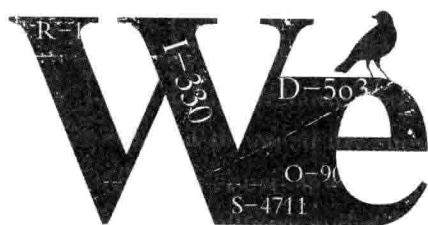


~~Yevgeny Zamyatin~~



Yevgeny Zamyatin

北方文艺出版社

Contents



RECORD ONE	001
An Announcement//The Wisest of Lines//A Poem	
RECORD TWO	003
Ballet//Square Harmony//X	
RECORD THREE	008
A Coat//A Wall//The Tables	
RECORD FOUR	013
The Wild Man with a Barometer//Epilepsy//If	
RECORD FIVE	017
The Square//The Rulers of the World//An Agreeable and Useful Function	
RECORD SIX	020
An Accident//The Cursed "It's Clear"//Twenty-four Hours	
RECORD SEVEN	027
An Eyelash//Taylor//Henbane and Lily of the Valley	
RECORD EIGHT	033
An Irrational Root//R—13//The Triangle	

RECORD NINE	038
Liturgy//Iambus//The Cast—iron Hand	
RECORD TEN	042
A Letter//A Membrane//Hairy I	
RECORD ELEVEN	050
No, I Can't; Let It Be without Headings!	
RECORD TWELVE	055
The Delimitation of the Infinite//Angel//Meditations on Poetry	
RECORD THIRTEEN	059
Fog//Thou//A Decidedly Absurd Adventure	
RECORD FOURTEEN	064
"Mine"//Impossible//A Cold Floor	
RECORD FIFTEEN	067
The Bell//The Mirror—like Sea//I Am to Bum Eternally	
RECORD SIXTEEN	072
Yellow//A Two-dimensional Shadow//An Incurable Soul	
RECORD SEVENTEEN	078
Through Glass//I Died//The Corridor	
RECORD EIGHTEEN	084
Debris of Logic//Wounds and Plaster//Never Again	
RECORD NINETEEN	090
The Infinitesimal of the Third Order//From Under the Forehead//	
Over the Railing	

RECORD TWENTY	096
Discharge//The Material of an Idea//The Zero Rock	
RECORD TWENTY-ONE	099
The Duty of an Author//The Ice Swells//The Most Difficult Love	
RECORD TWENTY-TWO	105
The Benumbed Waves//Everything Is Improving//I Am a Microbe	
RECORD TWENTY-THREE	109
Flowers//The Dissolution of a Crystal//If Only (?)	
RECORD TWENTY-FOUR	114
The Limit of the Function//Easter//To Cross Out Everything	
RECORD TWENTY-FIVE	118
The Descent from Heaven//The Greatest Catastrophe in History//	
The Known—Is Ended	
RECORD TWENTY-SIX	125
The World Does Exist//Rash//Forty-one Degrees Centigrade	
RECORD TWENTY-SEVEN	129
No Headings. It Is Impossible!	
RECORD TWENTY-EIGHT	135
Both of Them//Entropy and Energy//The Opaque Part of the Body	
RECORD TWENTY-NINE	143
Threads on the Face//Sprouts//An Unnatural Compression	
RECORD THIRTY	146
The Last Number//Galileo's Mistake//Would It Not Be Better?	

RECORD THIRTY-ONE	150
The Great Operation//I Forgave Everything//The Collision of Trains	
RECORD THIRTY-TWO	158
I Do Not Believe//Tractors//A Little Human Splinter	
RECORD THIRTY-THREE	164
This Without a Synopsis, Hastily, the Last The day.	
RECORD THIRTY-FOUR	166
The Forgiven Ones//A Sunny Night//A Radio-Valkyrie	
RECORD THIRTY-FIVE	174
In a Ring//A Carrot//A Murder	
RECORD THIRTY-SIX	180
Empty Pages//The Christian God//About My Mother	
RECORD THIRTY-SEVEN	184
Infusorian//Doomsday//Her Room	
RECORD THIRTY-EIGHT	188
I Don't Know What Title—Perhaps the Whole//Synopsis May Be Called a Castoff Cigarette Butt	
RECORD THIRTY-NINE	191
The End	
RECORD FORTY	196
Facts//The Bell//I Am Certain	

RECORD ONE



An Announcement
The Wisest of Lines
A Poem

This is merely a copy, word for word, of what was published this morning in the State newspaper:

"In another hundred and twenty days the building of the Integral will be completed. The great historic hour is near, when the first Integral will rise into the limitless space of the universe. One thousand years ago your heroic ancestors subjected the whole earth to the power of the United State. A still more glorious task is before you: the integration of the indefinite equation of the Cosmos by the use of the glass, electric, fire-breathing Integral. Your mission is to subjugate to the grateful yoke of reason the unknown beings who live on other planets, and who are perhaps still in the primitive state of freedom. If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically faultless happiness, our duty will be to force them to be happy. But before we take up arms, we shall try the power of words.



"In the name of the Well-Doer, the following is announced herewith to all Numbers of the United State:

"Whoever feels capable must consider it his duty to write treatises, poems, manifestoes, odes, and other compositions on the greatness and the beauty of the United State.

"This will be the first cargo which the Integral will carry. "Long live the United State! Long live the Numbers!! Long live the Well-Doer!!!"

I feel my cheeks burn as I write this. To integrate the colossal, universal equation! To unbend the wild curve, to straighten it out to a tangent—to a straight line! For the United State is a straight line, a great, divine, precise, wise line, the wisest of lines!

I, D-503, the builder of the Integral, I am only one of the many mathematicians of the United State. My pen, which is accustomed to figures, is unable to express the march and rhythm of consonance; therefore I shall try to record only the things I see, the things I think, or, to be more exact, the things we think. Yes, "we"; that is exactly what I mean, and We, therefore, shall be the title of my records. But this will only be a derivative of our life, of our mathematical, perfect life in the United State. If this be so, will not this derivative be a poem in itself, despite my limitations? It will. I believe it, I know it.

My cheeks still burn as I write this. I feel something similar to what a woman probably feels when for the first time she senses within herself the pulse of a tiny, blind, human being. It is I, and at the same time it is not I. And for many long months it will be necessary to feed it with my life, with my blood, and then with a pain at my heart, to tear it from myself and lay it at the feet of the United State.

Yet I am ready, as everyone, or nearly everyone of us, is. I am ready.

RECORD TWO



Ballet

Square Harmony

X

SPRING. From behind the Green Wall, from some unknown plains the wind brings to us the yellow honeyed pollen of flowers. One's lips are dry from this sweet dust. Every moment one passes one's tongue over them. Probably all women whom I meet in the street (and certainly men also) have sweet lips today. This somewhat disturbs my logical thinking. But the sky! The sky is blue. Its limpidness is not marred by a single cloud. (How primitive was the taste of the ancients, since their poets were always inspired by these senseless, formless, stupidly rushing accumulations of vapor!) I love, I am sure it will not be an error if I say we love, only such a sky—a sterile, faultless sky. On such days the whole universe seems to be moulded by the same eternal glass, like the Green Wall, and like all our buildings. On such days one sees their wonderful equations, hitherto unknown. One sees these equations in everything, even in the most ordinary, everyday things.



Here is an example: this morning I was on the dock where the Integral is being built, and I saw the lathes; blindly, with abandon, the balls of the regulators were rotating; the cranks were swinging from side to side with a glimmer; the working beam proudly swung its shoulder; and the mechanical chisels were dancing to the melody of unheard tarantellas. I suddenly perceived all the music, all the beauty, of this colossal, this mechanical ballet, illumined by light blue rays of sunshine. Then the thought came: why beautiful? Why is the dance beautiful? Answer: because it is an unfree movement. Because the deep meaning of the dance is contained in its absolute, ecstatic submission, in the ideal non-freedom. If it is true that our ancestors would abandon themselves in dancing at the most inspired moments of their lives (religious mysteries, military parades), then it means only one thing: the instinct of non-freedom has been characteristic of human nature from ancient times, and we in our life of today, we are only consciously—

I was interrupted. The switchboard clicked. I raised my eyes—O-90, of course! In half a minute she will be here to take me for the walk.

Dear O-! She always seems to me to look like her name, O-. She is approximately ten centimeters shorter than the required Maternal Norm. Therefore she appears round all over; the rose-colored O of her lips is open to meet every word of mine. She has a round soft dimple on her wrist. Children have such dimples. As she came in, the logical flywheel was still buzzing in my head, and following its inertia, I began to tell her about my new formula which embraced the machines and the dancers and all of us.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" I asked.

"Yes, wonderful...Spring!" she replied, with a rosy smile.

You see? Spring! She talks about Spring! Females!... I became silent.

We were down in the street. The avenue was crowded. On days when the weather is so beautiful, the afternoon personal hour is usually the hour of the supplementary walk. As always, the big Musical Tower was playing the March of the United State with all its pipes. The Numbers, hundreds, thousands of Numbers in light blue unifs (probably a derivative of the ancient uniform) with golden badges on the chest—the State number of each one, male or female—

the Numbers were walking slowly, four abreast, exaltedly keeping step. I, we four, were but one of the innumerable waves of a powerful torrent: to my left, O-90 (if one of my long-haired ancestors were writing this a thousand years ago he would probably call her by that funny word, mine); to my right, two unknown Numbers, a she—Number and a he—Number.

Blue sky, tiny baby suns in each one of our badges; our faces are unclouded by the insanity of thoughts. Rays Do you picture it? Everything seems to be made of a kind of smiling, a ray—like matter. And the brass measures: Tm—ta—ta—tam...Tra—ta—ta—tam...Stamping on the brassy steps that sparkle in the sun, with every step you rise higher and higher into the dizzy blue heights Then, as this morning on the dock, again I saw, as if for the first time in my life, the impeccably straight streets, the glistening glass of the pavement, the divine parallel—epipeds of the transparent dwellings, the square harmony of the grayish-blue rows of Numbers. And it seemed to me that not past generations, but I myself, had won a victory over the old god and the old life, that I myself had created all this. I felt like a tower: I was afraid to move my elbow, lest the walls, the cupola, and the machines should fall to pieces.

Then without warning—a jump through centuries: I remembered (apparently through an association by contrast) a picture in the museum, a picture of an avenue of the twentieth century, a thundering, many-colored confusion of men, wheels, animals, billboards, trees, colors, and birds They say all this once actually existed!

It seemed to me so incredible, so absurd, that I lost control of myself and laughed aloud. A laugh, as if an echo of mine, reached my ear from the right. I turned. I saw white, very white, sharp teeth, and an unfamiliar female face.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but you looked about you like an inspired mythological god on the seventh day of creation. You look as though you are sure that I, too, was created by you, by no one but you. It is very flattering."

All this without a smile, even with a certain degree of respect (she may know that I am the builder of the Integral). In her eyes, nevertheless, and on her brows, there was a strange irritating X, and I was unable to grasp it, to find an arithmetical expression for it. Somehow I was confused; with a somewhat



hazy mind, I tried logically to explain my laughter.

"It was absolutely clear that this contrast, this impassable abyss, between the things of today and of years ago—"

"But why impassable?" (What bright, sharp teeth!) "One might throw a bridge over that abyss. Please imagine: a drum battalion, rows—all this existed before and consequently—"

"Oh, yes, it is clear," I exclaimed.

It was a remarkable intersection of thoughts. She said almost in the same words the things I had written down before the walk! Do you understand? Even the thoughts! It is because nobody is one, but one of. We are all so much alike—

"Are you sure?" I noticed her brows that rose to the temples in an acute angle—like the sharp corners of an X. Again I was confused, casting a glance to the right, then to the left. To my right—she, slender, abrupt, resistant flexible like a whip, 1—330 (I saw her number now). To my left, O—, totally different, all made of circles with a childlike dimple on her wrist; and at the very end of our row, an unknown he—Number, double—curved like the letter S. We were all so different from one another...

The one to my right, I—330, apparently caught the confusion in my eye, for she said with a sigh, "Yes, alas!"

I don't deny that this exclamation was quite in place, but again there was something in her face or in her voice...

With an abruptness unusual for me, I said, "Why, 'alas'? Science is developing and if not now, then within fifty or one hundred years—"

"Even the noses will—"

"Yes, noses!" This time I almost shouted, "Since there is still a reason, no matter what, for envy... Since my nose is button—like and someone else's is—"

"Well, your nose is rather classic, as they would have said in ancient days, although your hands— No, no, show me your hands!"

I hate to have anyone look at my hands; they are covered with long hair—a stupid atavism. I stretched out my hand and said as indifferently as I

could, "Apelike."

She glanced at my hand, then at my face.

"No, a very curious harmony."

She weighed me with her eyes as though with scales. The little horns again appeared at the corners of her brows.

"He is registered in my name," exclaimed O—90 with a rosy smile.

I made a grimace. Strictly speaking, she was out of order. This dear O—, how shall I say it? The speed of her tongue is not correctly calculated; the speed per second of her tongue should be slightly less than the speed per second of her thoughts—at any rate not the reverse.

At the end of the avenue the big bell of the Accumulating Tower resounded seventeen. The personal hour was at an end. I—330 was leaving us with that S—like he—Number. He has such a respectable, and I noticed then, such a familiar, face. I must have met him some— where, but where I could not remember. Upon leaving me I—330 said with the same X—like smile:

"Drop in day after tomorrow at auditorium 112."

I shrugged my shoulders: "If I am assigned to the auditorium you just named—"

She, with a peculiar, incomprehensible certainty: "You will be."

The woman had a disagreeable effect upon me, like an irrational component of an equation which you can— not eliminate. I was glad to remain alone with dear O—, at least for a short while. Hand in hand with her, I passed four lines of avenues; at the next corner she went to the right, I to the left. O—timidly raised her round blue crystalline eyes.

"I would like so much to come to you today and pull down the curtains, especially today, right now "

How funny she is. But what could I say to her? She was with me only yesterday and she knows as well as I that our next sexual day is day after tomorrow. It is merely another case in which her thoughts are too far ahead. It sometimes happens that the spark comes too early to the motor.

At parting I kissed her twice—no, I shall be exact, three times, on her wonderful blue eyes, such clear, unclouded eyes.

RECORD THREE



A Coat

A Wall

The Tables

I looked over all that I wrote down yesterday and I find that my descriptions are not sufficiently clear. That is, everything would undoubtedly be clear to one of us, but who knows to whom my Integral will someday bring these records? Perhaps you, like our ancestors, have read the great book of civilization only up to the page of nine hundred years ago. Perhaps you don't know even such elementary things as the Hour Tables, Personal Hours, Maternal Norm, Green Wall, Well-Doer. It seems droll to me, and at the same time it is very difficult to explain these things. It is as though, let us say, a writer of the twentieth century should start to explain in his novel such words as coat, apartment, wife. Yet if his novel had been translated for primitive races, how could he have avoided explaining what a coat meant? I am sure that the primitive man would look at a coat and think, "What is this for? It is only a burden, an unnecessary burden." I am sure that you will feel the same, if I tell

you that not one of us has ever stepped beyond the Green Wall since the Two Hundred Years' War.

But, dear readers, you must think, at least a little. It helps.

It is clear that the history of mankind, as far as our knowledge goes, is a history of the transition from nomadic forms to more sedentary ones. Does it not follow that the most sedentary form of life (ours) is at the same time the most perfect one? There was a time when people rushed from one end of the earth to another, but this was the prehistoric time when such things as nations, wars, commerce, different discoveries of different Americas still existed. Who has need of these things now?

I admit that humanity acquired this habit of a sedentary form of life not without difficulty and not all at once. When the Two Hundred Years' War had destroyed all the roads, which later were overgrown with grass, it was probably very difficult at first. It must have seemed uncomfortable to live in cities which were cut off from each other by green debris. But what of it? Man soon after he lost his tail probably did not learn at once how to chase away flies without its help. I am almost sure that at first he was even lonesome without his tail; but now, can you imagine yourself with a tail? Or can you imagine yourself walking in the street naked, without clothes? (It is possible you go without clothes still.) Here we have the same case. I cannot imagine a city which is not surrounded by a Green Wall; I cannot imagine a life which is not surrounded by the figures of our Tables.

Tables...Now even, purple figures look at me austere yet kindly from the golden background of the wall. Involuntarily I am reminded of the thing which was called by the ancients "Sainted Image," and I feel a desire to compose verses, or prayers, which are the same. Oh, why am I not a poet, so as to be able to glorify the Tables properly, the heart and pulse of the United State!

All of us and perhaps all of you read in childhood, while in school, that greatest of all monuments of ancient literature, the Official Railroad Guide. But if you compare this with the Tables, you will see side by side graphite and diamonds. Both are the same, carbon. But how eternal, transparent, how shining the diamond! Who does not lose his breath when he runs through the



pages of the Guide? The Tables transformed each one of us, actually, into a six—wheeled steel hero of a great poem. Every morning, with six—wheeled precision, at the same hour, at the same minute, we wake up, millions of us at once. At the very same hour, millions like one, we begin our work, and millions like one, we finish it. United into a single body with a million hands, at the very same second, designated by the Tables, we carry the spoons to our mouths; at the same second we all go out to walk, go to the auditorium, to the halls for the Taylor exercises, and then to bed.

I shall be quite frank: even we have not attained the absolute, exact solution of the problem of happiness. Twice a day, from sixteen to seventeen o'clock and from twenty—one to twenty—two, our powerful united organism dissolves into separate cells; these are the personal hours designated by the Tables. During these hours you would see the curtains discreetly drawn in the rooms of some; others march slowly over the pavement of the main avenue or sit at their desks as I sit now. But I firmly believe, let them call me an idealist and a dreamer, I believe that sooner or later we shall somehow find a place in the general formula even for these hours. Somehow, all of the 86,400 seconds will be incorporated in the Tables of Hours.

I have had opportunity to read and hear many improbable things about those times when human beings still lived in the state of freedom, that is, in an unorganized primitive state. One thing has always seemed to me most improbable: how could a government, even a primitive has always seemed to me most improbable: how could a government, even a primitive government, permit people to live without anything like our Tables—without compulsory walks, without precise regulation of the time to eat, for instance? They would get up and go to bed whenever they liked. Some historians even say that in those days the streets were lighted all night, and all night people went about the streets.

That I cannot understand. True, their minds were rather limited in those days. Yet they should have understood, should they not, that such a life was actually wholesale murder, although slow murder, day after day? The State (humanitarianism) forbade in those days the murder of one person, but it did

not forbid the killing of millions slowly and by inches. To kill one person, that is, to reduce the individual span of human life by fifty years, was considered criminal, but to reduce the general sum of human life by fifty million years was not considered criminal! Isn't it droll? Today this simple mathematical moral problem could easily be solved in half a minute's time by any ten—year—old Number, yet they couldn't do it! All their Immanuel Kants together couldn't do it! It didn't enter the heads of all their Kants to build a system of scientific ethics, that is, ethics based on adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing.

Further, is it not absurd that their State (they called it State!) left sexual life absolutely without control? On the contrary, whenever and as much as they wanted...absolutely unscientific, like beasts! And like beasts they blindly gave birth to children! Is it not strange to understand gardening, chicken farming, fishery (we have definite knowledge that they were familiar with all these things), and not to be able to reach the last step in this logical scale, namely, production of children—not to be able to discover such things as Maternal and Paternal Norms?

It is so droll, so improbable, that while I write this I am afraid lest you, my unknown future readers, should think I am merely a poor jester. I feel almost as if you may think I want simply to mock you and with a very serious face try to relate absolute nonsense to you. But first I am incapable of jesting, for in every joke a lie has its hidden function. And second, the science of the United State contends that the life of the ancients was exactly what I am describing, and the science of the United State does not make mistakes! Yet how could they have State logic, since they lived in a condition of freedom like beasts, like apes, like herds? What could one expect of them, since even in our day one hears from time to time, coming from the bottom, the primitive depths, the echo of the apes?

Fortunately it happens only from time to time, very seldom. Happily, it is only a case of small parts breaking; these may easily be repaired without stopping the eternal great march of the whole machine. And in order to eliminate a broken peg we have the skillful heavy hand of the Well-Doer, we have the experienced eyes of the Guardians...