LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Here is an example of a syllogism. The cat has four paws. Isidore and Fricot both have four paws. Therefore Isidore and Fricot are cats.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: My dog has got four paws.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Then it's a cat.
BERENGER [to Jean]: I've barely got the strength to go on living. Maybe I don't even want to.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician, after deep reflection]: So then logically speaking, my dog must be a cat?
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Logically, yes. But the contrary is also true.
BERENGER [to Jean]: Solitude seems to oppress me. And so does the company of other people.
JEAN [to Berenger]: You contradict yourself. What oppresses you - solitude, or the company of others? You consider yourself a thinker, yet you're devoid of logic.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: Logic is a very beautiful thing.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: As long as it is not abused.
BERENGER [to Jean]: Life is an abnormal business.
JEAN: On the contrary. Nothing could be more natural, and the proof is that people go on living.
BERENGER: There are more dead people than living. And their numbers are increasing. The living are getting rarer.
JEAN: The dead don't exist, there's no getting away from that! Ah! Ah ...! [He gives a huge laugh.] Yet you're oppressed by them, too? How can you be oppressed by something that doesn't exist?
BERENGER: I sometimes wonder if I exist myself. JEAN: You don't exist, my dear Berenger, because you don't think. Start thinking, then you will.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Another syllogism. All cats die. Socrates is dead. Therefore Socrates is a cat.
OLD GENTLEMAN: And he's got four paws. That's true. I've got a cat named Socrates.
LOGICIAN: There you are, you see.
JEAN [to Berenger]: Fundamentally you're just a bluffer. And a liar. You say that life doesn't interest you. And yet there's somebody who does.
BERENGER: Who?
JEAN: Your little friend from the office who just went past. You're very fond of her!
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: So Socrates was a cat, was he?
LOGICIAN: Logic has just revealed the fact to us.
JEAN [to Berenger]: You didn't want her to see you in your present state. [BERENGER makes a gesture.] That proves you're not indifferent to everything. But how can you expect Daisy to be attracted to a drunkard?
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]. Let's get back to our cats.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: I'm all ears.
BERENGER [to Jean]: In any case, I think she's already got her eye on someone.
JEAN: Oh, who?
BERENGER: Dudard. An office colleague, qualified in law, with a big future in the firm - and in Daisy's affections. I can't hope to compete with him.
LOGICIAN [to the old Gentleman]: The cat Isidore has four paws.
OLD GENTLEMAN: How do you know?
LOGICIAN: It's stated in the hypothesis.
BERENGER [to Jean]: The Chief thinks a lot of him. Whereas I've no future, I've no qualifications. I don't stand a chance.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: Ah! In the hypothesis.
JEAN (to Berenger): So you're giving up, just like that...?
BERENGER: What else can I do?
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Fricot also has four paws. So how many paws have Fricot and Isidore?
OLD GENTLEMAN: Separately or together?
JEAN [to Berenger]: Life is a struggle, it's cowardly not to put up a fight!
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Separately or together, it all depends.
BERENGER [to Jean]: What can [do? I've nothing to put up a fight with.
JEAN: Then find yourself some weapons, my friend.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician after painful reflection]: Eight, eight paws.
LOGICIAN: Logic involves mental arithmetic, you see.
OLD GENTLEMAN: It certainly has many aspects!
BERENGER [to Jean]: Where can I find the weapons?
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: There are no limits to logic.
JEAN: Within yourself Through your own will.
BERENGER: What weapons?
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: I'm going to show you
JEAN [to Berenger]: The weapons of patience and culture, the weapons of the mind.
[BERENGER yawns.] Turn yourself into a keen and brilliant intellect. Get yourself up to the mark!
BERENGER: How do I get myself up to the mark?
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: If I take two paws away from these cats - how many does each have left?
OLD GENTLEMAN: That's not so easy.
BERENGER [to Jean]: That's not so easy.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: On the contrary, it's simple.
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: It may be simple for you, but not for me.
BERENGER [to Jean]: It may be simple for you, but not for me.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Come on, exercise your mind. Concentrate!
JEAN [to Berenger]: Come on, exercise your will. Concentrate I
OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: I don't see how.
BERENGER [to Jean]: I really don't see how.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: You have to be told every-thing.
JEAN [to Berenger]: You have to be told everything.
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Take a sheet of paper and calculate. If you take six paws
from the two cats, how many paws are left to each cat?

OLD GENTLEMAN: Just a moment ... [He calculates on a sheet of paper which he takes from his pocket.]

JEAN: This is what you must do: dress yourself properly, shave every day, put on a clean shirt.

BERENGER: The laundry's so expensive

JEAN: Cut down on your drinking. This is the way to come out: wear a hat, a tie like this, a well-cut suit, shoes well polished. [As he mentions the various items of clothing he points self-contentedly to his own hat, tie, and shoes.]

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: There are several possible solutions.

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Tell me.

BERENGER [to Jean]: Then what do I do? Tell me

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: I'm listening.

BERENGER [to Jean]: I'm listening.

JEAN: You're a timid creature, but not without talent

BERENGER: I've got talent, me?

JEAN: So use it. Put yourself in the picture. Keep abreast of the cultural and literary events of the times.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: One possibility is: one cat could have four paws and the other two.

BERENGER [to Jean]: I get so little spare time!

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: You're not without talent You just needed to exercise it.

JEAN: Take advantage of what free time you do have. Don't just let yourself drift.

OLD GENTLEMAN: I've never had the time. I was an official you know.

LOGICIAN: One can always find time to learn.

JEAN [to Berenger]: One can always find time.

BERENGER [to Jean]: It's too late now.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: It's a bit late in the day for me.

JEAN [to Berenger]: It's never too late.

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: It's never too late.

JEAN [to Berenger]: You work eight hours a day, like me and everybody else, but not on Sundays, nor in the evening, nor for three weeks in the summer. That's quite sufficient, with a little method.

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Well, what about the other solutions? Use a little method, a little method!

[The OLD GENTLEMAN starts to calculate anew.]

JEAN [to Berenger]: Look, instead of drinking and feeling sick, isn't it better to be fresh and eager, even at work? And you can spend your free time constructively.

BERENGER: How do you mean?

JEAN: By visiting museums, reading literary periodicals, going to lectures. That'll solve your troubles, it will develop your mind. In four weeks you'll be a cultured man.

BERENGER: You're right.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: There could be one cat with five paws...

JEAN [to Berenger]: You see, you even think so yourself!

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: And one cat with one paw. But would they still be cats, then?

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Why not?
JEAN [to Berenger]: Instead of squandering all your spare money on drink, isn't it better to buy a ticket for an interesting play? Do you know anything about the avant-garde theatre there's so much talk about? Have you seen Ionesco's plays?

BERENGER [to Jean]: Unfortunately, no. I've only heard people talk about them.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: By taking two of the eight paws away from the two cats

JEAN [to Berenger]: There's one playing now. Take advantage of it.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: ... we could have one cat with six paws

BERENGER: It would be an excellent initiation into the artistic life of our times.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: We could have one cat with no paws at all.

BERENGER: You're right, perfectly right. I'm going to put myself into the picture, like you said.

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: In that case, one cat would be specially privileged.

BERENGER [to Jean]: I will, I promise you.

JEAN: You promise yourself, that's the main thing.

OLD GENTLEMAN: And one under-privileged cat deprived of all paws.

BERENGER: I make myself a solemn promise, I'll keep my word to myself

LOGICIAN: That would be unjust, and therefore not logical.

BERENGER: Instead of drinking, I'll develop my mind. I feel better already. My head already feels clearer.

JEAN: You see!

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: Not logical?

BERENGER: This afternoon I'll go to the museum. And I'll book two seats for the theatre this evening. Will you come with me?

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Because Logic means Justice.

JEAN [to Berenger]: You must persevere. Keep up your good resolutions.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: I get it. Justice

BERENGER [to Jean]: I promise you, and I promise myself. Will you come to the museum with me this afternoon?

JEAN [to Berenger]: I have to take a rest this afternoon; it's in my programme for the day.

OLD GENTLEMAN: Justice is one more aspect of Logic.

BERENGER [to Jean]: But you will come with me to the theatre this evening?

JEAN: No, not this evening.

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: Your mind is getting clearer!

JEAN [to Berenger]: I sincerely hope you'll keep up your good resolutions. But this evening I have to meet some friends for a drink.

BERENGER: For a drink?

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: What's more, a cat with no paws at all

JEAN [to Berenger]: I've promised to go. I always keep my word.

OLD GENTLEMAN [to the Logician]: ... wouldn't be able to run fast enough to catch mice.

BERENGER [to Jean]: Ah, now it's you that's setting me a bad example! You're going out drinking.

LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman]: You're already making progress in logic.

[A sound of rapid galloping is heard approaching again, trumpeting and the sound of rhinoceros hooves and pantings; this time the sound comes from the opposite direction approaching from back-stage to front, in the left wings.]

JEAN [furiously to Berenger]: It's not a habit with me, you know. It's not the same as with you. With you ... you're ... it's not the same thing at all
BERENGER: Why isn't it the same thing?
JEAN [shouting over the noise coming from the cafe']: I'm no drunkard, not me!
LOGICIAN [shouting to the Old Gentleman]: Even with no paws a cat must catch mice. That's in its nature.
BERENGER [shouting very loudly]: I didn't mean you were a drunkard. But why would it make me one any more than you, in a case like that?
OLD GENTLEMAN [shouting to the Logician]: What's in the cat's nature?
JEAN [to Berenger]: Because there's moderation in all things. I'm a moderate person, not like you!
LOGICIAN [to the Old Gentleman, cupping his hands to his ears]: What did you say?
[Deafening sounds drown the words of the four characters. I
BERENGER [to Jean, cupping his hands to his ear;]: What about me, what? What did you say?
JEAN [roaring]: I said that
OLD GENTLEMAN [roaring]: I said that
JEAN [suddenly aware of the noises which are now very near]: Whatever's happening?
LOGICIAN: What is going on?
JEAN [rises, knocking his chair over as he does so; looks towards left wings where the noises of the passing rhinoceros are coming from]: Oh, a rhinoceros!
LOGICIAN [rising, knocking over his chair]: Oh, a rhinoceros!
OLD GENTLEMAN [doing the same]: Oh, a rhinoceros!
BERENGER [still seated, but this time, taking more notice]: Rhinoceros! In the opposite direction!
WAITRESS (emerging with a tray and glasses): What is it? Oh, a rhinoceros! [She drops the tray, breaking the glasses.]
PROPRIETOR [Coming out of the cafe']: What's going on?
WAITRESS (to the Proprietor): A rhinoceros!
LOGICIAN: A rhinoceros, going full-tilt on the opposite pavement!
GROCER [Coming out of his shop]: Oh, a rhinoceros!
JEAN: Oh, a rhinoceros!
GROCER'S WIFE [sticking her head through the upstairs window of shop]: Oh, a rhinoceros!
PROPRIETOR: It's no reason to break the glasses.
JEAN: It's rushing straight ahead, brushing up against the shop windows.
DAISY [entering left]: Oh, a rhinoceros!
BERENGER [noticing Daisy]: Oh, Daisy!
[noise of people fleeing, the same 'Ohs' and 'Ahs' as before]
WAITRESS: Well of all things!
PROPRIETOR [to the waitress]: You'll be charged up for those!
BERENGER tries to make himself scarce, not to be seen by Daisy. The OLD GENTLEMAN, the LOGICIAN, the GROCER, and iris WIFE move to centre-stage and say together]
ALL: Well, of all things!
JEAN and BERENGER: Well, of all things!
(A piteous mewing is heard, then an equally piteous cry of a woman.)
ALL: Oh!