration documents?
- SAVANT: (To STROLL) She is sexy, you know. Just wait till someone catches her in the dark! (To GROSS) What did you say?
- GROSS: Why do you actually need the personal registration documents? 625
- SAVANT: Well, it's like this, you see. Although I've been employed by this organization, I'm no common or garden staff member. I am, as you well know, a scholar. A scholar of a new sort, of course, as everything about Ptydepe is new. And as such I naturally take certain – shall we say – exceptions to some of the rather bureaucratic procedures of my staff colleagues. As a matter of fact, it's not really exceptions I take – it's more like objections. No, objections isn't the right word either. How shall I put it? I'm sorry, Mr Gross. You see, I'm used to speaking in Ptydepe and so it's rather difficult for me to find the right words in a natural language. 630
- GROSS: Please go on.
- SAVANT: In Ptydepe one would say axajores. My colleagues sometimes yلود kaboz pady el too much, and at the same time they keep forgetting that etrokaj zenig ajte ge gyboz.
- STROLL: Abdy hez fajut gabob nyp orka? 640
- SAVANT: Kavej hafiz okuby ryzal.
- STROLL: Ryzal! Ryzal! Ryzal! Varuk bado di ryzal? Kabyzach? Mahog? Hajbam?
- SAVANT: Ogný fyk hajbam? Parde gul axajores va dyt rahago kabrazol! Fabotybe! They think they can simply send me a chap, I'll give him an OK, and that'll be the end of it. Byzugat rop ju ge tyrak! Don't they realize that if our statistics are to make any sense at all we must have 645

concrete foundations to build on. We must have detailed information about everybody who comes in contact with Ptydepe, in order to get the greatest possible variety of sociological and psychological data. Otherwise we just couldn't carry on.

- GROSS: Wouldn't it be enough if a chap just told you himself everything you want to know about him?
- SAVANT: That wouldn't guarantee that everything was hutput.
- GROSS: I beg your pardon?
- SAVANT: Hutput. Quite exact. 655  
(*MARIA returns by the back door.*)
- MARIA: I'm sorry, but it appears that Mr Langer will definitely be eating his lunch today.
- STROLL: Pity. 660  
(*MARIA sits at her desk and continues working.*)
- GROSS: Excuse me, you were speaking about the uncertainties of verbal statements.
- SAVANT: Ah, yes! Well now, all the particulars concerning each employee have long been recorded with the utmost precision and without the risk of any possible subjective zexdohyt – I'm sorry – point of view – 665
- GROSS: I understand – (*Jokingly*) I've a completely hutput zexdohyt of it.
- SAVANT: Zexdohyttet! You've forgotten that every noun preceded by the adjective hutput takes on the suffix 'tet' –
- STROLL: Or 'tete'.
- SAVANT: Or 'tete'. Quite. Many people make this mistake. Even Mr Wassermann in one of his letters – 670
- GROSS: Excuse me, you were speaking about the advantages of the personal registration documents.
- SAVANT: Ah, yes! Well now, the personal registration documents often record things which even the particular employee doesn't know about himself. 675  
(*To STROLL*) Nuzapom?
- STROLL: Zapom. Yd nik fe rybol zezuhof.
- SAVANT: Yd nik – yd nek.
- GROSS: To sum up. You'll authorize a translation only for those members of the staff who can produce their documents. All right, where does one get them? 680  
(*HELENA enters by the side door.*)
- HELENA: Hallo, everybody!
- SAVANT: (*Sings*) Hallo, everybody, hallo –
- HELENA: You know whose birthday it is today? Eddi Kliment's! 685
- SAVANT: Eddi's? Is it?
- HELENA: There's a party going on for him next door. So drop everything and come along. (*To MARIA*) Seems the grocer's got limes. Would you mind running over and getting me eight? 690  
(*MARIA hurries out by the back door.*)
- SAVANT: What are they drinking?
- HELENA: Vodka.
- SAVANT: Did you hear that, Otto? 695  
(*SAVANT and STROLL hasten towards the side door.*)
- GROSS: You haven't told me yet where one gets those documents.
- SAVANT: Why, right here from our Chairman. From Nellie, of course.  
(*SAVANT and STROLL quickly walk out by the side door. HELENA is about to follow them.*)
- GROSS: Miss Helena –
- HELENA: (*Halts by the door.*) What? 700
- GROSS: I'd like a word with you.



- HELENA: Later, love. You'll have to wait.
- GROSS: Here?
- HELENA: Where else?
- GROSS: You mean you don't mind leaving me here alone? With all this classified material?
- HELENA: You won't be alone. There's a chink in the wall, sweetie. You're being watched by our Staff Watcher.
- GROSS: Good gracious! A chink?
- HELENA: Wouldn't be much good if he was actually in here. That way he'd be able to watch only one office, wouldn't he? This way he can watch five of them at once. You see, his cubicle is surrounded by offices and each is furnished with an observation chink. So all he has to do is to walk – at random, natch – from one to the other and peer. 710
- GROSS: Interesting idea. 715
- HELENA: Isn't it! And it's my idea, too! My point was to stop visitors from having to hang about in the hall when the office is empty. Damned nuisance for them. Even in these piddling details one must be thinking of the good of the people! See you later, sweetie.  
(*She runs out through the side door. GROSS wanders about investigating the walls.*) 720
- GEORGE: (*After a while, offstage*) Don't bother. The chink is well disguised.
- GROSS: I should say it is! One might make use of this idea in other departments as well.
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) Not so easy. This kind of thing has to be planned for by the architect from the very start. 725
- GROSS: I see what you mean. On the other hand, he couldn't very well have planned for it here.
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) He didn't. He made a mistake in his calculations. And when this building was erected it was found that there was this space left over between the offices. So it was used in this way. 730
- GROSS: A really stimulating idea!  
(*Pause. GROSS sits down, looks impatiently at his watch, gets up, sits down, again looks at his watch, gets up, searches his pockets, again sits down. MARIA runs in by the back door.*) 735
- What's the matter?
- MARIA: Forgot my purse.  
(*She opens the drawer of the typing desk and rummages in it hastily.*)
- GROSS: Miss –
- MARIA: Yes? 740
- GROSS: Do you know Ptydepe?
- MARIA: A bit.
- GROSS: Can you translate it?
- MARIA: I'm strictly forbidden to make any translations before I've passed my exams. 745
- GROSS: But on my authority you might try to make a translation, mightn't you? It doesn't have to be perfect, you know.  
(*MARIA smiles.*)
- What's so funny about it?
- MARIA: You wouldn't understand. It's impossible, that's all. 750
- GROSS: What's your name?
- MARIA: Maria.
- GROSS: Maria! A pretty name.
- MARIA: Do you like it?
- GROSS: Very much. Maria – just for once! Nobody'll know about it. 755
- MARIA: Mr Gross! Somebody might walk in any minute. Please be reasonable!

- GROSS: (*Urgently*) Go on, my dear!
- MARIA: And what about the Staff Watcher?
- GROSS: (*Whispers*) You could whisper the translation to me.
- MARIA: The limes will soon be sold out and Miss Helena will be angry. Bye.  
(*Having found her purse, she runs out by the back door. Pause. GROSS, tired, sinks into his chair. He stares ahead, mechanically begins to try his pockets again. Then gets up and walks straight to the cigar box. When he is about to open it, he quickly takes his hand away and looks around cautiously.*) 765
- GROSS: Mr Watcher – (*Pause.*) Mr Watcher – (*Pause.*) Listen, Mr Watcher, can you hear me? Have you got a cigarette? (*Pause.*) He must have fallen asleep. (*Carefully opens the box.*)
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) What do you mean – fallen asleep!
- GROSS: (*Jerks away from the box.*) Well, why didn't you answer me? 770
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) I wanted to test you out.
- GROSS: I beg your pardon! Do you realize who I am? The Managing Director!
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) Habuk bulugan.
- GROSS: I beg your pardon?
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) Habuk bulugan, avrator. 775
- GROSS: What did you mean by that?
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) Nutuput.
- GROSS: (*Looks at his watch, then walks quickly to the back door, turns by the door.*) I won't put up with any abuse from you! I expect you to come to me and apologize. (*Exits by the back door.*) 780
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) Gotroch!

## SCENE 4

- The Director's office. BALLAS and PILLAR are silently waiting for GROSS. PILLAR has a notebook in his hand. HANA is combing her hair. Then GROSS hurries in by the back door, crosses to his desk, sits down with studied casualness. For a while there is menacing silence.* 785
- BALLAS: Well?
- GROSS: Well?
- BALLAS: The hour has passed. Ready to be more sensible now?
- GROSS: Certainly not. 790
- BALLAS: As you may have noticed, the introduction of Ptydepe into our organization successfully proceeds. What are you going to do about it?
- GROSS: Put a stop to it.
- HANA: Mr Gross, may I go and get the chocolates?
- BALLAS: How? 795
- GROSS: By issuing an order that the introduction of Ptydepe be stopped and its use cancelled.
- BALLAS: You cannot.
- GROSS: Why not?
- BALLAS: You never issued any order for its introduction and use, so you're in no position to stop and cancel anything at all. 800
- GROSS: Then you'll do it.
- BALLAS: I haven't issued any such order either. Have I, Mr P?  
(*PILLAR shakes his head.*)
- HANA: Mr Gross, may I go and get the chocolates? 805
- GROSS: What do you mean?

- BALLAS: It was just a verbal directive, based on an assurance that you'd validate it by a supplementary order.
- GROSS: Then I'll simply not give any supplementary order.
- HANA: Mr Gross, may I go and get the chocolates?
- BALLAS: The introduction of Ptydepe is in full swing and it will naturally go on even without it. (*To HANA*) Run along.  
(*HANA immediately stops combing her hair and is off by the back door.*)
- GROSS: In that case I'll have to report the whole matter to the authorities. 815
- BALLAS: (*Laughs.*) Did you hear that, Mr P? He doesn't know that the authorities have taken a great fancy to Ptydepe.
- GROSS: If that's the case, why haven't they made its use obligatory in all organizations?
- BALLAS: Playing it safe. If Ptydepe succeeds, they'll have plenty of time to take the credit for it; if it fails, they'll be able to dissociate themselves from it and blame the departments. 820
- GROSS: I hope you don't expect me to be a traitor to my beliefs.
- BALLAS: I do.
- GROSS: How do you propose to make me? 825
- BALLAS: (*Points at PILLAR's book.*) Do you see this book? Not long ago it was improperly authenticated by your order, although it had not been registered by the Purchasing Department and thus was your own property. Do you know what that constitutes? Abuse of authority.
- GROSS: Good God! Don't you make yourself sick? 830
- BALLAS: Do we make ourselves sick, Mr P?  
(*PILLAR shakes his head.*)  
Of course we don't. When the good of Man is at stake, nothing will make us sick.
- GROSS: But you yourself got me to sign it! 835
- BALLAS: I did? I don't seem to remember –
- GROSS: By your hints about the rumours concerning that damned rubber stamp!
- BALLAS: I wouldn't bring that up, if I were you.
- GROSS: Why not? 840
- BALLAS: Because it's no extenuating circumstance at all. Just the reverse, in fact.
- GROSS: I don't know what you're talking about.
- BALLAS: Don't you? Well, look here. If it weren't for the rubber stamp affair, you might have claimed that you signed the authentication of this book moved by a sincere desire to help our clerical staff, which of course wouldn't have excused your conduct, but would at least have explained it somewhat on humanitarian grounds; while if you do bring up this motive now, you'll be admitting thereby that you signed it moved merely by petty cowardice, so as to silence legitimate inquiries into the circumstances of the rubber stamp affair. Do you follow me? If, on the other hand, you hadn't signed it, you might have pretended that you were indeed taking the rubber stamp home for reasons of work, but your signature proves that you were clearly aware of your guilt. As you see, both your errors are intertwined in such an original way that the one greatly multiplies the other. By publicizing the circumstances which you consider extenuating you would leave nobody in any doubt whatever about the real motives of your conduct. Well then, shall we come to an agreement? 845
- GROSS: All right, I'll resign.
- BALLAS: But we don't want you to. 850
- GROSS: Well, what do you want me to do? 855

- BALLAS: Sign the supplementary order for the introduction and the use of Ptydepe in our organization.
- GROSS: But you said, didn't you, that Ptydepe will be used even without a supplementary order? Then why do you insist on it now?
- BALLAS: That's our business.  
(*A long pause.*)
- GROSS: (*Quietly*) Are you sure that Ptydepe will really make office communications more precise?
- BALLAS: I'm glad our discussion is at last reaching a realistic level. Mr Pillar, would you offer Mr Gross some milk? 870  
(PILLAR *hands* GROSS HANA's *bottle of milk*. GROSS *drinks mechanically*.)  
Look here. You yourself know best how many misunderstandings, suspected innuendos, injustices and injuries can be contained in one single sentence of a natural language. In fact, a natural language endows many more-or-less precise terms, such as for example the term 'coloured', with so many wrong, let's say emotional, overtones, that they can entirely distort the innocent and eminently human content of these terms. Now tell me sincerely, has the word 'mutarex' any such overtones for you? It hasn't, has it? You see! It is a paradox, but it is precisely the surface inhumanity of an artificial language which guarantees its truly human function! After Ptydepe comes into use, no one will ever again have the impression that he's being injured when in fact he's being helped, and thus everybody will be much happier. 875  
(HANA *returns by the back door, carrying a box of chocolates, puts it in her shopping bag, sits down and once more begins to comb her hair. Pause.*) 880
- GROSS: You have convinced me. Have the supplementary order for the introduction of Ptydepe in our organization typed and bring it to me for signature. 890
- BALLAS: Mr Gross, we're overjoyed that you've grasped the demands of the times. We look forward to our further work in this organization under your expert and enlightened leadership.  
(*He takes out a sheet of paper and puts it on the desk in front of GROSS.*) 895  
Here is the typed order you request.  
(GROSS *signs*. When he finishes, BALLAS and PILLAR *begin to applaud*. GROSS *also claps uncertainly a few times*. They all *shake hands and congratulate each other*. Finally, BALLAS *takes the signed document*.) 900  
Well, that's that. Aren't you hungry, Mr P?  
(PILLAR *shakes his head. Pause.*)  
I believe that from now on we'll be working very closely together.
- GROSS: We'll have to. Without your help it'd probably be rather hard for me to find my bearings in the new situation. Perhaps at the beginning we shan't be able to avoid directing the organization, so to speak, hand in hand. 905
- BALLAS: I have a better idea. What about me being the director and you my deputy. Won't that make things much easier?
- GROSS: (*Confused*) But you said, didn't you, that you were looking forward to working under my expert and enlightened leadership? 910
- BALLAS: You will be able to use your expertise and enlightenment just as well as a deputy. I'll go and get my things, while you, Mr Gross, will kindly move out of my desk!
- GROSS: As you wish, Mr Ballas. 915
- BALLAS: Mr P, let's go.

(BALLAS and PILLAR leave by the side door. GROSS collects papers from his desk and stuffs them in his pockets, then carefully takes down the fire extinguisher hanging on the wall.)

GROSS: Things do seem to be moving rather fast.

HANA: Mr Gross –

GROSS: There was nothing else I could do. An open conflict would have meant that I'd be finished. This way – as Deputy Director – I can at least salvage this and that.

HANA: Mr Gross –

GROSS: Anyway, who knows, maybe this – Ptydepe – will turn out to be a good thing after all. If we grasp the reins firmly and with intelligence –

HANA: Mr Gross –

GROSS: What is it?

HANA: May I go and get my lunch?

GROSS: Run along!

(HANA hastily takes her knife and fork, and hurries out by the back door. BALLAS and PILLAR enter by the side door. BALLAS is carrying a fire extinguisher, identical with the one GROSS just took off the wall. GROSS halts in the centre and stares sadly ahead.)

(To himself) Why can't I be a little boy again? I'd do everything differently from the beginning. (GROSS lingers dejectedly for a second longer, then turns and slowly walks out by the back door, the fire extinguisher clasped in his arms. Meanwhile BALLAS has placed his own extinguisher in the emptied space, PILLAR has taken various papers from his pockets and spread them on the desk. Then they both sit down at the desk, make themselves comfortable, grow still, look at each other and smile happily.)

925

930

935

940

## SCENE 5

*The Ptydepe classroom. Again LEAR lecturing to four clerks.*

945

LEAR: Well then, let us proceed to the interjections. As you know, every word of a natural language – including the interjections – has several Ptydepe equivalents, which differentiate its several shades of meaning. To start with, for each interjection we shall learn only one, the most common, expression in Ptydepe. Nevertheless, as an example, I'd like to demonstrate to you through the Ptydepe renderings of the interjection 'boo', how rich and precise is Ptydepe, even in this marginal sphere.

950

(GROSS enters by the back door, fire extinguisher in his arms, walks towards the side door, hesitates, halts, thinks for a moment, then turns to LEAR.)

955

GROSS: Sir –

LEAR: What is it?

GROSS: I do hate to interrupt you, but I happen to have with me a little Ptydepe text, and I was wondering if – just as an example, you know – it might not be a good thing to acquaint our colleagues here with the actual shape of Ptydepe. Perhaps if you read it aloud and then possibly translated it, it might be of interest to the class.

960

LEAR: As regards a sample of an actual Ptydepe text, I've prepared my own, authorized, specimen. However, for the sake of variety, I'm quite prepared to read your text as well, that is, provided you can show that your interest in Ptydepe is vital and you're not just trying to interfere with the class. You may sit down

965

- (GROSS, *surprised, mechanically sits in an empty chair, puts extinguisher in his lap.*)  
Generally speaking, the interjection 'boo' is used in the daily routine of an office, a company, a large organization when one employee wants to sham-ambush another. Who can tell us how one says 'boo' in Ptydepe when a hidden employee wants to sham-ambush another employee who is in full view and quite unprepared for the danger? Mr Thumb!
- THUMB: (*Gets up.*) Gedyndrelom. (*Sits down.*) 975  
LEAR: Correct. And when the imperilled employee is aware of the danger? (*Points at GROSS.*)
- GROSS: (*Gets up.*) Danger menacing an employee who is in full view?  
LEAR: Yes. 980  
GROSS: Who is aware of the danger?  
LEAR: Yes.  
GROSS: And the perpetrator is hidden?  
LEAR: Yes.  
GROSS: Aha – yes – I see. Well – in that case one says – damn it, it was on the tip of my tongue. 985  
LEAR: Mr Thumb, do you know?  
THUMB: (*Gets up.*) Osonfterte. (*Sits down.*)  
LEAR: There. You see how easy it is! Well, let's take another case, shall we? For example, how would a superior say 'boo' when he wishes to test out the vigilance of a subordinate? 990
- GROSS: A superior?  
LEAR: Yes.  
GROSS: The vigilance of a subordinate?  
LEAR: Yes. 995  
GROSS: I say, I think I know this one!  
LEAR: Well, then tell us.  
GROSS: We're translating the interjection 'boo', aren't we?  
LEAR: Yes.  
GROSS: I'm sure I know it – only – it has sort of slipped my mind. 1000  
LEAR: Well, Mr Thumb?  
THUMB: (*Gets up.*) Ysiste etordyf. (*Sits down.*)  
LEAR: Correct, Mr Thumb. Well, shall we try once more? Third time never fails, eh? Let's see if you can tell us, for example, how does an employee who has not taken the precaution, or the time, or the trouble to hide say 'boo' if he wants to sham-ambush another employee who is also in full view, when it is meant in earnest? 1005
- GROSS: I'm afraid I don't know.  
LEAR: Let me help you. Eg –  
GROSS: Eg – eg – eg – 1010  
LEAR: Jeht –  
GROSS: Yes, I do remember now. Eg jeht.  
LEAR: Wrong. Mr Thumb, would you mind telling him?  
THUMB: (*Gets up.*) Eg jeht kuz. (*Sits down.*)  
LEAR: Correct. Eg jeht doesn't mean anything at all. Those are only two sub-words of the word eg jeht kuz. 1015  
GROSS: The third sub-word escaped me.  
LEAR: Unfortunately, also the first two sub-words escaped you, just as all the other Ptydepe words which I was trying to teach you only a moment ago. When one considers that the interjections are the easiest part of Ptydepe and that my requirements have indeed been minimal, one cannot avoid concluding that yours is not merely a case of average 1020

- inattentiveness or negligence, but of that particular inability to let any Ptydepe whatsoever which stems from a profound and well-disguised doubt in its very sense. Under these circumstances I can hardly be expected to oblige you by reading aloud and, what's more, translating an unauthorized text. Chozup puzuk bojt!
- GROSS: Goodness! So much fuss about three little words! (*Claps fire extinguisher in his arms and leaves by the side door.*)
- LEAR: Now then, let us proceed. Mr Thumb, can you tell us how a subordinate says 'boo' to a superior in Ptydepe on the days specially appointed for this purpose? 1030
- THUMB: (*Gets up.*) Yxap tseror najx. (*Sits down.*)
- LEAR: Correct, Mr Thumb. You get an A.

## SCENE 6

1035

*The Secretariat of the Translation Centre. The office is empty, only the noise of a party going on offstage can be heard: gay voices, laughter, clinking of glasses, singing of 'Happy birthday to you', drinking songs, etc. During the first part of the following scene the noise occasionally becomes very loud, then quiets down a little. GROSS hurries in by the back door with the fire extinguisher still in his arms, halts in the centre, looks around, listens, then puts the extinguisher on the floor and tentatively sits down. MARIA enters by the back door, carrying a paper bag full of limes and walks towards the side door. GROSS gets up at once.*

1040

- GROSS: Good afternoon. 1045
- MARIA: Good afternoon. (*Leaves by the side door, offstage*) Here are the limes, Miss Helena.
- HELENA: (*Offstage*) Would you mind putting them down by the coat rack? That's a good girl. 1050
- (*MARIA re-enters by side door, sits at her desk and begins to work.*)
- GROSS: (*Also sits down.*) Miss Helena is next door?
- MARIA: Yes. They're celebrating Mr Kliment's birthday.
- GROSS: Do you think she'd mind coming here for a moment?
- MARIA: I'll ask – (*Exits by the side door. Returns after a short while.*) Mr Gross –
- GROSS: Yes? 1055
- MARIA: You're no longer the Managing Director?
- GROSS: I'm his deputy now.
- MARIA: Oh! Forgive me for asking – but what happened?
- GROSS: Oh, well, we just – we exchanged jobs, Mr Ballas and I.
- MARIA: Well, Deputy Director is also a very responsible position. 1060
- GROSS: It is, isn't it? As a matter of fact, to some extent it's even more responsible than the director's! I can remember, for instance, that when I was the director, my deputy often solved some of the most important problems for me. Will Miss Helena come?
- MARIA: You'll have to wait a little, I'm afraid. 1065
- (*HELENA looks in at the side door. GROSS quickly gets up.*)
- HELENA: (*To MARIA*) Come here a moment, will you?
- (*MARIA leaves with HELENA by the side door. GROSS slowly sits down again. Long pause. Loud voices and noise from next door. After a while all quiets down.*) 1070
- GROSS: Mr Watcher –
- GEORGE: (*Offstage*) What is it?
- GROSS: We're friends again, aren't we?

- GEORGE: (Offstage) Oh, well – why not?  
(Pause. Noise of the party.)
- GROSS: Mr Watcher –
- GEORGE: (Offstage) What now?
- GROSS: Aren't you celebrating?
- GEORGE: I'm following the party through the chink.
- GROSS: Does it look like a long one? 1080
- GEORGE: (Offstage) They've finished the vodka.
- GROSS: Have they?  
(Pause. Singing offstage, changing into cheers.)
- VOICES: (Offstage) For he's a jolly good fellow  
For he's a jolly good fellow 1085  
For he's a jolly good fellow  
Which nobody can deny.  
Hip–hip–hurrah!  
(Cheers and shouts culminate in laughter which, however, soon dies down; voices are beginning to recede, a few farewells, then all is quiet. The party is over. STROLL and SAVANT enter by the side door, absorbed in animated conversation.) 1090
- STROLL: I bet she was shy!
- SAVANT: To start with. But then –
- STROLL: Then what? 1095
- HELENA: (Enters by the side door.) Come on, everybody! Let's have some coffee!
- STROLL: That's a thought! Where's Maria?
- SAVANT: Our sexy little thing? Mr Gross might know.
- GROSS: I?
- SAVANT: Don't try to deny it! You lust after her! 1100
- GROSS: I beg your pardon.
- SAVANT: You called her my dear. The Staff Watcher heard you.
- GEORGE: (Offstage) You talk too much, Alex.
- SAVANT: Listen, why don't you shut up and do your watching!
- STROLL: Now, now, friends! (Calls) Maria! 1105
- SAVANT: (Sings) 'Maria–Maria–Maria!'
- HELENA: Leave her alone, sweetie. She's ironing my slip. I'll make the coffee.  
(Calls towards the side door) Where do you keep the percolator?  
(MARIA runs in by the side door, iron in one hand; with the other she takes the percolator from the drawer, and runs out again.) 1110
- STROLL: You won't mind, Mr Gross, will you, if we don't offer you any coffee?  
We've very little left, you see. It'll just about make three cups.
- GROSS: Never mind. I don't really care for any.
- STROLL: Nellie, Mr Gross doesn't care for any coffee. Make it three cups, but make mine double. (To SAVANT) I say, what about a cigar with the coffee? 1115
- SAVANT: That's a thought!
- GROSS: Miss Helena –
- HELENA: (Calling towards the side door) Where do you keep the coffee?  
(MARIA runs in by the side door with the iron, takes a jar of coffee from another drawer, runs out again. Meanwhile STROLL has taken the cigar box off his desk. Offers one to SAVANT.) 1120
- GROSS: Miss Helena –
- STROLL: That's what I call a cigar!
- SAVANT: (Takes one.) Ta.  
(STROLL also takes one. Both light them expertly. GROSS watches them. As usual, he first tries all his pockets, then takes out some money and offers it to STROLL.) 1125
- GROSS: Excuse me – may I – if you'd –



- STROLL: Sorry, Mr Gross, I wouldn't advise it. I really wouldn't. They're awfully heavy, you're not used to them, they're sure to make you cough.
- GROSS: Just one –
- STROLL: I mean it. You'd be making a mistake.  
(GROSS, *disappointed, puts his money back.* STROLL and SAVANT *smoke with gusto.*)
- GROSS: Miss Helena – 1135
- HELENA: Why don't you call me Nellie, sweetie. What is it?
- GROSS: Miss Nellie, do you issue the documents one needs to get a translation authorized?
- STROLL: Goose, vodka, and a cigar, that's what I call living.
- SAVANT: And what a cigar! 1140
- GROSS: I said, do you issue the documents one needs to get a translation authorized?
- HELENA: (*Calling towards the side door*) Where do you get water?
- MARIA: (*Offstage*) I'll get it.  
(*She runs in by the side door, iron in hand, grabs the kettle, and runs out through the back door.*) 1145
- HELENA: (*To GROSS*) What?
- GROSS: Do you issue the documents one needs to get a translation authorized?
- HELENA: Yes. To anybody who hasn't received a memo written in Ptydepe.
- GROSS: Why? 1150
- SAVANT: Downright heady!
- STROLL: I should say!
- GROSS: I said, why?
- HELENA: (*Calling towards the side door*) Where do you keep the cups?
- MARIA: (*Offstage*) Coming! 1155  
(*She runs in by the back door, carrying the iron and the kettle full of water. Pours water into the percolator, takes out cups and a spoon, hands them to HELENA and runs out by the side door.*)
- HELENA: (*Spoons out coffee into the percolator.*) Why what?
- GROSS: Why this condition? 1160
- HELENA: Because I cannot be expected to give the personal registration documents to every Tom, Dick and Harry without making damned sure they don't conflict with the findings of the last audit in his blessed memo!
- GROSS: Why can't you look at his memo and see what it says?
- STROLL: Poor Zoro Bridel used to smoke only these. And he was a real gourmet! 1165
- SAVANT: Pity he passed away!
- GROSS: I said why?
- HELENA: (*Calling towards the side door*) Sugar!  
(*MARIA runs in, carrying the iron, hands HELENA a paper bag of sugar and again runs out.*) 1170  
(*To GROSS*) Why what?
- GROSS: Why can't you look at his memo and see what it says?
- HELENA: I'm forbidden to translate any Ptydepe texts. (*Towards the side door*) It's almost empty.
- MARIA: (*Offstage*) There's another bag in the drawer. 1175
- GROSS: Good gracious! What can a staff member do in such a case?
- SAVANT: Mr Bridel loved goose, didn't he?
- STROLL: Zoro? Simply mad about it!
- HELENA: (*Calling towards the side door*) Water's boiling.  
(*MARIA runs in by the side door, puts the iron on the floor, unplugs the percolator, pours coffee into cups.*) 1180  
(*To GROSS*) What?
- GROSS: What can a staff member do in such a case?

- HELENA: He can have his memo translated. Listen everybody! Today y coffee's hyp nagyp!  
(MARIA passes cups to STROLL, SAVANT and HELENA, then takes the iron and runs out through the side door.)
- SAVANT: Nagyp avalyx?
- HELENA: Nagyp hayfazut!  
(STROLL, SAVANT and HELENA pass the spoon around, offer sugar to each other, sip their coffee with gusto, absorbed in their Ptydepe conversation. GROSS, growing more and more desperate, turns from one to the other.) 1190
- GROSS: Mr Stroll –
- STROLL: Hayfazut gyp andaxe. (To GROSS) Yes? 1195
- SAVANT: Andaxe bel jok andaxu zep?
- GROSS: In order to make a translation from Ptydepe, you require an authorization from Dr Savant –
- HELENA: Andaxu zep.
- STROLL: Ejch tut zep. Notut? 1200
- GROSS: Dr Savant –
- SAVANT: Tut. Gavych ejch lagorax. (To GROSS) Yes?
- HELENA: Lagorax hagyp.
- GROSS: In order to grant the authorization, you require the documents from Miss Helena – 1205
- STROLL: Lagorys nabarof dy Zoro Bridel caf o abagan.
- SAVANT: Mavolde gyzot abagan?
- GROSS: Miss Helena –
- HELENA: Abagan fajfor! (To GROSS) Yes?
- STROLL: Fajfor? Nu rachaj? 1210
- GROSS: In order to issue the documents, you require that a staff member have his memorandum translated –
- SAVANT: Rachaj gun.
- HELENA: Gun znojvep?
- STROLL: Znojvep yj. 1215
- SAVANT: Yj rachaj?
- HELENA: Rachaj gun!
- STROLL: Gun znojvep?
- SAVANT: Znojvep yj.
- HELENA: Yj rachaj? 1220
- STROLL: Rachaj gun!
- SAVANT: Gun znojvep?
- GROSS: (Shouts) Quiet!  
(At once all three become silent and quickly get up. Not on account of GROSS, of course, but because BALLAS and PILLAR have just quietly entered by the back door. GROSS's back is turned towards BALLAS and PILLAR, thus he does not see them.)  
I'm the Deputy Director and I insist that you show me some respect! You may sit down.  
(Naturally, they remain standing. Pause. MARIA, unaware of what has been happening, enters by the side door carrying the ironed slip over her arm. Seeing the situation she crumples the slip behind her back and stands like the others.) 1225
- As I've just discovered, any staff member who has recently received a memorandum in Ptydepe can be granted a translation of a Ptydepe text only after his memorandum has been translated. But what happens if the Ptydepe text which he wishes translated is precisely that memorandum? It can't be done, because it hasn't yet been translated officially. In other words, the only way to learn what is in one's memo is 1235

to know it already. An extraordinary paradox, when you come to think of it. Ladies and gentlemen, do you come to think of it? I ask you, what must an employee of our organization – whoever he may be – do in order to escape this vicious, vicious circle?

*(For a second there is dead silence.)*

BALLAS: He must learn Ptydepe, Mr Gross. *(To the others)* You may sit down. 1245  
*(They all sit down at once. MARIA, still hiding the slip behind her, runs fearfully to her desk.)*

GROSS: *(Faintly)* Are you here?

BALLAS: Yes, we are.

GROSS: Have you been here long? 1250

BALLAS: Not long.

GROSS: I didn't hear you come in.

BALLAS: We entered quietly.

GROSS: Excuse me, I –

BALLAS: There are things, Mr Gross, that cannot be excused. And when, at the 1255  
very time in which the whole organization is conducting a courageous struggle for the introduction and establishment of Ptydepe, an official, referring to the activities of our employees, speaks with such malicious innuendo and mean irony about – I quote – 'a vicious, vicious circle', then it cannot be excused at all. 1260

GROSS: I'm sorry, Mr Ballas, but the circumstance I've allowed myself to point out is simply a fact.

BALLAS: We refuse to be bullied by facts!

*(Long pause.)*

GROSS: *(In a quiet, broken voice)* I plead guilty. I acknowledge the entire 1265  
extent of my guilt, while fully realizing the consequences resulting from it. Furthermore, I wish to enlarge my confession by the following self-indictment. I issued an illegal order which led to the fraudulent authentication of my own, personal notebook. By this action I abused my authority. I did this in order to avert attention from the fact that 1270  
I'd appropriated a bank endorsement stamp improperly for my private use. I request for myself the most severe punishment.

BALLAS: I think that under these circumstances it is no longer possible for him to remain in our organization. What do you say, Mr P?

*(PILLAR shakes his head.)*

Certainly not. Come to my office tomorrow morning. We'll settle the 1275  
formalities connected with your dismissal. *(Calls)* George, come out of there! You'll be my deputy. *(To the others)* You may leave now. Mr P, let's go.

*(BALLAS and PILLAR leave by the back door, STROLL, SAVANT and HELENA by the side door, GROSS remains standing in the centre. Motionless, he stares ahead. MARIA watches him in silence. It seems she would like to help him in some way. Then she takes the cigar box and shyly offers one to GROSS. GROSS does not see her. HELENA looks in at the side door.)* 1280  
1285

HELENA: *(To MARIA)* Seems the grocer's got fresh canteloupes. Would you mind running over and getting me ten? If you're quick about it, I'll give you a taste!

*(HELENA disappears. MARIA hastily replaces the cigar box, snatches her string bag and runs out through the back door. GROSS hangs his head, takes the fire extinguisher, and slowly, sadly leaves by the back door. Just then a small secret door opens in one of the side walls and GEORGE backs out of it on all fours. When he is quite out, he straightens, stretches, arranges his clothes with a dash of vanity, takes a cigar from the box and haughtily struts out by the back door.)* 1290  
1295

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