



FICTION

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THIRD WHEEL FOR ELIZABETH
RUDINESCO'S TRIUMPH

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Probably already by the relatability of the traditional plot elements – the title and the denouement – the story «The Third Extra» pretends to a special reader, if not capable of risk, then at least inquisitive, ready to live a small space of text at least for the purpose of waiting for the novelty of the story under the provocatively formulaic words of the title cartouche. And such a reader will be rewarded with a tangible reward even for the sophisticated law of double-finality familiar in contemporary literature. Despite the fact that the decoding of the title in the last lines of the text is in the style of the retreat «from a day of direct sight to a day of avoidance.» This definition of reality by the famous philosopher and psychoanalyst Elisabeth Rudinesco could be applied to characterize in the story the fate of the man of comfort, who subordinates life to the cult of reason (simple) necessity, where there is no place for passions or affects, where everything is meant to be an alternative to the Freudian metaphor of man – not a master in his own home, simply because financial wealth allows this man to «unfroyd» multiply the number of buildings of which he is the owner. But it is in the light of Rudinesco's theory that the man of comfort in The Third Man appears as a subject who has suffered an indescribable total defeat. The comfort person in the book may fail to observe the interdependence of the unproblematic nature of her living in society and her reproductive death, caused by sluggish, depleting cells that have a purpose in prolonging life in children. She may not notice that the discovery by science of the mystery of the beginning of life and the banalized already practice



of IVF is accompanied by a periodic rebellion of the irrational, the unconscious and the superconscious, so that a reasonable plan is provided to cross the random encounter of germ cells. But in the eyes of the reader, the catastrophe of mere repose will appear more terrible than the catastrophe of explosive events. And the reader will experience the need to get out of the comfort zone of the characters, who refuse NOT planned to the same physically weak third child, as the inhabitants of the ancient Greek city of Kamiros went out into the desert behind the protective walls, to feel real life among the dangers and risks, to experience in the desert unpredictable own complexity as a challenge to the simplicity of the certainly understandable.

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Third wheel

Dedicated to O.M. and G. Z.

Rita was looking at herself in the mirror. A well groomed, chic woman without age, she could be in her twenties or close to her fifties, was sadly smiling to Rita from the silver surface. Shining skin, glossy healthy strands of hair, a teenage-perfect figure of a nymph, a business dress, a modest mink jacket, all those expressed success, prosperity and fortune. Her eyes were hopelessly looking in the mirror noticing the absence of wrinkles. Rita tried to understand, to find out for herself: why?

When she went to the kindergarten and school, her friends played house and dreamt about families and children. She had never dreamt about those things, because she was sure it could not be otherwise. Of course, she would definitely have children, she would definitely have a family. How could she not?. What for to dream about that will surely happen? She did not hurry. Next to her there were successful men who focused primarily on their careers. A modern man perceived the social ladder as a primitive hunting or fishing, he seriously treated it. His career was like killing a mammoth. That was the very man she chose — smart, practical and successful. Rita was also ambitious, she wanted to achieve something, others to be proud of her. They did not hurry with children, they thought they had time. There was so much exciting

all around! Children would still be, only with time.

So, Rita and Edik were intelligent (calm and right), successful and prosperous people. One can say they were rich. Both had impressive careers, whilst they did not work for money, more for self-realization, so money just stuck to them without any effort from their parts. By the way, they were not the first generation. Their parents were also very rich.

At the beginning, they studied at Institutes enjoying talks, visiting clubs, concerts and casinos with friends, travels (Monaco, Spain, India, Cuba, Italy, France and so on). Unlimited money gave the opportunity to spend time as they wanted, but it did not mean happily to spend it. Various little things could cause irritation. It can not be said that their relationship was ardent and passionate. The hotels were luxurious, the relationship was calm like the one of intelligent and well educated people who know how to behave decently. They were not off their heads, but it was calm and cozy, friendly comfortable.

Then in parallel with promising entrepreneurship according to the plan there were postgraduate studies. They needed PhD degrees not for work, as they were in business, but because it was prestigious. Thus, the presentations of their PhD theses passed with ease, without a hitch. If they had been real scientists and made any serious discoveries in science, then, of course, to defend the dissertations would have been incredibly difficult. However, as they were a businessman and a businesswoman, they had troubles only in business, besides, temporary ones which they solved in time.

They continued traveling a lot, but could never tell interesting stories about the countries they had visited, truly share their impressions. One could not get a word out of them with red-hot pincers. Scarce information, as a rule, was either about the level and service of luxury hotels where they had lived, or chic restaurants in which they had eaten, or transport, or some scientific and technological progress, technologies and never historic, cultural issues and customs. They seldom went to museums, more often reluctantly, always with a guide tube, because trips were individual, not group, but, as for a guide, they even did not have an idea to spend money on him or her.

They were going out for seven years while studying and defending. Then were living together for five years to see if they could get well under one roof. After twelve years of relationship they decided to get married, to register their marriage. There was no particular passion between them. Everything was convenient, comfortable, civilized, almost correct, based on the relationship between a man and a woman of the Western type of culture. They had two luxury apartments in the city center: one



flat in an architectural building, 260 m², where they lived; the other one in a newly built house, 170 m², which they gave for rent. Three more one-room apartments were also just for rent and were located in the center too. With the money from renting it was possible to live and travel without working. However, Rita and Edik were active, working for the process that gave much more profit than the leasing of properties. They bought a huge plot of land and were building a house. Life was calm and measured.

They were over thirty years old. Regarding their age, financial possibilities and marital status they both came to the conclusion that they could have a child. Who else but them?! Thus, they ceased being protected. Even in their sexual relationship there appeared a kind of wingedness that had not been traced before. However, after some time as always Rita's menstruation began. She got a little upset, because she always had what she had planned before. This time the situation went out of control, but she decided not to worry too much. She read in the *Cosmopolitan* that couples who managed to get pregnant within a half of year were considered healthy. They kept trying, but each time menstruation began Rita became melancholic, and after four months she even cried a bit.

Edik reassured her that six months had not passed yet, there was nothing to worry about. But Rita's sadness began to grow into initial boredom. She did not know what to do. She didn't want to think about what might happen, that she would never have children. She didn't want to think about it, but it was the very thought that was swirling in her head. Gradually she began to imagine what she would do if she had no children. Rita had a successful life, almost everyone envied her, because it seemed that impossible did not exist for her: both psychologically (she had a strong character and strategic thinking) and in the material sense. She would work, build, travel, communicate, relax. Would not those enough? Everyone wants to come to this. Couples with children can afford all those after the age of fifty when the children have grown up. She and Edik could be happy at thirty! She had only to accept that they would not have children and get it over.

As soon as she began to realize this, from the middle, from the solar plexus something began to pull, she felt sorry for herself. She was going to burst into tears: would Edik endure this, would he be with her if she did not bear a child, would she be with him?! Rita decided to keep on trying to get pregnant.

Six months passed, and Rita was not pregnant. Then they decided to consult a doctor. Naturally they chose a private, very expensive clinic. The beautiful interior

had to justify itself. Its patients were not very poor people, they were offered a wide range of procedures. They began to be taken a number of tests which cost an incredible amount of money and also took time. Instead of working Rita and Edik at a point were forced to go to the private clinic. However, in addition to necessary tests for not to be too upset they were offered additional procedures, such as massage, vitamins, rejuvenation, cosmetological service, as well as hairdressing and manicure. At first it was like a vacation, but three weeks later it became tiresome, in a month and a half it caused not very good suspicions and three months later when a substantial amount was spent and the diagnosis was never established Edik said timidly:

- In my opinion, money is being pumped out of us and no one is going to help us, because it is not economically profitable for them. As a businessman, I partially understand them: it is pointless to let go a chicken that lays golden eggs.

Edik said aloud what Rita had been thinking all over, but she didn't dare to admit it even to herself. She had already been on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Soothing massages did not soothe, but only irritated. When Edik voiced out what she had been guessing about for two months, but at the same time he had been afraid of admitting, Rita got hysterical right there. Rita sobbed, intermittent sobs turned into a scream. The doctor reacted immediately. Trying to seem professionally calm, louder than usual he gave orders to a nurse:

- Put the patient to bed! To begin, intramuscularly inject 5 mg of phenozeepam!

- Five? The nurse reaked and tensed up.

The doctor looked at her.

- Five and then in four hours I will look and we'll inject five more.

The nurse got nervous, the doctor noticed that. Rita and Edik saw that too. Rita kept sobbing. They did not understand what they were talking about, but it was not comfortable.

- All right, - said the doctor, - 8 mg we'll inject now and after that I'll decide!

Edik intuitively quickly understood what was going on, grabbed Rita in his arms whispering in her ear:

- Let's get out of here!

She stopped crying. In the hall he let her stand and holding her hand ran to the exit. She ran with him:

- What happened?! - she asked running.

- I don't know, - Edik replied without stopping, - I'll explain later.

A nurse ran into the hall behind them and began to shout:



– Rita Nikolaevna! You can't run! Stop!

Another woman in white came out towards them, with a smile she tried to say something to stop them, but they pushed her away and ran on. Right in their hospital's pajamas they jumped out into the street to get in the car as soon as possible and leave. The nurse jumped out on the porch.

– You didn't take your things! – She shouted behind them.

However, they were already on their way. Rita's friend then stopped by to pick up the things left in the hospital's wardrobe. She took them away *ырццштп* a notarized power of attorney. Rita and Edik did not dare to return there, but it was a pity to leave too expensive things there.

They decided that in our country medicine was very bad and doctors were dishonest, they needed to go to Germany and to do everything there. At work Rita explained to both the management and colleagues that they were planning to get pregnant. They were healthy, there were no obstacles, at least, they were not announced. However, our medicine was not on a sufficient level, so they would have to spend some time abroad. She still would work, deal with documents, it would be possible to send her everything by e-mail, she would do everything.

It took more than two years to try to get pregnant in Germany. Rita was sad. She tried to switch. Even over time she began getting used with the idea that they might not have children. She decided to start a new business, to organize international business with Italy. She began to study Italian and went to Milan.

However, the thought about a child did not let her go...

After the private clinic and Germany following the recommendation of verified acquaintances they asked for help a specialist of the Ukrainian budget hospital - «Family Planning Center». Gynecologist Halyna Anatoliivna examined Rita on a chair and recommended diagnosing uterine obstruction for which she prescribed an X-ray of the fallopian tubes. In the Center it cost 1,000 hryvnias. The X-ray confirmed the doctor's diagnosis which had not been made either in the private hospital or by German specialists. Rita had obstruction of the fallopian tubes.

Halyna Anatoliivna insisted on a surgery, she offered to do laparoscopy of the fallopian tubes. The surgery cost 6,000 hryvnias. Before the surgery Edik had got a spermogram which predictably turned out to be bad. Of course, to seem a specialist Galina Anatoliyivna prescribed the supplementary therapeutic treatment involving a huge pack of vitamins and tablets

for different systems of human organisms. Both Edik and Rita sluggishly, but also selflessly took them dutifully and regularly, in secret from themselves hoping for success. Nonetheless, laparoscopy did not help. Evidently slow sperm simply could not overcome numerous tubercles of the fallopian tubes, even after the influence of expensive vitamins and medicines.

Rita cried at nights. She secretly spied on women with children in the street and playgrounds. She mourned, gradually losing the last shred of hope. Edik very worried about Rita. He almost accepted the fact that they would not have children, but he felt sorry for Rita. He could not calm her down, probably he did not know how. Halyna Anatoliivna offered them the last option – IVF. However, before doing IVF, of course, they would have to take vitamins. Over those years it was unbearable for Rita and Edik not only to take tablets, they could not stand looking at them. Nevertheless, fighting vomitive impulses, they bravely continued taking medicines, having decided to do everything possible not to blame themselves for giving up something and not using a very small chance while preparing for IVF.

Rita and Edik were totally indifferent to money. They were told that IVF (in vitro fertilization) cost from forty to fifty thousand hryvnias (five or six thousand dollars). Then they were warned that the procedure could be repeated several times, namely three. The total amount was from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty thousand hryvnias (from fifteen to eighteen thousand dollars). Something was broken in Rita, perhaps due to the duration of treatment and previous failures. In addition to boredom, there was psychological fatigue and the desire to stop, to leave everything as it was.

This time, despite the material stability, they could afford almost anything, when Edik and Rita heard the sum, they both eloquently became silent at the same time. Emotional fatigue had affected the desire to act, it had provoked the wish to abandon the idea of having a child at all, because it was very scary to feel disappointed after a new failure again. Halyna Anatoliivna carefully looked at them. Two minutes after the pause she said that the next patients had been waiting for her. Edik realized that they had to say something and he asked:

– We need to consult and think.

– Okay, – said Halyna Anatoliivna, – when you have thought about this, call me.

They went outside. Nice soft snow was falling down. Rita seemed worried. Edik had a business appointment. He was in hurry. She asked him to walk down the street for a while, because they worked all the time and almost never walked. He politely



agreed, though he knew he was late. They were walking down the street. Across the road there was a beautiful young woman holding a girl's hand. The girl was very pretty. In her other hand the woman was holding a violin case. Right in front of them there was another woman, shouting at a crying child. The child was sobbing, as if she was suffocating, and asking for something, but the woman did not want to give it to her. Captivated Rita looked at both women. The one with the violin, aroused her admiration and even envy, while the other one caused exclusively condemnation. «Why is everything so unfair?!» – Rita thought. «She is not worthy to have a child! She yells at her! And I don't have a child! Why?!». It broke Rita's heart. She was so sad that she did not want anything at all, just to forget about everything, calm down and for everything to end finally.

They were walking on, approaching to a shop with a bright window. On one of the mannequins there was a fashionable mink coat trimmed with sable. Rita stopped and her eyes suddenly lit up. Edik noticed that. She felt a desire that surprised her very much, because she thought at that moment that she would never want anything again.

– I wonder how much it costs? – Edik began thinking aloud. – Let's go in and find out, – he suggested.

Surprised, Rita entered the shop with fascination and asked for a fur coat from the shop window, believing that she was doing it in vain. She suddenly looked lovingly at herself in the mirror. The fur coat cost forty thousand hryvnias, they gave for thirty-two thousands (four thousand dollars). Edik cynically thought that it was cheaper than IVF and they could buy it right away. Here it was. Rita seemed to be smiling again.

– We'll think about it, – Edik said sensibly and they left the shop.

Rita looked at the window. The child in the street continued crying hysterically and the mother, instead of calming her down, pretended to leave that made the baby howl even more. The beautiful woman, already without the violin case, was walking slowly the opposite side of the road. They were watching and from time to time they glanced at each other.

– Do you really want a child? – Edik asked Rita. – Look how the girl is screaming, and that lady at least an hour would be walking here up and down getting frozen, while her child would be playing the violin. Do you want the fur coat?!

– This one?

– You liked it!

– I want!

Edik went to the store and came out ten minutes later with a package in his hand.

– Well, let's go! I still have to be on time for the appointment.

They quickly went to the car. On the way Rita was admiring the views from the window and it seemed that her soul was gradually thawing.

In the evening, Rita was admiring herself in a new fur coat for a long time in the mirror. At night she suddenly woke up and began to shout hysterically at Edik:

– I want a baby! I don't need your rags! I want children!

In the morning, Edik called Halyna Anatoliivna and agreed on an IVF date and then everything happened like in a fairy tale.

After the first attempt of artificial insemination, Rita very much hoped that she and Edik would be in that rare percentage of lucky people who succeeded with the first try. A few days later she began carefully to examine herself in the mirror and look for signs of pregnancy in her changed figure. It seemed to her that the tummy had already appeared and clothes were more difficult to fasten on the waist and hips. She began to eat more so that the baby did not need anything, she ate the most delicious food, the best was for her, for their baby.

Ultrasound was scheduled three weeks after IVF. Rita was sure she was pregnant and felt very happy. For the ultrasound she took Edik with her, he had postponed a very important business meeting for this. In the Center Edik was sitting in the hall while Rita was being examined. Ten minutes later she came out of the doctor's office in tears, ignoring Edik, walked past him and jumped out into the street without a coat. Halyna Anatoliivna approached Edik and told him to enter the office. Instead of entering, Edik rushed after Rita.

Without clothes she reached the end of the district. He rushed to catch up with her and he did very quickly. Edik threw off his jacket and carefully put it on Rita.

- What are you doing?! You will catch a cold!

- I want to catch a cold, to die! I can't do anything!

- Where did you get it from, Rita? You are always so calm and sensible! What are you doing?! Let's go back! Galina Anatoliyivna is waiting for us!

Rita obediently turned back to the «Center».

– I warned you, – said Halyna Anatoliyivna softly and calmly, – that it might not work out after the first try. Let's make the second attempt, but not now, in four or five



months. Meantime you should return to your normal life. Go to work, switch from your problem, calm down. I will prescribe some supportive medicines that you will take together. Let's hope for the second time everything will go well.

«Vitamins» once again.

Five months later nothing changed after the second try. That time she calmly took the news. Alienation began swelling between Rita and Edik, which Rita, by the way, passionately encouraged provoking him to scandals in every possible way. Edik began staying at work longer so that he could come home as late as possible and see his unhappy wife as little as possible. Rita, in her turn, began being jealous of him for no reason, but her jealousy raised doubts in him and he involuntarily started looking at other women who were blooming and beautiful.

Four months later the last, third IVF procedure was scheduled. Rita did not expect anything. Absolutely depressed she went for an ultrasound three weeks later. Halyna Anatoliivna was examining her for a long time, then she called her colleague and they together looked at the computer monitor using some incomprehensible terms.

Galina Anatoliyivna took Rita's hand and very gently, with a smile said:

- Congratulations, you are pregnant.

- How can I be pregnant? – Rita whispered not understanding, not believing and tears unconsciously started falling down her face.

- So?

- Is that true? – Rita did not believe.

– Yes, it's. I'll say even more, you have had two fertilized eggs.

- What does it mean?

- This means that you'll have two children.

- How is it two? How can I give birth to two children? – Rita asked suspiciously.

- Don't worry! You can!

Rita immediately went to work to Edik to tell that she was pregnant and that they would have not one, but two children. Edik seemed to be glad to hear what he had no longer hoped for, but he said he would talk to the doctor in person about it.

In Halyna Anatoliyivna's office Edik already felt much more confident, but somehow not everything was clear for him. Thoughts were not fair and not iridescent despite the happy news.

- Thank you, Galina Anatoliyivna», – Edik said intelligently and kindly. –We

have already lost any hope.

Halyna Anatoliyivna looked at him softly, she was waiting for stupid nonsensical questions.

– Tell me, – Edik continued, – You said we would have two children. You see, – he said beginning to mumble, – we somehow didn't expect, we didn't calculate for this. That's a very big responsibility. Will we be able to raise two children? Maybe something can be done?

Halyna Anatoliivna having worked in the «Center» thought that it would be impossible to surprise her, but even she somehow tensed up. The tone of her voice became professionally detached and cold. As a doctor in a white coat she spoke to the «sick» subconsciously feeling «It is a sin to laugh at the poor».

– It's possible, – the doctor said with a share of cruelty. – It's possible to make a reduction of the embryo.

- Sorry, I did not quite understand... How is it?

- It is possible take away an extra cell, but it's alive!

Edik's eyes flashed with hope:

– Is it safe?

– It's very dangerous. We can damage the remaining cell and in your case it'll mean losing children, – the doctor said harshly and firmly.

– Then, we don't do anything! – Edik refused frightenedly. – Sorry for taking your time.

Rita's pregnancy passed surprisingly wonderfully and easily. Apparently, it was a sort of compensation for the suffering they had recently experienced.

Childbirth was easy too, if you can believe that childbirth can be easy. In the maternity hospital a tired but cheerful midwife told Edik:

– Daddy, congratulations on the birth of triplets! You are a sexual giant!

Edik had a surprised face:

- What triplets?

- Yes! Triplets! Three boys! The third, however, is weak. He was the last... He got it probably... Although, maybe, he didn't get it, - the midwife was thinking. - Well, nothing! You are rich! You'll bring them all up! Now there are so many good medicines! There would be money!

«Happy» Rita and Edik left the maternity hospital with two beautiful and healthy boys. Rita wanted to feel joy, but she was very tired. She could not sleep as before. These were unfamiliar emotions: fatigue mixed with remorse which she tried

to suppress, but it did not work well. They had a totally new life, complex, but very interesting filled with a completely different meaning.

The nurses from the infant ward, not indifferent to beauty, looked at the beautiful couple with admiration:

– Well, let’s go feed the children? – A red-haired nurse said to a blonde one.

– How many bottles to make? – The redhead asked. – Eight?

– Nine!

- Why nine?!

– They decided to give up the third child.

– How is it?! The redhead reasked with wide round eyes.

– First of all, they didn’t plan the third child,» – the blonde replied. – And, secondly, he had weak physical indications.

The nurses looked sadly out through the window at the luxurious white Porsche tied with a blue bow that Edik had given to Rita on the occasion of the birth of their children.

– Perhaps, the Lord not accidentally does not give children to some people, – said the red-head. – Do we have the right to interfere in God’s providence?

– Okay, let’s go feed the children, – the blonde said.

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