

THE HOUSE OF GOVERNMENT



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**A SAGA OF
THE RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION**

YURI SLEZKINE

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This is a work of history. Any resemblance to fictional
characters, dead or alive, is entirely coincidental.

Sometimes it seemed to Valène that time had come to a stop, suspended and frozen around an expectation he could not define. The very idea of his projected tableau, whose exposed, fragmented images had begun to haunt every second of his life, furnishing his dreams and ordering his memories; the very idea of this eviscerated building laying bare the cracks of its past and the crumbling of its present; this haphazard piling up of stories grandiose and trivial, frivolous and pathetic, made him think of a grotesque mausoleum erected in memory of companions petrified in terminal poses equally insignificant in their solemnity and banality, as if he had wanted to both prevent and delay these slow or quick deaths that seemed to engulf the entire building, story by story: Monsieur Marcia, Madame Moreau, Madame de Beaumont, Bartlebooth, Rorschach, Mademoiselle Crespi, Madame Albin, Smautf. And him, of course, Valène himself, the house's oldest inhabitant.

GEORGES PEREC, *LIFE: A USER'S MANUAL*

Mephisto:

There lies the body; if the soul would fly away,
I shall confront it with the blood-signed scroll.
Alas, they have so many means today
To rob the Devil of a soul.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, *FAUST*,
TRANS. WALTER KAUFMANN

