A Cunning Man

One man found some money and started scheming how to deal with his wife so she wouldn't tell anyone; for he knew that women are very impatient — they'll spread it around the moment they hear it. So he went out to the yard and brought an egg into the house from outside. "Wife," says the man, entering the house, "as you see, I've laid an egg." His wife claps her hands in amazement — she's astonished that her husband laid an egg. After that the man went to the market, bought a bunch of bagels there, hung them up at night in front of the windows on the fence, on the pegs, and says to his wife in the morning: "Wife! Didn't you hear what happened last night?" — "No, I didn't hear," says his wife, "what was it?" — "A bagel cloud flew by; I woke you, but you didn't hear. Come on, let's go out to the yard and see if any of the bunches got caught." They went and looked. His wife is amazed that bagels got caught on the fence, thinks she's dreaming. "Gather them up, wife, so no one sees and tells the sotnyk; because if anyone tells him about these bagels, he'll order them brought to him." After this the man says to his wife one day: "Look, wife, a chicken cloud will be flying by soon, so hide in the cellar; I'll cover you up there, and I'll hide myself where I know." So he took and locked his wife in the cellar, and covered her there with a bast mat; on top of the mat he scattered buckwheat, let the chickens in there: they started pecking at that buckwheat. His wife just sits there and doesn't stir anymore. The chickens ate up the buckwheat, and the man asks his wife: "Are you here, wife?" — "I'm here, and I was terribly scared! Did the chicken cloud fly by?" — "It flew by!" — "Well, did you catch many chickens?" — "Oh! I barely held onto my own." Not long after this the man went somewhere, and coming home he says to his wife: "Wife, I was at the market and saw something there, but I'm afraid to tell you, so you won't tell anyone." — "No, don't be afraid, I won't tell!" — "I saw, wife, how they led the sotnyk around the market, having hung tripe around his neck because he was caught stealing." — "Well now! Who could have expected that of him? Amazing!.."

Having pulled such tricks, the man spent the money he had found on whatever he wanted. And his wife sees that her husband has come by a lot of money somewhere, and asks him: "Where did you get all this money, Ivan?" — "Hush, wife, and don't tell anyone; I found it." — "When did you find it? Why haven't you told me until now?" — "I didn't get around to it because of all the troubles." — "But when did you find it, tell me that time?" — "That time when I laid an egg and brought it to you; and that time when the bagel cloud flew by; and that time when they led the sotnyk around the market." His wife kept quiet, but not for long; the man beat her one day, so she ran to the sotnyk to complain: "Pan Sotnyk! I want to

tell you something." — "Speak, speak, young woman!" — the sotnyk replies. "It's like this, Pan Sotnyk! My husband found some money, asked me not to tell anyone, and now he's started beating me too, so I've come to tell you." — "Ah, so that's how it is!" says the sotnyk. "Well, stay here a while, wait; I'll send someone for him right away." Soon the husband came too. The sotnyk asks him: "Why don't you tell me that you found money? Eh?" — "No," says the man, "I haven't found any money at all. But I've come to tell you that my wife is out of her mind, it seems." — "Oh, so that's how it is!" the wife shouted. "You find money, and your wife is crazy?" — "But when did I find money?" — "That time when you laid an egg; forgot?" — "Well, see for yourself, Pan Sotnyk, what she's saying! Can a man possibly lay an egg? I told you she's not right in the head!" — "Oh, you scoundrel! And when the chicken cloud and the bagel cloud flew by; you'll say that's not true either, maybe?" — "She, as you yourself see, Pan, is out of her mind!" — "Out of her mind! And you forgot that you also found money that time when they led the sotnyk around the market, having hung tripe around his neck? Aha, you're caught!" — "Well, Pan, as you will, she's completely lost her mind." And the sotnyk, hearing what the woman said about him, ordered her beaten soundly, so she wouldn't let her tongue run wild. "You see, wife, what it means not to keep that foolish tongue of yours on a leash!" — said the husband, when they returned home.