Kiepenheuer y de Kessels, como Max Brod documentó, siempre se resistió a cualquier tentativa de imponer su voluntad. Por regla general, Kafka se decía por un título definitivo una vez concluida la obra. No se puede excluir, por consiguiente, que El proceso fuese sólo un título provisional.

PUBLISHER’S NOTE

“Dearest Max, my last request: Everything I leave behind me . . . in the way of diaries, manuscripts, letters (my own and others’), sketches, and so on, [is] to be burned unread . . . Yours, Franz Kafka”

These famous words written to Kafka’s friend Max Brod have puzzled Kafka’s readers ever since they appeared in the postscript to the first edition of The Trial, published in 1925, a year after Kafka’s death. We will never know if Kafka really meant what he told Brod to do what he asked; Brod believed that it was Kafka’s high artistic standards and merciless self-criticism that lay behind the request, but he also believed that Kafka had deliberately asked the one person he knew would not honor his wishes (because Brod had explicitly told him so). We do know, however, that Brod disregarded his friend’s request and devoted great energy to making sure that all Kafka’s works—his three unfinished novels, his unpublished stories, diaries, and letters—would appear in print. Brod explained his reasoning thus:

I would like to acknowledge the scholarly assistance given by Professor Mark Anderson and Dr. Anthony David Skinner in the preparation of this note.

My decision [rests] simply and solely on the fact that Kafka’s unpublished work contains the most wonderful treasures, and, measured against his own work, the best things he has written. In all honesty I must confess that this one fact of the literary and ethical value of what I am publishing would have been enough to make me decide to do so, definitely, finally, and irrevocably, even if I had had no single objection to raise to the validity of Kafka’s last wishes. (From the Postscript to the first edition of The Trial)

In 1925, Max Brod convinced the small avant-garde Berlin publisher Verlag die Schmiede to publish The Trial, which Brod prepared for publication from Kafka’s unfinished manuscript. Next he persuaded the Munich publisher Kurt Wolff to publish his edited manuscript of The Castle, also left unfinished by Kafka, in 1926, and in 1927 to bring out Kafka’s first novel, which Kafka had meant to entitle Der Verschollene (The Man Who Disappeared), but which Brod named Amerika. The first English translation of The Trial, by Edwin and Willa Muir (who had already translated The Castle in 1930), appeared in 1937 simultaneously in England and the United States, the latter edition published by Knopf with illustrations by Georg Salter. Neither the German nor the English-language editions sold well, although they were critically well received.

Undeterred, Max Brod enlisted the support of Martin Buber, André Gide, Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, and Franz Werfel for a public statement urging the publication of Kafka’s collected works as “a spiritual act of unusual dimensions, especially now, during times of chaos.” Since Kafka’s previous publishers had closed during Germany’s economic depression, he appealed to Gustav Kiepenheuer and Gustav Kiepenheuer to undertake the project. Kiepenheuer agreed, but on condition that the first volume be financially successful. But the Nazi rise to power in 1933 forced Kiepenheuer to abandon his plans. Between 1933 and 1938 German Jews were barred from teaching or studying in “German” schools, from publishing or being published in “German” newspapers or publishing houses, or from speaking and performing in front of “German” audiences. Publishers that had been owned or managed by Jews, such as S. Fischer Verlag, were quickly “Aryanized” and ceased to publish books by Jews. Kafka’s works were not well enough known to be banned by the government or burned by nationalist students, but they were “Jewish” enough to be off limits to “Aryan” publishers.

When the Nazis introduced their racial laws they exempted Schocken Verlag, a Jewish publisher, from the ban against publishing Jewish authors on condition that its books would be sold only to Jews. Founded in 1931 by the department store magnate Salomon Schocken, this small publishing company had already published the works of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig as well as those of the Hebrew writer S. Y. Agnon as part of its owner’s interest in fostering a secular Jewish literary culture.

Max Brod offered Schocken the world publishing rights to all of Kafka’s works. This offer was initially rejected by Lambert Schneider, Schocken Verlag’s editor in chief, who regarded Kafka’s work as outside his mandate to publish books that could reaquaint German Jewry with its distinguished heritage. He also doubted its publishable appeal. The editor also had his doubts about the marketability of six volumes of Kafka’s novels, stories, diaries, and letters, although he recognized their universal literary quality as well as their potential to undermine the official campaign to denigrate German Jewish culture. But he was urged by one of his editors, Moritz Spitzer, to see in Kafka a quintessentially “Jewish” voice that could give meaning to the new reality that had befallen German Jewry and would demonstrate the central role of Jews in German culture. Accordingly, Before the Law, an anthology drawn from Kafka’s diaries and short stories, appeared in 1934 in Schocken Verlag’s Bucherei series, a collection of books aimed to appeal to a popular audience, and was followed a year later—the year of the infamous Nuremberg Laws—by Kafka’s three novels. The Schocken editions were the first to give Kafka widespread distribution in Germany. Martin Buber, in a letter to Brod, praised these volumes as “a great possession” that could “show how one can live marginally with complete integrity and without loss of background.” (From The Letters of Martin Buber [New York: Schocken Books, 1991], p. 431)

Inevitably, many of the books Schocken sold ended up in non-Jewish hands, giving German readers—at home and in exile—their only access to one of the century’s greatest writers. Klaus Mann wrote in the exile journal Sammlung that “the collected works of Kafka, offered by the Schocken Verlag in Berlin, are the noblest and most significant publications that have come out of Germany.” Praising Kafka’s books as “the epoch’s purest and most singular works of literature,” he noted with astonishment that “this spiritual event has occurred within a splendid isolation, in a ghetto far from the German cultural ministry.” Quite probably in response to Mann’s article, on July 22, 1935, a functionary of the German cultural ministry wrote to Schocken complaining that the publisher was “still selling the complete works of Franz Kafka, edited by Max Brod,” although the work of both Kafka and Brod had been placed by the Nazis on the “list of harmful and undesirable writings” three months earlier. Schocken moved his production to Prague, where he published Kafka’s diaries and letters. Interestingly, despite the Nazi protest against the collected works, he was able to continue printing and distributing his earlier volume of Kafka’s short stories in Germany itself until the government closed down Schocken Verlag in 1939. The German occupation of Prague that same year put an end to Schocken’s operations in Europe.

In 1939, he re-established Schocken Books in Palestine, where he had lived intermittently since 1934, and editions of Kafka’s works in the renewed Hebrew language were among its first publications. In 1940, he moved to New York, where five years later he opened Schocken Books with Hannah Arendt and Nahum Glazter as his chief editors while continuing to publish Kafka in German, Schocken reissued the existing Muir translations of the novels in 1946 and commissioned translations of the letters and diaries in the 1950s, thus placing Kafka again at the center of his publishing program. Despite a dissenting opinion from Edmund Wilson in The New Yorker (where he nonetheless compared Kafka to Nikolai Gogol and Edgar Allan Poe), a postwar Kafka craze began in the United States; translations of all of Kafka’s works began to appear in many other languages; and in 1951 the German Jewish publisher S. Fischer of Frankfurt (also in exile during the Nazi period) obtained the rights to publish Kafka in German. As Hannah Arendt wrote to Salman Schocken, Kafka had come to share Marx’s fate: “Though during his lifetime he could not make a decent living, he will now generate intellectuals both gainfully employed and well-fed.” (Letter, August 9, 1946, Schocken Books Archive, New York)

Along with the growing international recognition of Franz Kafka as one of the great writers of our century, scholars began to raise doubts about the editorial decisions made by Max Brod. In editing The Trial for its original German publication in 1925, Brod’s primary concern had been to provide an accessible, unified text that would establish Kafka-hitherto known only as a “master of the small form”—as a great novelist. As he explained in the postscript to that edition, he had sought to reduce the fragmentary nature of the manuscript by publishing only the finished chapters and by making minor additions to the virtually finished eighth chapter (“Block, the Merchant, Dismissal of the Lawyer”).
expanding the numerous contradictions (“Fräulein Bürsten für ‘F.B.’, “Titorelli” for “T.”), and correcting “obvious” slips of the pen. Another, serious question was the sequence of the chapters, which Kafka had entitled but not numbered, and which Brod ordered for the first edition according to internal narrative logic, some textual evidence, and his own memory. What was the fifth chapter to be in the 1946 postscript to the third edition of the novel, Brod admitted that further scrutiny of the manuscript made it appear possible that “Kafka intended the episode now designated as the fifth chapter to be in fact the second.” He did not change the original chapter sequence, however, claiming that the order “must forever remain doubtful.”

Salomon Schocken was among the most eager for new, critical editions of Kafka’s works. “The Schocken editions are bad,” he wrote in an internal memo. “Without any question, new editions that include the incomplete novels would require a completely different approach.” (September 29, 1940, Schocken Archives, Jerusalem) However, Max Brod’s refusal to give up the Kafka archive in his Tel Aviv apartment or to allow scholars access to it made such new editions impossible until 1956, when the threat of war in the Middle East prompted him to deposit the bulk of the archives, including The Castle, in a Swiss vault. When the young German Cartesian Malcolm Pasley learned of the archives’ whereabouts, he received permission from Kafka’s heirs in 1961 to deposit them in Oxford’s Bodleian Library, where they were subsequently made available for scholarly inspection. The manuscript of The Trial, which Kafka had given to Brod in 1920, remained in Brod’s personal possession, passing to his companion and heiress Else Elster Hoffe when he died in 1968. It was not until the late 1980s that Ms. Hoffe agreed to sell the manuscript, which was auctioned for a record sum by Sotheby’s in November 1988 to the German national literary archives in Marbach, where it is now kept.

Since 1978 an international team of Kafka experts has been working on German critical editions of all of Kafka’s writings, which are being published by S. Fischer Verlag with financial support from the German government. The first of these editions, The Castle, appeared in 1982, edited by Malcolm Pasley in two volumes, one for the restored text of the novel drawn from Kafka’s handwritten manuscript, the second for textual variants and editorial notes. The Man Who Died and Schillermel, also in two volumes, was published the following year; The Trial, edited by Malcolm Pasley, appeared in 1990.

Our new English translation of The Trial, by Breon Mitchell, is based on the restored text in the first volume of the Fischer critical edition, which removed all previous editorial interventions, including numbering and pagination. Kafka’s free orthography and vocabulary to standard High German. The new translation reproduces the poetics of Kafka’s prose with particular care, rendering with unusual fidelity the intricate texture of terms, images, and symbols that characterizes Kafka’s style. Following Pasley’s decision for the Fischer critical edition, this translation makes slight changes in the chapter divisions and sequence of chapter fragments: “It’s Friend,” which was the second chapter in Max Brod’s edition, has been put with the fragments in the appendix. The first chapter has been broken into two separate chapters, “Arrest” and “Conversation with Frau Grubach, Then Fräulein Bürsten.” Otherwise, Brod’s original ordering of the chapters remains unchanged. Variants and deletions made by Kafka, which Pasley included in the second volume of the German critical edition, have not been included in this translation. The chief objective of this new edition, which is intended for the general public, is to present the text as close as possible to the state in which the author left the manuscript.

ARTHUR H. SAMUELSON
Editorial Director, Schocken Books, New York

TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE

Translating Kafka was once my dream. Now I only dream of how I might have done it better. From the moment I first read The Trial, as a teenager on the plains of Kansas in the late 1950s, I was drawn into Kafka’s world so strongly that I have never quite escaped it. I had come to believe that I would have to spend the next five years, and maybe longer, reading and writing about Kafka, and that I had chosen the wrong profession. But in 1988, the 100th anniversary of Kafka’s birth, I was able to begin work on a translation of the complete works. I have, however, attempted to reflect every truly unusual use of punctuation, including the occasional omission of commas in a series, or a period where one would expect a question mark.

The present version thus attempts to mirror the critical edition of the text quite closely. But rendering Kafka’s prose involves far more than punctuation and formatting. The power of Kafka’s text lies in the language, in a nuanced use of the discourses of law, religion, and the theater, and in particular in a closely woven web of linguistic motifs that must be rendered consistently to achieve their full impact. Here the Muirs, for all the virtues of their translation, fell far short, for in attempting to create a readable and stylistically refined version of Kafka’s Trial, they consistently overlooked or deliberately varied the repetitions and interconnections that echo so meaningfully in the ear of every attentive reader of the original text. What follows here is an attempt to give any easy solutions to the challenges Kafka presents.

Jemaine Kastner, Josef K. verleumdet haben, einen ohne den Raum zu ebels Buse getan hätte, würde er eines Morgens verhaftet.

The translator’s trial begins with the first sentence, in part because the hint of uncertainty so subtly introduced by the subjunctive verb batteln[1] is inevitably lost in the standard translation, even with E. M. Butler’s later revisions. “Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for he had done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning.” Although in this version it is by no means clear why Josef K. has been arrested, there is no doubt about the subjunctive. That the subjunctive, however, tends to undermine this reading even as it asserts itself. Of course nothing is ever that simple in Kafka, even in translation, and we might argue that since the information received is filtered through Josef K.’s own mind from the very beginning, it is constantly suspect in any case. On a strictly literal level, however, the standard English translation declares K.’s innocence too simply.

There are other questions as well. Why render the common phrase “eines Morgens” with the false irony of “one morning” when it was first used in German, with the surprise of his arrest? And why has the legal resonance of “verleumden” (to slander) been reduced to merely “telling lies”? A further problem is posed by the subjunctive, for it is applied to the actions of an adult, reverberates with moral and philosophical overtones ranging from the story of the Fall in the Garden of Eden to Nietzsche’s discussion of the origins of morality in Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil). To claim that K. has done nothing “Buses” is both more and less than to claim he has done nothing wrong. Josef K. has done nothing truly wrong, at least in his own eyes.

In wrestling with these problems I settled upon the following: “Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested.” My choice of “truly wrong” for “Bows” has a double purpose: to push the word “wrong” toward the province of the criminally malicious and to introduce, on a level corresponding to the almost subliminal use of the subjunctive in German, the question of truth.

There are no totally satisfying solutions to the difficulties presented by Kafka’s opening sentence. But it is crucial to recognize and grapple with them. Such a struggle is not inappropriate in a novel that deals with the question of falsely accused and the traces of a year to twist and turn his way through the process of his own trial. And indeed, having made it through the first sentence, the translator is immediately

usage, since Kafka’s own punctuation, even where it loosens substantially, normally remains well within the range of accepted German usage, and I do not wish for it to appear falsely ungrammatical. It should be noted in particular that Kafka’s prevalent use of what we call a comma splice has been perfectly acceptable in German prose since the eighteenth century, as are the repetitions and complex sentence patterns that characterize his practice. I have, however, attempted to reflect every truly unusual use of punctuation, including the occasional omission of commas in a series, or a period where one would expect a question mark.

The present version thus attempts to mirror the critical edition of the text quite closely. But rendering Kafka’s prose involves far more than punctuation and formatting. The power of Kafka’s text lies in the language, in a nuanced use of the discourses of law, religion, and the theater, and in particular in a closely woven web of linguistic motifs that must be rendered consistently to achieve their full impact. Here the Muirs, for all the virtues of their translation, fell far short, for in attempting to create a readable and stylistically refined version of Kafka’s Trial, they consistently overlooked or deliberately varied the repetitions and interconnections that echo so meaningfully in the ear of every attentive reader of the original text. What follows here is an attempt to give any easy solutions to the challenges Kafka presents.

Jemaine Kastner, Josef K. verleumdet haben, einem ohne den Raum zu ebels Buse getan hätte, würde er eines Morgens verhaftet.

The translator’s trial begins with the first sentence, in part because the hint of uncertainty so subtly introduced by the subjunctive verb batteln[1] is inevitably lost in the standard translation, even with E. M. Butler’s later revisions. “Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for he had done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning.” Although in this version it is by no means clear why Josef K. has been arrested, there is no doubt about the subjunctive. That the subjunctive, however, tends to undermine this reading even as it asserts itself. Of course nothing is ever that simple in Kafka, even in translation, and we might argue that since the information received is filtered through Josef K.’s own mind from the very beginning, it is constantly suspect in any case. On a strictly literal level, however, the standard English translation declares K.’s innocence too simply.

There are other questions as well. Why render the common phrase “eines Morgens” with the false irony of “one morning” when it was first used in German, with the surprise of his arrest? And why has the legal resonance of “verleumden” (to slander) been reduced to merely “telling lies”? A further problem is posed by the subjunctive, for it is applied to the actions of an adult, reverberates with moral and philosophical overtones ranging from the story of the Fall in the Garden of Eden to Nietzsche’s discussion of the origins of morality in Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil). To claim that K. has done nothing “Buses” is both more and less than to claim he has done nothing wrong. Josef K. has done nothing truly wrong, at least in his own eyes.

In wrestling with these problems I settled upon the following: “Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested.” My choice of “truly wrong” for “Bows” has a double purpose: to push the word “wrong” toward the province of the criminally malicious and to introduce, on a level corresponding to the almost subliminal use of the subjunctive in German, the question of truth.

There are no totally satisfying solutions to the difficulties presented by Kafka’s opening sentence. But it is crucial to recognize and grapple with them. Such a struggle is not inappropriate in a novel that deals with the question of falsely accused and the traces of a year to twist and turn his way through the process of his own trial. And indeed, having made it through the first sentence, the translator is immediately

usage, since Kafka’s own punctuation, even where it loosens substantially, normally remains well within the range of accepted German usage, and I do not wish for it to appear falsely ungrammatical. It should be noted in particular that Kafka’s prevalent use of what we call a comma splice has been perfectly acceptable in German prose since the eighteenth century, as are the repetitions and complex sentence patterns that characterize his practice. I have, however, attempted to reflect every truly unusual use of punctuation, including the occasional omission of commas in a series, or a period where one would expect a question mark.
confronted by problems of another sort in the second.

Die Köchin der Frau Grubach, seiner Vermieterin, die ihm jeden Tag gegen acht Uhr früh das Frühstück brachte, kam diesmal nicht.

Here Kafka himself is partly to blame. He originally began the sentence quite straightforwardly: “Die Köchin der Vermieterin, die ihm . . .”; but the manuscript reveals that he inserted the words “der Frau Grubach, seiner” between the lines, introducing her immediately into the cast of characters. Literal versions such as “The cook of Frau Grubach, who always brought him breakfast. . ..” or “His landlady Frau Grubach’s cook, who brought him breakfast. . . .” are impossibly awkward and even grammatically misleading. The Muirs solved this problem by simply omitting her name: “His landlady’s cook, who always brought him breakfast. . . .” Here as so often, the Muirs smooth away the difficulties at some cost, since when Frau Grubach’s name first comes up later in the scene, it is not clear in the English version who she is. In order to reflect Kafka’s obvious intentions, I have retained her by name: “His landlady, Frau Grubach, had a cook who brought him breakfast.” Here and “Muir” is again in the position to recognize one of the important figures in the drama, even if he cannot perform the final act himself.

Of course, Kafka may well have smoothed out such sentences, or even rewritten them entirely, had he completed the novel and prepared it for publication. He would surely have removed inconsistencies in the spelling of his characters’ names (Kullrich and Kulzych), both versions of which are retained in the critical edition; he would probably have straightened out the confusion with time in the cathedral chapter, where K. plans to meet the Italian at ten o’clock, the latter refers to eleven; he might well have cleared up the matter of the maid’s room where Block works and sleeps, which is at first windowless (“fensterlos”), although he later included a window that looks out onto an air shaft. But we can hardly hold the author of The Metamorphosis to a strict standard of reality. Kafka constantly distorts time and space, and often underlines the frailty of human perception. The critical edition therefore retains such apparent anomalies, allowing the reader direct access to Kafka’s text in progress, and here too I have followed the German version faithfully.

The Trial begins as farce and ends in tragedy. The opening chapter has a strong theatrical air, complete with an American “stage manager.” Later that year, when Josef K. reenacts the scene for an amused Fräulein Bürstner, who has just returned from the theater herself, he takes on both his own role and that of the stage manager, a solution that is not only less readable, it remains true to Kafka’s text, even in its slightly awkward construction.

Over the course of the novel, such verbal echoes accumulate with great power. Kafka took special care to create and maintain consistent echoes in his work, links the Muirs consistently missed or unintentionally weakened. One extended example must suffice here.

Fräulein Bürstner’s apparent reappearance in the final chapter reminds the reader how crucially related she is to K.’s fate. Kafka has reinforced this in many ways, including the use of the verb “überfallen” (to attack by surprise, assault). Although this verb has a range of meanings, including “mugging” if it occurs on the street, it is of crucial importance here. Thus, for example, in the opening chapter K. wonders: “wer wagte ihn in seiner Wohnung zu überfallen” (“who dared assault him in his own lodgings”). On two further occasions in that first chapter, “überfallen” refers to assault and rape: “and when he appears before the examining magistrate at the initial inquiry he repeats the same word again. Thus when he hesitates to speak to Fräulein Bürstner because his sudden emergence from his own darkness might have “den Anschein eines Überfalls” (“resemble an assault”), and even more strikingly, when he suggests to her “Wollen Sie verbreitet haben, dass ich Sie überfallen habe?” (“Do you wish to spread the story that I attacked you?”), and repeats the phrase a sentence later, the verbal link between his slander and arrest and his relationship to the young typist is made abundantly clear. A final link in the chain of associations is forged when K. worries that his lawyer is simply lulling him to sleep, “um ihn dann plötzlich mit der Entscheidung zu überfallen” (“so that they could assault him suddenly with the verdict”). The Muirs, however, render the five occurrences where K. is referring to his own arrest or the possible verdict as “seize him,” “grab me,” “fall upon me,” “seized,” and “overwhelm him,” while the three times Kafka uses the term in Josef K.’s conversation with Fräulein Bürstner are rendered as “waylaying her” and “assaulted” (twice). Thus no reader of the English version can know what one of the central links in the novel, nor fully understand why her appearance in the final chapter is such a strong reminder of the futility of all resistance.

The dominant discourse in The Trial is of course legal. Some critics have gone so far as to suggest that the second part of the novel is pure law, that Kafka’s own training as a lawyer and his abiding interest in the law, effacing all distinctions of tone, so that “everybody in The Trial, high or low, uses the same language.” But in fact, the language of the novel is clearly varied. They include not only the long legal disquisitions of the lawyer Huld, but also the voices of women, of K.’s uncle, of the merchant, the painter, and the priest. Moreover, the narrative itself is recounted in a voice we have long since come to recognize as distinctly Kafka’s own. The translator’s task includes rendering these voices individually, even if they are all entangled in the web of the law.

The German word “Prozess,” as often has been noted, refers not only to an actual trial, but also to the proceedings surrounding it, a process that, in this imaginary world, includes preliminary investigations, numerous hearings, and a wide range of legal and extra-legal maneuvering. “The Trial” is a reasonable translation of the German, combining as it does the literal and figurative associations surrounding Josef K.’s yearlong struggle. Yet the shadowy and seemingly infinite hierarchies of courts depicted in The Trial cannot be corresponded to any actual legal system so far as we know, then or now. Nevertheless, Kafka employs a vocabulary of recognizable legal terms that have come down to us relatively intact from the period in which he practiced law. Some critics have gone so far as to suggest that Kafka’s own yearlong struggle with the German legal system was reflected in the novel. However, Kafka himself dismisses such apologist readings of the novel. The Muirs transcribe words from the German text without alteration, while the Muirs render “überfallen” as “waylaying her” and “assaulted” (twice). Thus no reader of the English version can know what one of the central links in the novel, nor fully understand why her appearance in the final chapter is such a strong reminder of the futility of all resistance.

The three possibilities the painter Titorelli presents to Josef K. as outcomes for his trial are “wirkliche Freisprechung,” “Verschleppung,” and “achtungswürdige Freisprechung,” and “Verschleppung.” The first two of these, “actual acquittal” and “apparent acquittal,” represent a distinction with no parallel in actual law, but the third, which seems on the surface least likely to be real, is in fact a common German legal term referring to drawing out a trial by delaying tactics, or “protraction.” When the Muirs chose to translate this as “indefinite postponement,” they misrepresented both the tactic itself (the trial is not in fact indefinitely postponed) and its basis in actual law.

Perhaps the most striking use of a legal term occurs in the final lines of the novel, yet up to now a reader of the standard English version could have no idea it was there. When the two men thrust the knife into Josef K.’s heart at the end of the novel, K. observes the “Entscheidung,” the Muirs tell us they are “watching the final act.” Yet “Entscheidung” is not only the ordinary German word for “decision,” but also the term for legal proceedings surrounding it, a process that, in this sense, is similar to any actual trial. And we should note that Kafka had often argued that if the three times Kafka repeats that phrase in the opening chapter he refers specifically to this “assault,” and “überfallen” is simply lulling him to sleep, “um ihn dann plötzlich mit der Entscheidung zu überfallen” (“so that they could assault him suddenly with the verdict”). The Muirs, however, render the five occurrences where K. is referring to his own arrest or the possible verdict as “seize him,” “grab me,” “fall upon me,” “seized,” and “overwhelm him,” while the three times Kafka uses the term in Josef K.’s conversation with Fräulein Bürstner are rendered as “waylaying her” and “assaulted” (twice). Thus no reader of the English version can know what one of the central links in the novel, nor fully understand why her appearance in the final chapter is such a strong reminder of the futility of all resistance.

The Trial, tr. by Breon Mitchell

BREON MITCHELL
ARREST

Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested. His landlady, Frau Grubach, had a cook who brought him breakfast each day around eight, but this time she didn’t appear. That had never happened before. K. waited a while longer, watching from his pillow the old woman who lived across the way, who was peering at him with a curiosity quite unusual for her; then, both put out and hungry, he rang. There was an immediate knock at the door and a man he’d never seen before in these lodgings entered. He was slender yet solidly built, and was wearing a fitted black jacket, which, like a traveler’s outfit, was provided with a variety of pleats, pockets, buckles, buttons and a belt, and thus appeared eminently practical, although its purpose remained obscure. “Who are you?” asked K., and immediately sat halfway up in bed. But the man ignored the question, as if his presence would have to be accepted, and merely said in turn: “You rang?” “Anna’s to bring me breakfast,” K. said, scrutinizing him silently for a moment, trying to figure out who he might be. But the man didn’t submit to his inspection for long, turning instead to the door and opening it a little in order to tell someone who was apparently standing just behind it: “He wants Anna to bring him breakfast.” A short burst of laughter came from the adjoining room; it was hard to tell whether more than one person had joined in. Although the stranger could hardly have learned anything new from this, he nonetheless said to K., as if passing on a message: “It’s impossible.” “That’s news to me,” K. said, jumping out of bed and quickly pulling on his trousers. “I’m going to find out who those people are next door, and how Frau Grubach can justify such a disturbance just opposite me.” Although he realized at once that he shouldn’t have spoken aloud, and that by doing so he had, in a sense, acknowledged the stranger’s right to oversee his actions, that didn’t seem important at the moment. Still, the stranger took it that way, for he said: “Wouldn’t you rather stay here?” “I have no

LA DETENCIÓN

Alguien tenía que haber calumniado a Josef K. (2), pues fue detenido una mañana sin haber hecho nada malo (3). La cocinera de la señora Grubach, su case- ra, que le llevaba todos los días a eso de las ocho de la mañana el desayuno a su habitación, no había aparecido. Era la primera vez que ocurría algo semejante. K esperó un rato más. Apoyado en la almohada, se quedó mirando a la anciana que vivía frente a su casa y que le observaba con una curiosidad insustituida. Poco después, extrñado y hambriento, tocó el timbre. Nadie más hacerlo, se oyó cómo llamaban a la puerta y un hombre al que no había visto nunca entró en su habitación. Era delgado, aunque fuerte de constitución, llevaba un traje negro ajustado, que, como cierta indumentaria de viaje, disponía de varios pliegues, bolsillos, hebillas, botones, y de un cinturón; todo parecía muy práctico, aunque no se supiese muy bien para qué podía servir.

—¿Quién es usted? —preguntó Josef K., y se sentó de inmediato en la cama.

El hombre, sin embargo, ignoró la pregunta, como si no tuviera que aceptar táficamente su presencia, y se limitó a decir:

—¿Ha llamado? (4)

—Anna me tiene que traer el desayuno —dijo K, y intentó averiguar en silencio, concentrándose y reflexionando, quién podría ser realmente aquel hombre. Pero éste no se expuso por mucho tiempo a sus miradas, sino que se dirigió a la puerta, la abrió un poco y le dijo a alguien que presumiblemente se hallaba detrás:

—Quieres que Anna le traiga el desayuno.

Se escuchó una risa en la habitación contigua, aunque por el tono no se podía decir si la risa provenía de una o de varias personas. Aunque el desconocido no po- día haberse enterado de nada que no supiera con anterioridad, le dijo a K con una entonación oficial:

—Es imposible.

—¡Es lo que faltaba! —dijo K, que saltó de la cama y se puso los pantalones con rapidez—. Quiero saber qué personas hay en la habitación contigua y cómo la señora Grubach me explica este atropello.

Al decir esto, se dio cuenta de que no debería haberlo dicho en voz alta, y que, al mismo tiempo, en cierta medida, había reconocido el derecho a vigilarse que se arrogaba el desconocido, pero en ese momento no le pareció importante.

En todo caso, así lo entendió el descon- nocido, pues dijo:

—¿No prefieres quedarse aquí?
Era la sala de estar de la señora Grubach. Tal vez esa habitación repleta de muebles, alfombras, objetos de porcelana y fotografías aparentaba esa mañana tener un poco más de espacio libre que de costumbre, aunque era algo que no se advertía al principio, como el cambio principal, que consistía en la presencia de un hombre sentado al lado de la ventana con un libro en las manos, del que, al entrar K., apartó la mirada.

¿Tendría que haberse quedado en su habitación? ¿Acaso no se lo ha dicho Franz?

—Sí, ¿qué quiere usted de mí? —preguntó K., que miró alternativamente al nuevo desconocido y a la persona a la que había llamado Franz, que ahora permanecía en la puerta. A través de la ventana abierta pudo ver otra vez a la anciana que, con una auténtica curiosidad senil, permanecía asomada con la firme resolución de no perderse nada.

—Quiero ver a la señora Grubach —dijo K., hizo un movimiento como si quisiera desasirse de los dos hombres, que, sin embargo, estaban situados lejos de él, y se dispuso a irse.

—No —dijo el hombre de la ventana, arrojó el libro sobre una mesita y se levantó—. No puede irse, usted está detenido.

—Así parece —dijo K. (5)—. ¿Y por qué? —preguntó a continuación.

—Ni quiero quedarme aquí, ni deseo que usted me siga hablado mientras no se haya presentado.

—Se lo he dicho con buena intención —dijo el desconocido, y abrió voluntariamente la puerta. La habitación contigua, en la que K. entró más desapacio de lo que hubiera deseado, ofrecía, al menos a primera vista, un aspecto muy parecido al de la noche anterior. Era la sala de estar de la señora Grubach. Tal vez esa habitación repleta de muebles, alfombras, objetos de porcelana y fotografías aparentaba esa mañana tener un poco más de espacio libre que de costumbre, aunque era algo que no se advertía al principio, como el cambio principal, que consistía en la presencia de un hombre sentado al lado de la ventana con un libro en las manos, del que, al entrar K., apartó la mirada.

—¿Tendría que haberse quedado en su habitación? ¿Acaso no se lo ha dicho Franz?

—Sí, ¿qué quiere usted de mí? —preguntó K., que miró alternativamente al nuevo desconocido y a la persona a la que había llamado Franz, que ahora permanecía en la puerta. A través de la ventana abierta pudo ver otra vez a la anciana que, con una auténtica curiosidad senil, permanecía asomada con la firme resolución de no perderse nada.

—Quiero ver a la señora Grubach —dijo K., hizo un movimiento como si quisiera desasirse de los dos hombres, que, sin embargo, estaban situados lejos de él, y se dispuso a irse.

—No —dijo el hombre de la ventana, arrojó el libro sobre una mesita y se levantó—. No puede irse, usted está detenido.

—Así parece —dijo K. (5)—. ¿Y por qué? —preguntó a continuación.

—Ni quiero quedarme aquí, ni deseo que usted me siga hablado mientras no se haya presentado.
that they would look after this one, as well as the rest of his undergarments, and if his case turned out well, they’d return them to him.

“You’re better off giving the things to us than leaving them in the depository,” they said, “there’s a lot of pilfering there, and besides, they sell everything after a time, whether the proceedings in question have ended or not. And trials like this last so long, particularly these days! Of course you’d get the proceeds from the depository in the end, but first of all they don’t amount to much, since sales aren’t based on the size of the offer but on the size of the bribe, and secondly, experience shows that they dwindle from year to year as they pass from hand to hand.”

K. scarcely listened to this speech; he attached little value to whatever right he might still possess over the disposal of his things, it was much more important to him to gain some clarity about his situation; but he couldn’t even think in the presence of these men: the belly of the second guard—they surely must be guards-kept bumping against him in a positively friendly way, but when he looked up he saw a face completely at odds with that fat body: a dry, bony face, with a large nose set askew, consulting above his head with the other guard. What sort of men were they? What were they talking about? What office did they represent? After all, K. lived in a state governed by law, there was universal experience, conforme van pasando de mano en mano y van transcurriendo los años. In the elección de la edad y de otras circunstancias temporales se dan motivos autobiográficos, en concreto se reflejan determinados acontecimientos relativos a su relación con Felice Bauer.

(6) No sin cierta ironía describe Kafka la situación jurídica—política del momento. Kafka comenzó la novela el 11 de agosto de 1914, en plena gestación de la I Guerra Mundial. Las referencias al «Estado de Derecho» y al vígor de las leyes es interesante porque designa un régimen que se somete al derecho en su forma de actuación. No hay ninguna perturbación del orden político ni ningún «estado de alarma, excepción o tierra» que pudiera justificar la existencia de tribunales de excepción.

(7) La acción de la novela transcurre en el periodo exacto de un año. Siempre intentaba tomarlo todo a la ligera, creer en lo peor sólo cuando lo peor ya había sucedido, no tomar ninguna previsión para el futuro, ni siquiera cuando existía una amenaza considerable. Aquí, sin embargo, no le parecía lo correcto. Ciertamente, todo se podía considerar una broma, si bien una broma grosera, que sus colegas del banco le gastaban por motivos desconocidos, o tal vez porque precisamente ese día cumplía treinta años (7). Era muy posible, a lo mejor sólo necesitaba reírse ante los rostros de los vigilantes para que ellos rieran con él, quizá fueran los mozos de cuerda de la esquina, su apariencia era similar, no obstante, desde la primera mirada que le había dirigido el vigilante Franz, había decidido no renunciar a la más pequeña ventaja que pudiera poseer contra esa gente (8). Por lo demás, K no infravaloraba el pe-
able to take a joke, but he clearly recalled—although he generally didn’t make it a practice to learn from experience—a few occasions, unimportant in themselves, when, unlike his friends, he had deliberately behaved quite recklessly, without the least regard for his future, and had suffered the consequences. That wasn’t going to happen again, not this time at any rate: if this was a farce, he was going to play along.

He was still free. “Pardon me,” he said, and walked quickly between the guards into his room. “He seems to be reasonable,” he heard them say behind him. In his room he yanked open the drawers of his desk at once; everything lay there in perfect order, but at first, in his agitation, he couldn’t find the one thing he was looking for: his identification papers. Finally he found his bicycle license and was about to take that to the guards, but then it seemed too insignificant a document and he kept on looking until his found his birth certificate. When he returned to the adjoining room, the door opposite opened and Frau Grubach started to enter. She was only visible for a moment, for no sooner had she noticed K. than she seemed seized by embarrassment, apologized, and disappeared, closing the door carefully behind her. “Come on in,” K. barely had time to say. But now he remained standing in the middle of the room with his papers, still staring at the door, which did not reopen, until he was brought to himself by a call from the guards, who were sitting at the small table by the open window and, as K. now saw, eating his breakfast. “Why didn’t she come in?” he asked. “She’s not allowed to,” said the tall guard, “after all, you’re under arrest.” “How can I be under arrest? And in this manner?” “Now you go again,” said the guard, “you’re under arrest. And in this manner?” “Now there you go again,” said the guard, “and I hope you’ll be good enough to go in, if you wish to have your breakfast.” “I don’t answer such questions.” “You’re going to have to answer them,” said K. “Here are my papers, now show me yours, starting with the arrest warrant,” said the guard, “you just can’t accept your situation; you seem bent on annoying us unnecessarily, although...
we’re probably the human beings closest to you now.”

“That’s right, you’d better believe it,”
said Franz, not lifting the coffee cup
in his hand to his mouth but staring at
K. with a long and no doubt meaningful,
but incomprehensible, look. K. allowed
himself to become involved in an
involuntary staring match with Franz,
but at last thumped his papers and said:
“Here are my identification papers.”

“So what?” the taller guard cried out,
“you’re behaving worse than a child.
What is it you want? Do you think you
can bring your whole damn trial to a
quick conclusion by discussing your
identity and arrest warrant with your
guards? We’re lowly employees who
can barely make our way through such
documents, and whose only role in
your affair is to stand guard over you
ten hours a day and get paid for it.
That’s all we are, but we’re smart
enough to realize that before ordering
such an arrest the higher authorities
who employ us inform themselves in
great detail about the person they’re
arresting and the grounds for the
arrest. There’s been no mistake. After
all, our department, as far as I know,
and I know only the lowest level,
doesn’t seek out guilt among the
general population, but, as the Law
states, is attracted by guilt and has to
send us guards out. That’s the Law.
What mistake could there be?” “I
don’t know that law,” said K. “All the
worse for you,” said the guard. “It
probably exists only in your heads,”
said K.; he wanted to slip into his
guards’ thoughts somehow and turn
them to his own advantage or
accustom himself to them. But the
guard merely said dismissively:
“You’ll feel it eventually.”

Franz broke in and said:
“You see, Willem, he admits
that he doesn’t know the Law and
yet he claims he’s innocent.”

“You’re right there, but he can’t seem
to understand anything,” said the
other. K. said nothing more; why
should I let the idle talk of these lowly
agents-they admit themselves that’s
what they are-confuse me even
further? he thought. After all, they’re
discussing things they don’t
understand. Their confidence is based
solely on ignorance. A few words
spoken with someone of my own sort
will make everything incomparably
clearer than the longest conversations
with these two. He paced back and
forth a few times through the cleared
space of the room; across the way he
blemely somos los que ahora estamos más
próximos a usted entre todos los hombres.

—Asi es, créalo —dijo Franz,
que no se llevó la taza a los la-
bios, sino que dirigió a K una lar-
ga mirada, probablemente sin im-
portancia, pero incomprendible.

K incurrió sin quererlo en un in-
tercambio de miradas con Franz,
pero agitó sus papeles y dijo:

—Aquí están mis documentos de identidad.

—¿Y qué nos importan a nosotros? —
gritó ahora el vigilante más alto—. Se está
comportando como un niño. ¿Qué quiere
usted? ¿Acaso pretende al hablar con no-
sotros sobre documentos de identidad y
sobre órdenes de detención que su maldito
proceso acabe pronto? Somos empleados
subalternos, apenas comprendemos algo
sobre papeles de identidad, no tenemos
nada que ver con su asunto, excepto nues-
tra tarea de vigilarle diez horas todos los
días, y por eso nos pagan. Eso es todo lo
que somos. No obstante, somos capaces de
comprender que las instancias superiores,
a cuyo servicio estamos, antes de disponer
una detención como ésta se han informado
a fondo sobre los motivos de la detención
y sobre la persona del detenido. No hay
ningún error. El organismo para el que tra-
bajamos, por lo que conozco de él, y sólo
conozco los rangos más inferiores, no se
dedica a buscar la culpa en la población,
sino que, como está establecido en la ley,
se ve atraído por la culpa y nos envía a
nosotros, a los vigilantes. Eso es ley. ¿Dónde
puede cometerse aquí un error?

—No conozco esa ley—dijo K.

—Pues peor para usted—dijo el vigilante.

—Sólo existe en sus cabezas —dijo K,
que quería penetrar en los pensamientos de
los vigilantes, de algún modo inclinarlos a
su favor o ir ganando terreno.

Pero el vigilante se limitó a decir:

—Ya sentirá sus efectos.

Franz se inmiscuyó en la conversación y dijo:

—Mira, Willem, admite que no
conoce la ley y, al mismo tiem-
po, afirma que es inocente.

—Tienes razón, pero no se puede con-
seguir que comprenda nada —dijo el otro.

K ya no respondió. «¿Acaso —
pensó— debo dejarme confundir por
la chachara de estos emplea-
dos subalternos, como ellos mis-
mos reconocen serlo? Hablan de
cosas que no entienden en absolu-
to. Su seguridad sólo se basa en su
necesidad. Un par de palabras que
intercambie con una persona de mi
nivel y todo quedará incompara-
blemente más claro que en una
conversación larga con éstos». Pa-
seó de un lado a otro de la habita-
ción, seguía viendo enfrent a la
saw the old woman, who had pulled an ancient man far older than herself to the window and had her arms wrapped about him; K. had to bring this show to an end: “Take me to your supervisor,” he said. “When he wishes it; not before,” said the guard called Willem. “And now I advise you,” he added, “to go to your room, remain there quietly, and wait to find out what’s to be done with you. We advise you not to waste your time in useless thought, but to pull yourself together; great demands will be placed upon you. You haven’t treated us as we deserve; given how accommodating we’ve been; you’ve forgotten that whatever else we may be, we are at least free men with respect to you, and that’s no small advantage. Nevertheless we’re prepared, if you have any money, to bring you a small breakfast from the coffeehouse across the way.”

K. stood quietly for a moment without responding to this offer. Perhaps if he were to open the door to the next room, or even the door to the hall, the two would not dare stop him, perhaps the best solution would be to bring the whole matter to a head. But then they might indeed grab him, and once subdued he would lose any degree of superiority he might still hold over them. Therefore he preferred the safety of whatever solution would surely arise in the natural course of things and returned to his room without a further word having passed on either side.

He threw himself onto his bed and took from the nightstand a nice apple that he had placed out the previous evening to have with breakfast. Now it was his entire breakfast, and in any case, as he verified with the first large bite, a much better breakfast than he could have had from the filthy all-night cafe through the grace of his guards. He felt confident and at ease; he was missing work at the bank this morning of course, but in light of the relatively high position he held there, that would be easily excused. Should he give the real excuse? He considered doing so. If they didn’t believe him, which would be understandable given the circumstances, he could offer Frau Grubach as a witness, or even the two old people across the way, who were probably even now on the march to the window opposite him. K. was anciana, que ahora había arrastrado hasta allí a una persona aún más anciana, a la que mantenía abrazada. K tenía que poner punto final a ese espectáculo.

—Condúzcanme hasta su superior —dijo K. —Cuando él lo diga, no antes — dijo el vigilante llamado Willem.— y ahora le aconsejo — añadió — que vaya a su habitación, se comporte con tranquilidad y espere hasta que se disponga algo sobre su situación. Le aconsejamos que no se pierda en pensamientos inútiles, sino que se concentre, pues tendrá que hacer frente a grandes exigencias. No nos ha tratado con la benevolencia que merecemos. Ha olvidado que nosotros, quienes quiera que seamos, al menos frente a usted somos hombres libres, y esa diferencia no es ninguna nimiedad. A pesar de todo, estamos dispuestos, si tiene dinero, a subirle un pequeño desayuno de la cafetería.

K no respondió a la oferta y permaneció un rato en silencio. Tal vez no le impidieran que abriera la puerta de la habitación contigua o la del recibidor, tal vez ésa fuera la solución más simple, llevarlo todo al extremo. Pero también era posible que se echaran sobre él y, una vez en el suelo, habría perdido toda la superioridad que, en cierta medida, aún mantenía sobre ellos. Por esta razón, prefirió a esa solución la seguridad que traería consigo el desarrollo natural de los acontecimientos, y regresó a su habitación, sin que ni él ni los vigilantes pronunciaran una palabra más.

Se arrojó sobre la cama y tomó de la mesilla de noche una hermosa manzana que había reservado la noche anterior para su desayuno. Ahora era su único desayuno y, como comprobó al darle el primer mordisco, resultaba, sin duda, mucho mejor que el desayuno que le hubiera podido subir el vigilante de la sucia cafetería. Se sentía bien y confiado. Cierto, estaba descuidando sus deberes matutinos en el banco, pero como su puesto era relativamente elevado podría disculparse con facilidad. ¿Debería decir las verdaderas razones? Pensó en hacerlo. Si no le creían, lo que sería comprensible en su caso, podría presentar a la señora Grubach como testigo o a los dos ancianos de enfrente, que ahora mismo se encontraban en camino hacia la ventana de la habitación opuesta. A K le sorprendió, al adoptar la perspectiva de los vigilantes, que le hubieran confinado en la ha-
surprised, at least from the guards’ perspective, that they had driven him into his room and left him alone there, where it would be ten times easier to kill himself. At the same time he asked himself from his own perspective what possible reason he could have for doing so. Because those two were sitting next door and had taken away his breakfast? Committing suicide would be so irrational that even had he wished to, the irrationality of the act would have prevented him. Had the intellectual limitations of the guards not been so obvious, he might have assumed this same conviction led them to believe there was no danger in leaving him alone. Let them watch if they liked as he went to the little wall cupboard in which he kept good schnapps and downed a small glass in place of breakfast, then a second one as well, to give himself courage, a mere precaution, in the unlikely event it might be needed.

Then a shout from the adjoining room startled him so that he rattled his teeth on the glass. “The inspector wants you!” It was the cry alone that startled him: a short clipped military cry that he would never have expected from the guard Franz. The order itself he gladly welcomed: “It’s about time,” he called back, locked the cupboard, and hurried into the adjoining room. The two guards were standing there and, as if it were a matter of course, chased him back into his room. “What are you thinking of?” they cried. “Do you want to see the inspector in your nightshirt? He’ll have you soundly flogged and us along with you!” “Let go of me, damn you,” cried K., who was already pushed back against his wardrobe, “if you assault me in bed, you can hardly expect to find me in formal attire.” “It has to be a black coat,” they said. K. threw the coat to the floor in response and said—without knowing himself in what sense he meant it—: “But this isn’t the main hearing yet.” The guards smiled, but stuck to their words: “It has to be a black coat.” “If that will

En ese instante le asustó tanto una llamada de la habitación contigua que morrió el cristal del vaso.
—El supervisor le llama—dijeron.
Sólo había sido el grito lo que le había asustado, ese grito corto, seco, militar, del que jamás hubiera creído capaz a Franz. La orden fue bienvenida.
—¡Por fin! —exclamó, cerró el armario y se apresuró a entrar en la habitación contigua. Allí estaban los dos vigilantes que le conminaron a que volviera a su habitación, como si fuera algo natural.
—¿Pero cómo se le ocurre? —gritaron—. ¿Cómo pretende presentarse ante el supervisor en mangas de camisa? ¡Le dará una paliza y a nosotros también!
—¡Al diablo con todo! —gritó K, que ya había sido empujado hasta el armario ropero—. Cuando se me asalta en la cama no se puede esperar encontrarme en traje de etiqueta.
—No se puede tratar de la vista oral—dijeron los vigilantes, quienes, siempre que K gritaba, permanecían tranquilos, con cierto aire de tristeza, lo que le confundía y, en cierta medida, le hacía entrar en razón.
—¡Ceremonias ridículas! —gruñó aún, pero cogió una chaqueta de la silla y la mantuvo un rato entre las manos, como si la sometiera al juicio de los vigilantes. Ellos negaron con la cabeza.
—¡No se puede tratar de la vista oral—dijeron.
La orden fue bienvenida.

Entonces le asustó tanto una llamada de la habitación contigua que morrió el cristal del vaso.
—El supervisor le llama—dijeron.
Sólo había sido el grito lo que le había asustado, ese grito corto, seco, militar, del que jamás hubiera creído capaz a Franz. La orden fue bienvenida.

En ese instante le asustó tanto una llamada de la habitación contigua que morrió el cristal del vaso.
—El supervisor le llama—dijeron.

Sólo había sido el grito lo que le había asustado, ese grito corto, seco, militar, del que jamás hubiera creído capaz a Franz. La orden fue bienvenida.
—¡Por fin! —exclamó, cerró el armario y se apresuró a entrar en la habitación contigua. Allí estaban los dos vigilantes que le conminaron a que volviera a su habitación, como si fuera algo natural.
—¿Pero cómo se le ocurre? —gritaron—. ¿Cómo pretende presentarse ante el supervisor en mangas de camisa? ¡Le dará una paliza y a nosotros también!
—¡Al diablo con todo! —gritó K, que ya había sido empujado hasta el armario ropero—. Cuando se me asalta en la cama no se puede esperar encontrarme en traje de etiqueta.
—No se puede tratar de la vista oral—dijeron los vigilantes, quienes, siempre que K gritaba, permanecían tranquilos, con cierto aire de tristeza, lo que le confundía y, en cierta medida, le hacía entrar en razón.
—¡Ceremonias ridículas! —gruñó aún, pero cogió una chaqueta de la silla y la mantuvo un rato entre las manos, como si la sometiera al juicio de los vigilantes. Ellos negaron con la cabeza.
—¡No se puede tratar de la vista oral—dijeron.

K arrojó la chaqueta al suelo y dijo:
—Aún no se puede tratar de la vista oral.
Los vigilantes sonrieron, pero no cam-
When he was fully dressed, he had to walk just ahead of Willem through the empty room next door into the following room, the double doors to which were already thrown open. As K. well knew, this room had been newly occupied not long ago by a certain Fräulein Bürstner, a typist, who usually left for work quite early and came home late, and with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting. Now the nightstand by her bed had been shoved to the middle of the room as a desk for the hearing and the inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs and placed one arm on the back of the chair. In a corner of the room three young men stood looking at Fräulein Bürstner’s photographs, which were mounted on a mat on the wall. A white blouse hung on the latch of the open window. Across the way, the old couple were again at the opposite window, but their party had increased in number, for towering behind them stood a man with his shirt open at the chest, pinching and twisting his reddish goatee.

“Josef K.?” the inspector asked, perhaps simply to attract K.’s wandering gaze back to himself. K. nodded. “You’re no doubt greatly surprised by this morning’s events?” asked the inspector, arranging with both hands the few objects lying on the nightstand—a candle with matches, a book, and a pincushion—as if they were tools he required for the hearing. “Of course,” said K., overcome by a feeling of relief at finally standing before a reasonable man with whom he could discuss his situation, “of course I’m surprised, but by no means greatly surprised.” “Not greatly surprised?” asked the inspector, who usually left for work quite early and come home late, and with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting. Now the nightstand by her bed had been shoved to the middle of the room as a desk for the hearing and the inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs and placed one arm on the back of the chair. In a corner of the room three young men stood looking at Fräulein Bürstner’s photographs, which were mounted on a mat on the wall. A white blouse hung on the latch of the open window. Across the way, the old couple were again at the opposite window, but their party had increased in number, for towering behind them stood a man with his shirt open at the chest, pinching and twisting his reddish goatee.

“Josef K.?” the inspector asked, perhaps simply to attract K.’s wandering gaze back to himself. K. nodded. “You’re no doubt greatly surprised by this morning’s events?” asked the inspector, arranging with both hands the few objects lying on the nightstand—a candle with matches, a book, and a pincushion—as if they were tools he required for the hearing. “Of course,” said K., overcome by a feeling of relief at finally standing before a reasonable man with whom he could discuss his situation, “of course I’m surprised, but by no means greatly surprised.” “Not greatly surprised?” asked the inspector, who usually left for work quite early and come home late, and with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting. Now the nightstand by her bed had been shoved to the middle of the room as a desk for the hearing and the inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs and placed one arm on the back of the chair. In a corner of the room three young men stood looking at Fräulein Bürstner’s photographs, which were mounted on a mat on the wall. A white blouse hung on the latch of the open window. Across the way, the old couple were again at the opposite window, but their party had increased in number, for towering behind them stood a man with his shirt open at the chest, pinching and twisting his reddish goatee.

“Josef K.?” the inspector asked, perhaps simply to attract K.’s wandering gaze back to himself. K. nodded. “You’re no doubt greatly surprised by this morning’s events?” asked the inspector, arranging with both hands the few objects lying on the nightstand—a candle with matches, a book, and a pincushion—as if they were tools he required for the hearing. “Of course,” said K., overcome by a feeling of relief at finally standing before a reasonable man with whom he could discuss his situation, “of course I’m surprised, but by no means greatly surprised.” “Not greatly surprised?” asked the inspector, who usually left for work quite early and come home late, and with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting. Now the nightstand by her bed had been shoved to the middle of the room as a desk for the hearing and the inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs and placed one arm on the back of the chair. In a corner of the room three young men stood looking at Fräulein Bürstner’s photographs, which were mounted on a mat on the wall. A white blouse hung on the latch of the open window. Across the way, the old couple were again at the opposite window, but their party had increased in number, for towering behind them stood a man with his shirt open at the chest, pinching and twisting his reddish goatee.

“Josef K.?” the inspector asked, perhaps simply to attract K.’s wandering gaze back to himself. K. nodded. “You’re no doubt greatly surprised by this morning’s events?” asked the inspector, arranging with both hands the few objects lying on the nightstand—a candle with matches, a book, and a pincushion—as if they were tools he required for the hearing. “Of course,” said K., overcome by a feeling of relief at finally standing before a reasonable man with whom he could discuss his situation, “of course I’m surprised, but by no means greatly surprised.” “Not greatly surprised?” asked the inspector, who usually left for work quite early and come home late, and with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting. Now the nightstand by her bed had been shoved to the middle of the room as a desk for the hearing and the inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs and placed one arm on the back of the chair. In a corner of the room three young men stood looking at Fräulein Bürstner’s photographs, which were mounted on a mat on the wall. A white blouse hung on the latch of the open window. Across the way, the old couple were again at the opposite window, but their party had increased in number, for towering behind them stood a man with his shirt open at the chest, pinching and twisting his reddish goatee.

“Josef K.?” the inspector asked, perhaps simply to attract K.’s wandering gaze back to himself. K. nodded. “You’re no doubt greatly surprised by this morning’s events?” asked the inspector, arranging with both hands the few objects lying on the nightstand—a candle with matches, a book, and a pincushion—as if they were tools he required for the hearing. “Of course,” said K., overcome by a feeling of relief at finally standing before a reasonable man with whom he could discuss his situation, “of course I’m surprised, but by no means greatly surprised.” “Not greatly surprised?” asked the inspector, who usually left for work quite early and come home late, and with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting. Now the nightstand by her bed had been shoved to the middle of the room as a desk for the hearing and the inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs and placed one arm on the back of the chair. In a corner of the room three young men stood looking at Fräulein Bürstner’s photographs, which were mounted on a mat on the wall. A white blouse hung on the latch of the open window. Across the way, the old couple were again at the opposite window, but their party had increased in number, for towering behind them stood a man with his shirt open at the chest, pinching and twisting his reddish goatee.
Inspector, placing the candle in the middle of the table and grouping the other objects around it. “Perhaps you misunderstand me,” K. hastened to add. “I mean—” Here K. interrupted himself and looked around for a chair. “I can sit down, can’t I?” he asked. “It’s not customary,” answered the inspector. “I mean,” K. continued without further pause, “I’m of course greatly surprised, but when you’ve been in this world for thirty years and had to make your way on your own, as has been my lot, you get hardened to surprises and don’t take them too seriously. Particularly not today’s.” “Why particularly not today’s?” “I’m not saying I think the whole thing’s a joke, the preparations involved seem too extensive for that. All the lodgers at the boardinghouse would have to be in on it, and all of you, which would go far beyond a joke. So I’m not saying it’s a joke.” “That’s right,” said the inspector, checking the number of matches in the matchbox. “But on the other hand,” K. continued, as he turned to all of them, and would have gladly turned even to the three by the photographs, “on the other hand, it can’t be too important a matter. I conclude that from the fact that I’ve been accused of something but can’t think of the slightest offense of which I might be accused. But that’s also beside the point, the main question is: Who’s accusing me? What authorities are in charge of the proceedings? Are you officials? No one’s wearing a uniform, unless you want to call your suit—a uniform, but it’s more like a traveler’s outfit. I demand clarification on these matters, and I’m convinced that once they’ve been clarified we can part on the friendliest of terms.” The inspector flung the matchbox down on the table. “You’re quite mistaken,” he said. “These gentlemen and I are merely marginal figures in your affair, and in fact know almost nothing about it. We could be wearing the most proper of uniforms and your case would not be a whit more serious. I can’t report that you’ve been accused of anything, or more accurately, I don’t know if you have. You’ve been arrested, that’s true, but that’s all I know. Perhaps the guards have talked about other things, if so it was just that, idle talk. If, as a result, I can’t answer your questions either, I can at least give you some advice: think less about us and what’s

(10) Desde la nota hasta «Josef K?» hay una versión alternativa en el manuscrito: «El supervisor le contempló en silencio y con mirada inquisitiva. “El interrogatorio parece limitarse a miradas—pensó K—. Un rato se le puede permitir. Si supiera qué autoridad parece limitarse a miradas—pensó K—.»

el supervisor, y puso ahora la vela en el centro de la mesilla, mientras agrupaba el resto de los objetos a su alrededor.

—Es posible que no me interprete bien—se apresuró a especificar—. Quiero decir—... aquí K se interrumpió y buscó una silla—. ¿Puedo sentarme?—preguntó.

—No es lo normal—respondió el supervisor.

—Quiero decir—dijo ahora K sin más pausas—que me ha sorprendido mucho, pero como llevo treinta años en el mundo y he tenido que abrirme camino solo en la vida, estoy endurecido contra todo tipo de sorpresas, así que no las tomo por la tremenda (10). Especialmente la de hoy, no.

—¿Por qué no especialmente la de hoy?

—No quiero decir que lo considere todo una broma, para ello me parecen demasiado complicadas todas las precauciones que se han tomado. Tendrían que participar todos los inquilinos de la pensión y también todos ustedes, eso me parece rebasar los límites de una broma. Por eso no quiero decir que se trata de una broma.

—En efecto—dijo el supervisor y se dirigió a contar las cerillas que había en la caja.

—Por otra parte—continuó K, y se dirigió a todos, incluso le hubiera gustado que los tres situados ante las fotografías se hubieran dado la vuelta para escucharlo—. Por otra parte el asunto no puede ser de mucha importancia. Lo debozco porque he sido acusado, pero no puedo encontrar ninguna culpa por la que me pudieran haber acusado. Pero eso también es secundario. Las preguntas principales son: ¿Quién me ha acusado? ¿Qué organismo tramita mi proceso? ¿Es usted funcionario? Ninguno tiene uniforme, a no ser que su traje—y se dirigió a Franz—se pueda denominar un uniforme, aunque a mí me parece más bien un traje de viaje. Reclamo claridad en estas cuestiones y estoy convencido de que, una vez que hayan sido aclaradas, nos pondremos a despedir amablemente.

El supervisor derribó la caja de cerillas sobre la mesa.

—Usted se encuentra en un grave error—dijo—. Estos señores, aquí presentes, y yo, carecemos completamente, en lo que se refiere a su asunto, de importancia, más aún, apenas sabemos algo de él. Podríamos llevar los uniformes reglamentarios y su asunto no habría empezado un apico. Tampoco puedo decirle si le han acusado, o mejor, no siquiera se si le han acusado. Usted está detenido, eso es cierto, no sé más. Es posible que los vigilantes hayan charlado de otra cosa, pero eso sólo es una charla. Aunque no pueda responder a sus preguntas, sí le puedo aconsejar que
K. stared at the inspector. Was he to be lectured like a schoolboy by what might well be a younger man? To be reprimanded for his openness? And to learn nothing about why he had been arrested and on whose orders? He grew increasingly agitated, paced up and down, freely and without hindrance, pushed his cuffs back, felt his chest, brushed his hair into place, went past the three men, muttering, “It’s completely senseless,” at which they turned and looked at him in a friendly but serious way, and finally came to a stop before the inspector’s table.

“Hasterer, the public prosecutor, is a good friend of mine,” he said, “can I telephone him?” “Certainly,” said the inspector, “but I don’t see what sense it makes, unless you have some private matter to discuss with him.” “What sense?” K. cried out, more startled than annoyed. “Who do you think you are? You ask what sense it makes, while you stage the most senseless performance imaginable? Wouldn’t it break a heart of stone? First these gentlemen assault me, and now they calmer?” They crossed the room, but s erious way, and finally came to a stop before the inspector’s table.

“Hasterer, the public prosecutor, is a good friend of mine,” he said, “can I telephone him?” “Certainly,” said the inspector, “but I don’t see what sense it makes, unless you have some private matter to discuss with him.” “What sense?” K. cried out, more startled than annoyed. “Who do you think you are? You ask what sense it makes, while you stage the most senseless performance imaginable? Wouldn’t it break a heart of stone? First these gentlemen assault me, and now they sit around or stand about and put me through my paces before you. What sense is there in telephoning a lawyer when I’ve supposedly been arrested? Fine, I won’t telephone.” “But do,” said the inspector, and waved toward the hall, where the telephone was, “please do telephone.” “No, I no longer wish to,” K. said, and went to the window. Across the way the group was still at the window, their peaceful observation now slightly disturbed as K. stepped to the window. The old couple started to rise, but the man behind them calmed them down. “There’s more of the audience over there,” K. cried out to the inspector and pointed outside. “Get away from there,” he yelled at them.

The three immediately retreated a few steps, the old couple even withdrawing behind the man, who shielded them with his broad body and, judging by the movement of his piense menos en nosotros y en lo que le pueda ocurrir y piense más en sí mismo. Y tampoco alardee tanto de su inocencia, estropee la buena impresión que da. También debería ser más reservado al hablar, casi todo lo que ha dicho hasta ahora se podría haber deducido de su comportamiento aunque hubiera dicho muchachos menos palabras, además, no resulta muy favorable para su causa. (11)

K miró fijamente al supervisor. ¿Acaso recibía lecciones de un hombre que probablemente era más joven que él? ¿Le reprendían por su sinceridad? ¿Y no iba a saber nada de su detención ni del que la había dispuesto? Se apodó de él cierta excitación, fue de un lado a otro, siempre y cuando nada ni nadie se lo impidiera, se subió los puños de la camisa, se tocó el pelo, se alisó el pelo, pasó al lado de los tres señores, dijo: "esto es absurdo", por lo que éstos se volvieron y le contemplaron con amabilidad, pero serios, y, finalmente, se paró ante la mesa del supervisor.

—El fiscal Hasterer es un buen amigo mio —dijo—, ¿le puedo llamar por teléfono?

—Por supuesto —dijo el supervisor—, pero no sé qué sentido podría tener hacerlo, a no ser que quisiera hablar con él de algún asunto particular.

—¿Qué sentido? —gritó K., más con fusado que enojado—. ¿Pero, entonces, quién es usted? Usted pretende encontrar algún sentido y procede de la manera más absurda. Esto es para volverse loco. Estos señores me han asaltado y ahora están aquí sentados o pasean alrededor y me obligan a comparecer ante usted como si fuera un colegial. ¿Qué sentido tendría llamar a un fiscal si, como indican las apariencias, estoy detenido? Bien, no llamaré por teléfono.

—Pero hágalo —dijo el supervisor, y extendió la mano en dirección al receptor, donde estaba el teléfono—, por favor, llame.

—No, ya no quiero —dijo K., y se acercó a la ventana. Desde allí podía ver a las personas de enfrente, quienes aho ra, al ver aparecer a K en la ventana, se sintieron algo perturbadas en su papel de tranquilos espectadores. Los ancianos querían levantarse, pero el hombre que estaba detrás de ellos los tranquilizó.

—¡Allí hay unos mirones! —gritó K hacia el supervisor y los señaló con el dedo—. ¡Fuera de ahí!

Los tres retrocedieron inmediatamente unos pasos, los dos ancianos se colocaron, incluso, detrás del hombre, que con su ancho cuerpo los tapaba. Por los movimientos de...
lips, apparently said something that couldn’t be understood at that distance. They didn’t disappear entirely, however, but instead seemed to wait for the moment when they could approach the window again unnoticed. “Obnoxious, thoughtless people!” said K., turning back to the room. The inspector may have agreed with him, as he thought he noticed with a sideways glance. But it was equally possible he hadn’t been listening at all, for he had pressed his hand firmly down on the table and seemed to be comparing the length of his fingers. The two guards were sitting on a chest draped with an embroidered coverlet, rubbing their knees. The three young men had placed their hands on their hips and were gazing around aimlessly. Everything was silent, as in some deserted office.

“Now, gentlemen,” K. said firmly, and for a moment it seemed to him as if he bore them all upon his shoulders, “judging by your expressions, this affair of mine must be closed. In my view, it would be best to stop worrying whether or not your actions were justified and end the matter on a note of reconciliation, by shaking hands. If you share my view, then please—” and he stepped up to the inspector’s table and held out his hand. The inspector looked up, chewed his lip, and regarded K.’s outstretched hand; K. still believed that the inspector would grasp it. But instead he rose, lifted a hard bowler from Fräulein Bürstner’s bed, and donned it carefully with both hands, like someone trying on a new hat.

“How simple everything seems to you!” he said to K. as he did so. “So you think we should end this matter on a note of reconciliation? No, I’m afraid we really can’t. Although that’s not at all to say you should despair. Why should you? You’re under arrest, that’s all. I was to inform you of that, I’ve done so, and I’ve noted your reaction. That’s enough for today, and we can take our leave, temporarily of course. No doubt you wish to go to the bank now?”

“To the bank?” K. asked.

“I thought I was under arrest.” K. said this with a certain insistence, for although no one had shaken his hand, he was beginning to feel increasingly independent of these
people, particularly once the inspector had stood up. He was toying with them. If they did leave, he intended to follow them to the door of the building and offer to let them arrest him. And so he said again: “How can I go to the bank if I’m under arrest?” “Oh, I see,” said the inspector, who was already at the door, “you’ve misunderstood me; you’re under arrest, certainly, but that’s not meant to keep you from carrying on your profession. Nor are you to be hindered in the course of your ordinary life.” “Then being under arrest isn’t so bad,” said K., approaching the inspector. “I never said it was,” he replied. “But in that case even the notification of arrest scarcely seems necessary,” said K., stepping closer still. Everyone was now gathered in a small area by the door. “It was my duty,” said the inspector. “A stupid duty,” said K. relentlessly. “Perhaps so,” replied the inspector, “but let’s not waste our time with such talk. I assumed you wished to go to the bank. Since you weigh every word so carefully, let me add that I’m not forcing you to go to the bank, I simply assumed you would want to. And to facilitate that, and to render your arrival at the bank as inconspicuous as possible, I’ve arranged for three of your colleagues here to be placed at your disposal.” “What?” K. cried out, and stared at the three in amazement. These so uncharacteristically anemic young men, whom he recalled only as a group by the photographs, were indeed clerks from his bank, not colleagues, that would be an overstatement, and indicated a gap in the inspector’s omniscience, but they were certainly lower-level clerks from the bank. How could K. have failed to notice that? How preoccupied he must have been by the inspector and the guards not to recognize these three. Wooden, arm-swinging Rabensteiner, blond Kullich with his deep-set eyes, and Kaminer with his annoying smile, produced by a chronic muscular twitch. “Good morning!” K. said after a moment, and held out his hand to the men, who bowed courteously. “I completely failed to recognize you. So now we can go to work, right?” The men nodded, laughing and eager, as if that was what they’d been waiting for all along, but when K. levantado se sentía mucho más independiente de aquella gente. Quería seguirles el juego. Tenía la intención, en el caso de que se fueran, de ir detrás de ellos hasta la puerta y ofrecerles su detención. Por eso repitió: —¿Cómo puedo ir al banco, si estoy detenido? —¡Ah, ya! —dijo el supervisor, que había llegado a la puerta—, me ha entendido mal, usted está detenido, cierto, pero eso no le impide cumplir con sus obligaciones laborales. Debe seguir su vida normal. —Entonces estar detenido no es tan malo —dijo K., y se acercó al supervisor. —No he dicho nada que lo desmienta—dijo éste. —Pero tampoco parece que haya sido necesaria la comunicación de la detención —dijo K., y se acercó más. También los otros se habían acercado. Todos se habían reunido en un pequeño espacio al lado de la puerta. —Era mi deber —dijo el supervisor. —Un deber bastante tonto —dijo K. inflexible. —Puede ser —respondió el supervisor—, pero no vamos a perder el tiempo con conversaciones como ésta. He pensado que querría ir al banco. Como usted está al tanto de todas las palabras, añado: no le obligo a ir al banco, sólo he supuesto que quería hacerlo. Para facilitárselo y para que su llegada al banco sea lo más discreta posible, he mantenido a estos tres jóvenes, colegas suyos, a su disposición. —¿Cómo? —gritó K., y miró asombrado a los tres. Aquellos jóvenes tan anodinos y anémicos, que él aún recordaba sólo como grupo al lado de las fotografías, eran realmente funcionarios de su banco, no colegas, eso era demasiado decir, y demostraba una laguna en la omnisciencia del supervisor, aunque, en efecto, se trataba de funcionarios subordinados del banco. ¿Cómo no se había dado cuenta antes? Hasta qué punto había concentrado el atento en el supervisor y en los vigilantes, que había sido incapaz de reconocer a esos tres: al torpe Rabensteiner, siempre agitando las manos, al rubio Kullich, con los ojos caídos, y a Kaminer, con su sonrisa insoportable, producto de una distrofia muscular crónica. —¡Buenos días! —dijo K., pasado un rato, y ofreció su mano a los señores, que se inclinaron correctamente.—. No les había reconocido. Bien, entonces nos vamos juntos al trabajo, ¿no? Los tres jóvenes asintieron solicitos y sonriendo, como si hubieran estado esperando ese momento durante todo el tiem-
K. missed his hat, which he’d left in his room, all three tripped over each other’s heels to get it, which indicated a certain embarrassment on their part after all. K. stood still and watched them pass through the two open doors, the lethargic Rabensteiner bringing up the rear, of course, having broken into no more than an elegant trot. Kaminer handed over the hat and K. had to remind himself, as he often did at the bank, that Kaminer’s smile was not deliberate and that in fact he couldn’t smile deliberately at all. In the hall, Frau Grubach, not looking as if she felt any particular sense of guilt, opened the outer door for the whole company and K. looked down, as so often, at her apron strings, which cut so unnecessarily deeply into her robust body. Downstairs, watch in hand, K. decided to go by car so as not to extend unnecessarily what was already a half-hour delay. Kaminer ran to the corner to get a cab; the other two apparently felt no need to entertain K. somehow, since Kullich suddenly pointed to the door of the building across the way, in which the man with the blond goatee had just appeared, and, at first embarrassed by now showing himself full-length, had retreated to the wall and leaned against it. The old couple were probably still on the stairs. K. was annoyed at Kullich for having pointed out the man, since he had already seen him himself, and in fact had been expecting him.

“Don’t look over there,” he said quickly, without realizing how strange it must sound to speak that way to grown men. But no explanation was necessary, for at that moment the cab arrived, they got in, and it pulled away. Then K. remembered that he hadn’t seen the inspector and the guards leave: the inspector had diverted his attention from the three clerks, and now the clerks had done the same for the inspector. That didn’t show much presence of mind, and K. resolved to pay greater attention to such things. Even now he turned around involuntarily and leaned across the rear panel of the car to see if the inspector and guards might still be in sight. But he turned around again immediately, without having made the slightest effort to locate anyone, and leaned back comfortably into the corner of the cab. Despite appearances, he could po, sólo cuando K echó de menos su sombrero, que se había quedado en su cuarto, se apresuraron, uno detrás del otro, a recordarlo, de lo que se podía deducir cierta perplejidad. K permaneció en silencio y vio cómo se alejaban a través de las dos puertas abiertas, el último, naturalmente, era el indiferente Rabensteiner, que se había limitado a adoptar un elegante trote corto. Kaminer le entregó el sombrero, y K tuvo que decirse expresamente, lo que, por lo demás, era necesario con frecuencia en el banco, que la sonrisa de Kaminer no era intencionada, que en realidad era incapaz de sonreír intencionadamente. En el recibidor, la señora Grubach, que no aparentaba ninguna conciencia culpable, abrió la puerta de la calle a todo el grupo, y K, como muchas veces, se quedó mirando la cinta de su delantal, que ceñía innecesariamente su poderoso cuerpo. Una vez fuera, K, con el reloj en la mano, y para no aumentar el retraso de media hora, decidió llamar a un taxi. Kaminer se acercó corriendo a una esquina para llamar a uno, pero mientras los otros dos aparentemente intentaban distraer a K, Kullich señaló repentinamente la puerta de enfrente, en la que acababa de aparecer el hombre con la perilla pelirroja, quien quedó algo confuso, ya que ahora se mostraba en toda su estatura, por lo que retrocedió hasta la pared y se apoyó en ella. Los ancianos aún estaban en las escaleras. K se enfadó con Kullich por haber llamado la atención sobre el hombre al que ya había visto antes y al que inclusive había esperado.

—No mire hacia allí —balbuceó, sin darse cuenta de lo llamativa que resultaba esa forma de expresarse cuando se dirigía a personas madur as. Pero tampoco era necesaria ninguna explicación, pues acababa de llegar el coche, así que se sentaron y partieron. En ese instante, K se acordó de que no se había percatado de la partida del supervisor y de los vigilantes, el supervisor le había ocultado a los tres funcionarios y ahora los funcionarios habían ocultado, a su vez, al supervisor. Eso no denotaba mucha serenidad, así que K se propuso observarse mejor. No obstante, se dio la vuelta y se inclinó por si todavía existía la posibilidad de ver al supervisor y a los vigilantes. Pero recuperó en seguida su posición original sin ni siquiera haber intentado buscar a alguien, reclamándose cómodamente en uno de los extremos del asiento del coche (12).

Aunque no lo aparentaba, habría ne-
CONVERSATION WITH FRAU GRUBACH
THEN FRÄULEIN BÜRSTNER

That spring K. generally spent his evenings as follows: after work, if there was still time he usually stayed at the office until nine—he would take a short walk, alone or with acquaintances, then go to a tavern, where he would sit with a group of regulars, mostly older men, until eleven o’clock. But there were also exceptions to this routine; for example, when K. was invited by the bank president, who valued his diligence and reliability highly, for a drive in his car or for supper at his villa. In addition K. paid a weekly visit to a young woman named Elsa, who worked at night and late into the morning as a waitress in a wine house, and by day received visitors only in bed.

But on this particular evening—the day had passed quickly, filled with hard work and a number of friendly and deferential birthday greetings—K. wanted to go straight home. He had thought about it during all the small breaks throughout the workday: without knowing exactly how, it seemed to him as if the morning’s events had thrown the whole of Frau Grubach’s boardinghouse into disarray, and that he was the one needed to restore order. Once that order had been restored, all trace of what had happened would be wiped away, and the old routine would resume. There was nothing in particular to fear from the three clerks; they had faded

cesitado ahora algo de conversación, pero los señores parecían cansados. Rabensteiner miraba hacia la derecha, Kullych hacia la izquierda y sólo Kaminer estaba a su disposición con sus muecas, y hacer una broma sobre ellas, por desgracia, lo prohibía la humanidad.

CONVERSACIÓN CON LA SEÑORA GRUBACH LA SEÑORITA BÜRSTNER

En esa primavera, K., después del trabajo, cuando era posible —normalmente permanecía hasta las nueve en la oficina—, solía dar un paseo por la noche solo o con algún conocido y luego se iba a una cervecería, donde se sentaba hasta las once en una tertulia compuesta en su mayor parte por hombres mayores. Pero había excepciones en esta rutina, por ejemplo cuando el director del banco, que apreciaba su capacidad de trabajo y su formalidad, le invitaba a una excursión con el coche o a cenar en su villa. Además, una vez a la semana iba a casa de una muchacha llamada Elsa, que trabajaba de camarera en una taberna hasta altas horas de la madrugada y durante el día sólo recibía en la cama a sus visitas.

Aquella noche, sin embargo —el día había transcurrido con rapidez por el trabajo agotador y las numerosas felicitaciones de cumpleaños—, K quería regresar directamente a casa. En todas las pequeñas pausas del trabajo había pensado en ello. Sin saber con certeza por qué, le parecía que los incidentes de aquella mañana habían causado un gran desorden en la vivienda de la señora Grubach y que su presencia era necesaria para restaurar de nuevo el orden. Una vez restaurado, quedaría suprimida cualquier huella del incidente y todo volvería a los cauces normales. De los tres funcionarios no había nada que temer, se habían
back into the larger realm of the bank’s bureaucracy without any noticeable change. K. had called them to his office several times, both individually and as a group, for no other purpose than to observe them; he had always been able to dismiss them totally satisfied.

When, at nine-thirty that evening, he arrived at the building where he lived, he met a young fellow standing spread-legged at the entrance, smoking a pipe. “Who are you,” K. asked straightaway and brought his face close to that of the fellow; the semidarkness of the entranceway made it hard to see. “I’m the caretaker’s son, sir,” the fellow answered, removing the pipe from his mouth and stepping aside. “The caretaker’s son?” K. asked, tapping the floor impatiently with his cane. “Is there anything I can do for you, sir? Shall I get my father?” “No, no,” said K. with a note of forgiveness, as if the fellow had done something truly wrong, but he was willing to forgive him. “That’s all right,” he said, and passed on; but before he went up the stairs, he turned around once more.

He could have gone straight to his room, but since he wanted to speak with Frau Grubach, he knocked first at her door. She sat darning a stocking at a table piled with other old stockings. K. excused himself absentmindedly for calling so late, but Frau Grubach was very friendly and would hear of no apology: he could visit her anytime, he was her best and dearest boarder, as he well knew. K. looked around the room: it had been fully restored to its former state; the breakfast dishes that had stood on the table by the window that morning had been removed as well. A woman’s hand indeed works quiet wonders, he thought; he might have smashed the dishes on the spot, but he certainly couldn’t have carried them out. He looked at Frau Grubach with a touch of gratitude. “Why are you working so late?” he asked. Now they were both sitting at the table, and from time to time K. buried his hand in the stockings. “There’s a lot of work to do,” she said, “during the day I belong to my boarders, but at night I can take care of my own affairs.”

Cuando llegó a las nueve y media de la noche a la casa en que vivía, K. se encontró en la puerta con un muchacho que permanecía con las piernas abiertas y fumando en pipa.
—¿Quién es usted? —preguntó K en seguida y acercó su rostro al del muchacho, pues no se veía mucho en el oscuro pasillo de entrada.
—Soy el hijo del portero, señor—respondió el muchacho, se sacó la pipa de la boca y se apartó.
—¿El hijo del portero? —preguntó K, y golpeó impaciente con el bastón en el suelo.
—¿Desea algo el señor? ¿Debo traer a mi padre?
—No, no —dijo K. En su voz había un tono de disculpa, como si el muchacho hubiera hecho algo malo y él le perdónara—. Está bien —dijo, y siguió, pero antes de subir las escaleras, se volvió una vez más.

Habría podido ir directamente a su habitación, pero como quería hablar con la señora Grubach, llamó a su puerta. Estaba sentada a una mesa cosiendo una media. Sobre la mesa aún quedaba un montón de medias viejas. K. se disculpó algo confuso por haber llegado tan tarde, pero la señora Grubach era muy amable y no quiso oír ninguna disculpa: siempre tenía tiempo para hablar con él, sabía muy bien que era su mejor y más querido inquilino. K. miró la habitación, había recobrado su antiguo aspecto, la vajilla del desayuno, que había estado por la mañana en la mesita junto a la ventana, ya había sido retirada. «Las manos femeninas hacen milagros en silencio —pensó—, él probablemente habría roto toda la vajilla, en realidad ni siquiera habría sido capaz de llevársela». Contempló a la señora Grubach con cierto agradecimiento.
—¿Por qué trabaja hasta tan tarde?
—preguntó. Ambos estaban sentados a la mesa, y K hundía de vez en cuando una de sus manos en las medias.
—Hay mucho trabajo —dijo ella—. Durante el día me debo a los inquilinos, pero si quiero mantener el orden en mis cosas sólo me quedan las noches.
—Hoy le he causado un trabajo extraordinario.
“How is that?” she asked, becoming more animated, her work resting in her lap. “I mean the men who were here this morning.” “Oh, that,” she said, returning to her state of calm, “that was no particular work.” K. watched in silence as she again took up the stocking she was darning. “She seems surprised I’m talking about it,” he thought, “she doesn’t seem to think I should. All the more reason to do so. The only person I can discuss it with is an old woman.” “Oh, it surely caused some work,” he continued, “but it won’t happen again.” “No, it can’t happen again,” she said reassuringly and smiled at K. in an almost melancholy way. “Do you really think so?” asked K. “Yes,” she said softly, “but above all you mustn’t take it too seriously. All sorts of things go on in this world! Since you’re talking so openly with me, Herr K., I’ll confess that I listened a little behind the door, and the guards told me a few things too. It involves your happiness after all, and I really take that to heart, more than I should perhaps, since after all, I’m only your landlady. Well anyway, I heard a few things, but I can’t say that it was anything very bad. No. You’re under arrest all right, but not the way a thief would be. If you’re arrested like a thief, that’s bad, but this arrest—. It seems like something scholarly, I’m sorry if that sounds stupid, but— it seems like something scholarly that I don’t understand, but that I don’t need to understand either.”

“What you’ve said is not at all stupid, Frau Grubach, at any rate I agree with you in part, except that I judge the whole matter even more harshly; I don’t even regard it as something scholarly, but simply as nothing at all. I was caught by surprise, that’s all. If I’d just gotten up the moment I awoke, without letting myself be thrown by the fact that Anna didn’t appear, and come to you without worrying about anyone’s standing in my way; if I’d eaten breakfast in the kitchen for once, and had you bring my clothes from my room; in short, if I’d behaved sensibly, nothing more would have happened, everything else would have been nipped in the bud. At the bank, for instance, I’m always prepared, nothing like this could ever happen

—¿Por qué? —preguntó con cierta vehemencia; el trabajo descansaba en su regazo.
—Me refiero a los hombres que estuvieron aquí esta mañana.
—¡Ah, ya! —dijo, y se volvió a tranquilizar—. Eso no me ha causado mucho trabajo.
K. miró en silencio cómo emprenía de nuevo su labor. «Parece asombrarse de que le hable del asunto —pensó—, no considera correcto que hable de ello. Más importante es, pues, que lo haga. Sólo puedo hablar de ello con una mujer mayor».
—Algo de trabajo sí ha causado —dijo—, pero no se volverá a repetir.
—No, no se puede repetir —dijo ella confirmándolo y sonrió a K casi con tristeza.
—¿Lo cree de verdad? —preguntó K.
—Sí —dijo ella en voz baja—, pero ante todo no se lo debe tomar muy en serio. ¡Las cosas que ocurren en el mundo! Como habla conmigo con tanta confianza, señor K, le confessaré que escuché algo detrás de la puerta y que los vigilantes también me contaron algunas cosas. Se trata de su felicidad, y eso me importa mucho, más, quizá, de lo que me in-cumbe, pues no soy más que la case-ra. Bien, algo he oído, pero no puedo decir que sea especialmente malo. No. Usted, es cierto, ha sido detenido, pero no como un ladrón. Cuando se detiene a alguien como si fuera un ladrón, entonces es malo, pero esta detención... me parece algo peculiar y complejo, perdóneme si digo alguna tontería, hay algo complejo en esto que no entiendo, pero que tampoco se debe entender.

—No ha dicho ninguna ton-tería, se señora Grubach, yo mismo com parto algo su opi-nión, pero juzgo todo con más r i g or que usted, y no to-mo por algo complejo sin por una nadería. Me han asaltado de un modo imprevisto, eso es todo. Si nada más despertarme no me hubiera dejado confundir por la ausencia de Anna, me hubiera levantado en seguida y, sin tener ninguna consideración con nadie que me saliera al paso, hubiera de-sayunado, por una vez, en la cocina y me hubiera traído usted el traje de mi habi-tación, entonces habría negociado todo breve y razonablemente, no habría pasa-do a mayores y no hubiera ocurrido nada de lo que pasó. Pero uno siempre está tan desprevenido. En el banco, por ejemplo, siempre estoy preparado, allí no me podría ocurrir algo similar, allí
to me there; I have my own assistant, the office phone and my outside line stand before me on the desk, people are constantly involved in, clients and officers; but even more importantly, I'm always involved in, my work, and so I have my wits about me; it would be a positive pleasure to confront a situation like this at my office. Well, it's all over now and I really didn't want to talk about it any more, I just wanted to hear your judgment on the matter, the judgment of a sensible woman, and I'm glad we agree about it. But now you must give me your hand; an agreement like this has to be confirmed by shaking hands."

Will she shake my hand? The inspector didn’t, he thought, and he looked at the woman in a new way, scrutinizing her. She stood up because he had already done so; she was a little embarrassed because she hadn’t understood everything that K. was saying. In her embarrassment, however, she said something she didn’t mean to, something totally inappropriate: “Don’t take it so hard, Herr K.,” she said with tears in her voice, forgetting of course to shake his hand. “I didn’t think I was taking it hard,” K. said, suddenly weary, and realizing how worthless this woman’s assent was.

At the door he asked: “Is Fräulein Bürstner home?” “No,” said Frau Grubach, and as she delivered this dry piece of information she smiled with belated, shared understanding. “She’s at the theater. Did you want something from her? Do you want me to give her a message?” “Oh, I just wanted to say a few words to her.” “I’m sorry, I don’t know when she’ll be back; when she’s at the theater she usually comes home late.” “It doesn’t matter,” said K., and was already turning to the door to leave, his head bowed, “I just wanted to beg her pardon for using her room today.” “That’s not necessary, Herr K., you’re too considerate; she doesn’t know anything about it, she hasn’t been home since early this morning, and everything’s already been straightened up, see for yourself.” And she opened the door to Fräulein Bürstner’s room. “Thanks, I believe you,” said K., but nevertheless walked to the open door. The moon shone softly into the dark room. As far as one could tell,
everything was really back in its place, and the blouse no longer hung from the window handle. The bolsters seemed strikingly plump on the bed, lying partially in moonlight.

"She often returns home quite late," K. said, and stared at Frau Grubach as if she were responsible. "Like all young people," said Frau Grubach by way of pardon. "Of course, of course," said K., "but it can go too far." "It can indeed," said Frau Grubach, "you’re certainly right there, Herr K. And perhaps it has in this case. I certainly have no wish to slander Fräulein Bürstner, she’s a fine and dear young woman, friendly, neat, punctual, and industrious, I appreciate all that, but it’s true she should show more pride, and more reserve. I’ve already seen her twice this month in other neighborhoods and each time with a different man. I find it very embarrassing; I swear to the dear Lord I’ve mentioned it to no one but you, Herr K., but there’s no getting around it, I’ll have to speak to the young woman about it. And that’s not the only thing I find suspicious about her."

"You’re totally off track," said K., scarcely able to conceal his fury, "it seems you’ve misunderstood my remarks about the young woman; that’s not at all what I meant. In fact I warn you frankly not to say anything to her; you’re completely mistaken, I know the young woman quite well, and there’s no truth at all in what you’ve said. But perhaps I’m going too far; I don’t wish to stand in your way, say whatever you want to her. Good night."

"Herr K.," said Frau Grubach imploringly and rushed after K. to his door, which he had already opened, "I really don’t want to speak with her, naturally that’s the only one I’ve told what I know. After all, it’s surely in the boarders’ best interest to try to run a clean house, and that’s all I’m trying to do."

"Clean!" K. cried through the crack in the door, "if you want to run a clean house, you’ll have to start by giving me notice." Then he slammed the door shut, paying no attention to the timid knocks that followed.

However, since he didn’t feel like sleeping, he decided to stay up, and use the opportunity to find out when Fräulein Bürstner would arrive. It might even be possible, though...
When he grew tired of looking out onto the empty street, he lay down on the divan, having opened the door to the hall slightly so that he could see anyone entering the lodgings directly from where he was lying. He lay on the divan smoking a cigar until around eleven. After that he couldn’t hold out there any longer, and went instead out into the hall for a little while, as if he could speed up Fräulein Bürstner’s arrival that way. He had no particular desire to see her, he couldn’t even quite remember what she looked like, but now he wanted to talk to her, and he was annoyed that by coming home so late she was bringing disturbance and disarray to this day’s end as well. And it was her fault he hadn’t eaten anything that evening, and that he’d skipped his intended visit to Elsa that day. Of course, he could make up for both now by going to the wine bar where Elsa worked. He’d do that later, after he had spoken with Fräulein Bürstner.

It was past eleven-thirty when he heard someone on the stairs. K., who had been pacing up and down the hall noisily, lost in thought, as if he were in his own room, fled behind his door. It was Fräulein Bürstner, returning. Shivering, she pulled a silk shawl around her slim shoulders as she locked the door. In another moment she would be entering her room, which K. certainly wouldn’t be permitted to invade this close to midnight; he had to speak to her now, but unfortunately he’d forgotten to switch on the light in his room, so that when he stepped out of the darkened room it would resemble an assault, and at the very least would give her a real shock. At a loss, and since there was no time to lose, he whispered through the crack in the door: “Fräulein Bürstner.”

www.it.wikipedia.org

Habían pasado de las once y medio cuando oyó pasos en la escalera, K., que se había quedado ensimismado en sus pensamientos y paseaba haciendo ruido por el recibidor, como si estuviera en su propia habitación, se escondió detrás de la puerta. Era la señorita Bürstner, que acababa de llegar. Después de cerrar la puerta de entrada se echó, temblorosa, un chal de seda sobre sus esbeltos hombros. A continuación, se dirigió a su habitación, en la que K., como era medianoche, ya no podría entrar. Por consiguiente, tenía que dirigirle la palabra ahora; por desgracia, había olvidado encender la luz de su habitación, por lo que su aparición desde la oscuridad tomaría la apariencia de un asalto y se vería obligado a asustarla. En esa situación comprometida, y como no podía perder más tiempo, susurró a través de la rendija de la puerta:

—Señorita Bürstner.
It sounded like a plea, not a call.  
"Is someone there?" asked Fräulein Bürstner and looked around wide-eyed.  
"It’s me," said K., and stepped forward.  
"Oh, Herr K.!
" said Fräulein Bürstner with a smile; "Good evening," and she held out her hand.  
"I wanted to have a few words with you, may I do so now?"  
"Now?" asked Fräulein Bürstner; "does it have to be now? Isn’t that a little unusual?"  
"I’ve been waiting for you since nine o’clock."  
"Well, I was at the theater, I had no idea you were waiting."  
"I wanted to talk to you about something that occurred just today."  
"Well, I really don’t mind, except that I’m so tired I’m about to drop. Come into my room for a few minutes then. We certainly can’t talk here, we’ll wake everyone up, and that would be even more unpleasant for us than for the others. Wait here until I’ve lit the lamp in my room and then turn this light off."

K. did so but then remained waiting until Fräulein Bürstner softly invited him in again from her room.  
"Sit down," she said, and pointed toward the ottoman, while she herself remained standing by the bedpost, in spite of her talk of fatigue; she didn’t even take off her small hat, which overflowed with flowers. "So what is it you want? I’m really curious." She crossed her legs lightly.  
"Perhaps you’ll say," K. began, "that the matter wasn’t so pressing that we had to talk about it now, but-"  
"I never listen to long preliminaries," said Fräulein Bürstner.  
"That makes my task easier," said K. "Your room was slightly disturbed today, and in a sense it was my fault; it was done by strangers and against my will, and yet, as I say, it was my fault; that’s what I wanted to ask your pardon for."  
"¿Mi habitación? --preguntó la señorita Bürstner..-- ¿Tiene que ser ahora? Es un poco extraño, ¿no? --La estoy esperando desde las nueve.--

"Ah!, bueno (16), he estado en el teatro, usted no me había dicho nada.  
"El motivo por el que quiero hablar con usted es algo que ha sucedido esta mañana.  
"Bien, no tengo nada en contra, excepto que estoy agotada. Venga un par de minutos a mi habitación, aquí no podemos conversar, despertaremos a todos y eso sería muy desagradable para mí, y no por las molestias causadas a los demás, sino por nosotros. Espere aquí hasta que haya encendido la luz en mi habitación y entonces apague la suya.

Así lo hizo K, luego esperó hasta que la señorita Bürstner le invitó en voz baja a entrar en su habitación.  
"Siéntese ---dijo, y señaló una ottoman; ella permaneció de pie al lado de la cama a pesar del cansancio del que había hablado. Ni siquiera se quitó su pequeño sombrero, adornado con un ramo de flores.  
"Bueno, ¿qué desea usted? Tengo curiosidad por saberlo ---dijo, y cruzó ligeramente las piernas.  
"Tal vez le parezca---comenzó K-- que el asunto no era tan urgente como para tener que hablarlo ahora, pero...  
"Siempre ignoro las introducciones---dijo la señorita Bürstner.  
"Bien, eso me facilita las cosas ---dijo K---. Su habitación ha sido esta mañana, en cierto modo por mi culpa, un poco desordenada. Lo hicieron unos extraños contra mi voluntad y, como he dicho, también por mi culpa. Por eso quisiera pedirle perdón.  
"¿Mi habitación? --preguntó la señorita Bürstner, y en vez de mirar la habitación dirigió a K una mirada inquisitiva.  
"Así ha sido ---dijo K, y por primera vez se miraron a los ojos---. La manera en que ha ocurrido no me recuerda la pena contarla.  
"Pero es precisamente lo interesante---dijo la señorita Bürstner.  
"No ---dijo K.  
"Bueno, tampoco quiero...
“I don’t want to pry into secrets; if you claim it’s of no interest, I won’t bother to argue. I gladly grant the pardon you seek, particularly since I see no trace of any disorder.”

She made a tour of the room, her hands flat and low on her hips. She stopped in front of the mat with the photographs. “Yes, look,” she cried out, “my photos have been all mixed up. That’s really annoying. Someone’s been in my room without permission.”

K. nodded and silently cursed the clerk Kaminer, who could never control his stupid, senseless fidgeting. “I find it odd,” said Fräulein Bürstner, “to be forced to forbid you to do something your own conscience should forbid, namely, to enter my room when I’m away.”

“But I explained to you, Fräulein,” said K., going over to the photographs as well, “I’m not the one who took liberties with your photographs; but since you don’t believe me, I must confess that the commission of inquiry brought along three bank clerks, and that one of them, whom I’ll have dismissed from the bank at the first opportunity, probably handled your photographs.”

“Yes,” K. added, since the young woman was staring at him with a questioning look. “Because of you?” the young woman asked. “Yes,” K. replied. “No,” the young woman cried with a laugh. “Oh, yes,” said K. “Do you think I’m guiltless then?” “Well, guiltless . . . .” said the young woman, “I don’t want to make a hasty judgment that might possibly have serious consequences, and I don’t really know you, but it does seem that you’d have to be a serious criminal to have a commission of inquiry come down on you right from the start. But since you’re free-at least I gather from your calm state that you haven’t escaped from prison-you can’t have committed any serious crime.”

“Yes,” said K., “but it may have been that the commission of inquiry realized I’m guiltless or at least not quite as guilty as they thought.” “Yes, that could be,” said Fräulein Bürstner, paying close attention. “You see,” said K., “you don’t have much experience in court matters.” “No, I don’t,” said Fräulein Bürstner, “and I’ve often regretted that, because I would like to know inmiscuirme en los asuntos de los demás, si usted insiste en que no es interesante, no objetaré nada. Acepto sus disculpas, sobre todo porque no encuentro ninguna huelga de desorden.

Dio un paseo por la habitación con las manos en las caderas. Se paró frente a las fotografías.

—Mire —exclamó—, han movido mis fotografías. Eso es algo de malusto. Así que alguien ha entrado en mi habitación sin mi permiso.

K asintió y maldijo en silencio al funcionario Kaminer, que no podía dominar su absurda e inculta vivacidad.

—Es extraño —dijo la señorita Bürstner—, me veo obligada a prohibirle algo que usted mismo se debería prohibir: entrar en mi habitación cuando me hallo ausente.

—Yo le aseguro, señora Bürstner —dijo K, acercándose a las fotografías—, que yo no he sido el que las ha tocado. Pero como no me cree, debo reconocer que la comisión investigadora ha traído a tres funcionarios del banco, de los cuales uno, al que cuando se me presente la primera oportunidad despediré del banco, probablemente tomó las fotografías en la mano. Sí —añadió K, ya que la señorita le había lanzado una mirada interrogativa—, esta mañana hubo aquí una comisión investigadora.

—¿Por usted? —preguntó la señorita.

—Sí —respondió K.

—No —exclamó ella, y rió.

—Sí, si —dijo K—, ¿crees que soy inocente?

—Bueno, inocente... —dijo la señorita——, No quiero emitir ahora un juicio trascendente, tampoco le conozco, en todo caso debe de ser un delito grave para mandar inmediatamente a una comisión investigadora. Pero como está en libertad —deduzco por su tranquilidad que no se ha escapado de la cárcel—, no ha podido cometer un delito semejante.

—Sí —dijo K—, pero la comisión investigadora puede haber comprobado que soy inocente o no tan culpable como habían supuesto.

—Cierto, pude ser —dijo ella muy atenta.

—Ve usted —dijo K—, no tiene mucha experiencia en asuntos judiciales.

—No, no lo tengo —dijo la señorita Bürstner—, y lo he lamentado con frecuencia, pues quisiera saberlo todo.
everything, and I’m fascinated with court matters. The court has a strange attraction, doesn’t it? But I’ll certainly be able to increase my knowledge in that area, because I start next month as a secretary in a law firm."

“That’s very good,” said K., “then you’ll be able to help me a little with my trial.”

“Perhaps,” said Fräulein Bürstner, “why not? I enjoy using my knowledge.”

“I’m serious too,” said K., “or at least half serious, like you. It’s too minor an affair to bring in a lawyer, but I could use someone to advise me.”

“Yes, but if I’m to advise you, I have to know what it’s all about,” said Fräulein Bürstner. “That’s just the problem,” said K., “I don’t know myself.”

“Then you’ve just been teasing me,” said Fräulein Bürstner, exceedingly disappointed, “you hardly needed to pick such a late hour to do it.” And she walked away from the photographs, where they had been standing together for so long.

“But Fräulein,” K. said, “I’m not teasing. Why won’t you believe me? I’ve already told you everything I know. More than I know in fact, because it wasn’t a commission of inquiry. I just called it that because I don’t know any other name for it. There was no inquiry, I was simply arrested, but by a commission.”

Fräulein Bürstner sat down on her ottoman and laughed again:

“What was it like?” she asked.

“Terrible,” said K., although now he wasn’t thinking about it at all, but was instead totally engrossed by the sight of Fräulein Bürstner, who was resting her head on one hand-her elbow propped on the cushion of the ottoman-while she slowly stroked her hip with the other. “That’s too general,” said Fräulein Bürstner. “What’s too general?” K. asked. Then he came to himself and asked: “Do you want me to show you how it was?” He wanted to move about and yet not leave. “I’m already tired,” said Fräulein Bürstner. “You go in so late,” said K. “And now it ends with reproaches; I deserve it, I should never have let you in. And it wasn’t really y los asuntos judiciales me interesan mucho. Los tribunales ejercen una poderosa fascinación, ¿verdad? Pero es muy probable que perfeccione mis conocimientos en este terreno, pues el mes próximo entro a trabajar en un bufete de abogados como secretaria.

—Eso está muy bien —dijo K—, así podrá ayudarme un poco en mi proceso.

—Podría ser—dijo ella—, ¿por qué no? Me gusta aplicar mis conocimientos.

—Se lo doy en serio —dijo K—, o al menos en el tono medio en broma medio en serio que usted ha empleado. El asunto es demasiado pequeño como para contratar a un abogado, pero podría necesitar a un consejero.

—Sí, pero si yo tuviera que ser el consejero, debería saber de qué se trata—dijo la señorita Bürstner.

—Ahi está el quid, que ni yo mismo lo sé.

—Entonces ha estado bromeadando conmigo—dijo ella muy decepcionada—, ha sido algo completamente innecesario elegir una hora tan intempestiva —y se alejó de las fotografías, donde hacía rato que permanecían juntos.

—Pero no, señorita—dijo K—, no bromeo en absoluto. ¿Que no me quiera creer! Le he contado todo lo que sé, incluso más de lo que sé, pues no era ninguna comisión investigadora, le he dado ese nombre porque no sabía cómo denominarla. No se ha investigado nada, sólo fui detenido, pero por una comisión.

La señorita Bürstner se sentó en la otomana y rió de nuevo:

—¿Cómo fue entonces?—preguntó.

—Horrible —dijo K, pero ya no pensaba en ello, se había quedado absorto en la contemplación de la señorita Bürstner, que, con la mano apoyada en el rostro, descansaba el codo en el cojín de la otomana y acariciaba lentamente su cadera con la otra mano.

—Eso es demasiado general —dijo ella.

—¿Qué es demasiado general?—preguntó K. Entonces se acordó y preguntó:

—¿Le puedo mostrar cómo ha ocurrido?—quería animar algo el ambiente para no tener que irse.

—Estoy muy cansada —dijo la señorita Bürstner.

—Vino muy tarde —dijo K.

—Y para colmo termina hiciéndome reproches: me lo merezco, pues no debería haberle dejado entrar. Tampoco era necesario,
ecessary, as it turned out."

"It was necessary, you'll see that now," said K. "May I move the nightstand away from your bed?"

"What an idea!" said Fräulein Bürstner; "of course you can't!"

"Then I can't show you," K. said, all upset, as if this would cause him immense harm.

"Well, if you need it for your performance, then go ahead and move the stand," said Fräulein Bürstner, adding in a faint voice, after a pause: "I'm so tired that I'm letting you take more liberties than I should.

K. placed the little table in the middle of the room and sat down behind it. "You have to visualize the cast of characters, it's very interesting. I'm the inspector, two guards are sitting over there on the chest, three young men are standing by the photographs. From the window handle, I'm just noting it in passing, hangs a white blouse. And now the action begins. Oh, I'm forgetting myself, the most important character: I'm standing here, in front of the table. The inspector is sitting totally at ease, his legs crossed, his arm hanging down like this from the back of the chair, an unbelievable boor. And now the action really begins. The inspector cries out as if he has to wake me up, practically shouting; unfortunately I'll have to shout too, to show you how it was; all he shouts is my name, by the way."

Fräulein Bürstner, laughing as she listened, held her finger to her lips to keep K. from yelling, but it was too late, K. had entered too deeply into his role: "Josef K.!

Aunque no lo hizo con la fuerza con que había amenazado, si con la suficiente como para que el grito, una vez emitido, se expandiera lentamente por la habitación.

En ese instante golpearon la puerta de la habitación contigua; fueron golpes fuertes, cortos y regulares. La señorita Bürstner palideció y se puso la mano en el corazón. K. se llevó un susto enorme, pues llevaba un rato en el que sólo había sido capaz de pensar en el incidente de la mañana y en la muchacha ante la que lo estaba representando. Apenas se había recuperado, saltó hacia la señorita Bürstner y tomó su mano. "No tema usted nada —le susurró—

There was a knock at the door to the adjoining room, a brief, loud series of blows. Fräulein Bürstner turned pale and put her hand to her heart. The shock was even greater for K., since for a short while he could think of nothing but that morning’s events and the young woman he was reenacting them for. As soon as he came to himself he sprang to Fräulein Bürstner and took her hand. "Don’t worry," he whispered,
“I’ll straighten everything out. But who can it be? That’s just the living room next door, and no one’s sleeping there.” “Oh, yes,” Fräulein Bürstner whispered in K.’s ear, “Frau Grubach’s nephew has been staying there since yesterday, a captain. There’s no other room free at the moment. I’d forgotten about it too. You had to shout so! That makes me very unhappy.” “There’s no reason to be,” said K. and kissed her on the forehead as she sank back upon the cushion. “Go, go,” she said, and quickly straightened up again, “go on, go away. What do you want, he’s listening at the door, he can hear everything. You’re tormenting me!” “I’m not going,” said K., “until you’ve calmed down a bit. Come over to the other corner of the room; he can’t hear us there.” She let him lead her there. “Just remember,” he said, “this may be unpleasant for you, but you’re in no danger. You know how Frau Grubach, whose voice will count most, particularly since the captain is her nephew, practically worships me, and believes anything I say. She’s beholden to me in another way too, since she’s borrowed a large sum from me. I’ll accept any suggestion you offer as to why we were together, as long as it’s halfway reasonable, and I guarantee I’ll get Frau Grubach not only to accept it in public, but to truly and honestly believe it. You needn’t spare me in any way. If you want it spread around that I assaulted you, that’s what Frau Grubach will be told and what she will believe, without losing confidence in me, that’s how devoted she is to me.” Fräulein Bürstner stared silently at the floor in front of her, slumping slightly. “Why shouldn’t Frau Grubach believe that I assaulted you,” K. added. He saw before him her hair, parted, tightly drawn reddish hair, gathered together lightly on her neck. He thought she would look up at him, but she spoke without changing her posture: “Pardon me, it was the sudden knocking that frightened me, not so much the possible consequences of the captain’s presence. It was so quiet after you cried out, and then the knocking came, that’s why I was so frightened, and I was sitting so close to the door, the knocking was right beside me. I appreciate your —, yo lo arreglaré todo. Pero, ¿quién puede ser? Aquí al lado sólo está el sa-lón y nadie duerme en él. —¡Oh, sí! —susurró la señorita Bürstner al oído de K—, desde ayer duerme un sobrino de la señora Grubach, un capitán. Ahora mismo no queda ninguna habitación libre. También yo lo había olvidado. ¡Cómo se le ocurre gritar así! Soy muy infeliz por su culpa. —No hay ningún motivo —dijo K. y besó su frente cuando ella se reclinó en el cojin. —Fuera, marchese —dijo ella, y se incorporó rápidamente—, már-chese. Qué quiere, él escucha de-trás de la puerta, lo escucha todo. ¡No me atormente más! —No me iré —dijo K— hasta que se haya calmado. Venga a la esquina opuesta de la habitación, allí no nos puede escuchar. Ella se dejó llevar. —Piense que se trata sólo de una contrariedad, pero que no en-traña ningún peligro. Ya sabe cómo me admira la señora Grubach, que es la que decide en este asunto, sob-bre todo considerando que el ca-pitán es sobrino suyo. Se cree todo lo que le digo. Además, depende de mi, pues me ha pedido prestada una gran cantidad de dinero. Acep-taré todas sus propuestas para una aclaración de nuestro encuentro, siempre que sea oportuno, y le ga-rantizo que la señora Grubach las creerá sinceramente y así lo mani-festará en público. No tenga con-migo ningún tipo de miramientos. Si quiere que se difunda que la he sorprendido, así será instruida la señora Grubach y lo creerá sin perder la confianza en mi, tan-to a pe go me ti e ne. La señorita Bürstner contemplaba el suelo en silencio y un poco hundida. —¿Por qué no va a creerse la señora Grubach que la he sorpre-n-dido? —añadió K. Ante él veía su pelo rojizo, separado por una raya, holgado en las puntas y recogi-do en la parte superior (17). Creyó que le iba a mirar, pero ella, sin cambiar de postura, dijo: —Discúlpeme, me he asustado tanto por los golpes repentinos, no por las consecuencias que podría traer consigo la presencia del capitán. Des-pués de su grito estaba todo tan si-lencioso y de repente esos golpes, por eso estoy tan asustada. Yo estaba sen-tada al lado de la puerta, los golpes se produjeron casi a mi lado. Le agra-
(17) Tachado en el manuscrito: «La felicidad de es-tar en su habitación, en su proximidad, podía ter-minar en cualquier momento».
suggestions, but I can’t accept them. I can take full responsibility for what happens in my room and face anyone. I’m surprised you don’t realize the insult to me implicit in your suggestions, along, of course, with your good intentions, which I certainly recognize. But go now, leave me to myself, I need that more than ever now. The few minutes you requested have turned into more than half an hour."

K. seized her by the hand and then by the wrist: “You’re not mad at me, are you?” he said. She pushed his hand away and answered: “No, no, I never get angry at anyone.” He reached for her wrist again, she allowed it now and led him to the door. He firmly intended to leave. But at the door, as if he hadn’t expected to find one there, he hesitated; Fräulein Bürstner used this moment to free herself, open the door, slip into the hall, and implore K. softly from there: “Now come on, please. Look” she pointed at the captain’s door, beneath which a strip of light emerged-“his light is on and he’s amusing himself over us.” “I’m coming,” said K., rushed out, seized her, kissed her on the mouth, then all over her face, like a thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring it has found at last. Finally he kissed her on the neck, right at her throat, and left his lips there for a long time. A noise from the captain’s room caused him to look up. “I’ll go now,” he said; he wanted to call Fräulein Bürstner by her given name, but he didn’t know it. She nodded wearily, allowed him to take her hand for a kiss as she was already half turned away, as if she were unaware of it, and entered her room with bowed head. Shortly thereafter K. lay in his bed. He fell asleep very quickly; before falling asleep he reflected briefly on his conduct: he was pleased with it, but was surprised that he didn’t feel even more pleased; he was seriously concerned on Fräulein Bürstner’s behalf because of the captain.
K. was informed by telephone that a brief inquiry into his affair would take place the following Sunday. He was notified that such inquiries would now be held on a regular basis, perhaps not every week, but with increasing frequency. On the one hand, it was in the general interest to bring his trial to a rapid conclusion; on the other, the inquiries must be thorough in every respect, yet never last too long, due to the strain involved. Therefore they had selected the expedient of this succession of closely spaced but brief inquiries. Sundays had been chosen for the inquiries to avoid disturbing K.’s professional life. It was assumed he would find this acceptable; if he preferred some other fixed time, they would try their best to accommodate him. For example the inquiries could be held at night, but K. probably wouldn’t be fresh enough then. At any rate, as long as K. had no objection, they would stay with Sundays. Of course he was required to appear; it was probably not really necessary to point that out. He was given the number of the building in which he was to appear: it was a building on a street in a distant suburb K. had never been to before.

Having received this message, K. hung up the phone without replying; he had resolved at once to go on Sunday; it was clearly necessary, the trial was getting under way and he had to put up a fight; this initial inquiry must also be the last. He was still standing lost in thought by the phone when he heard the voice of the executive vice president behind him, who wanted to make a phone call, but found K. blocking the way. “Bad news?” the vice president asked lightly, not because he wanted to know, but to get K. away from the phone. “No, no,” said K., stepping aside but not walking off. The vice president picked up the phone and, while waiting to be put through, spoke across the receiver: “May I ask you something, Herr K.? Will you do me the pleasure of coming to a party on my sailboat Sunday morning? There’ll be quite a few people, I’m sure you’ll know some of them. Among others Hasterer, the public prosecutor. Would you like to come? Please do!” K. tried to

A K le habían comunicado por teléfono que el domingo próximo tendría lugar una corta vista para la instrucción procesal de su causa. Sé le advertía que esas vistas se celebraban periódicamente, aunque no todas las semanas. También le comunicaron que todos tenían interés en concluir el proceso lo más rápidamente posible; sin embargo, las investigaciones tenían que ser minuciosas en todos los aspectos, aunque, al mismo tiempo, el esfuerzo unido a ellas jamás debía durar demasiado. Precisamente por este motivo se había elegido realizar ese tipo de citaciones cortas y continuadas. Se había optado por el domingo como día de la vista sumarial para no perturbar las obligaciones profesionales de K. Se presumía que él estaría de acuerdo, pero si prefería otra fecha se intendería satisfacer su deseo. Las citaciones podían tener lugar también por la noche, pero K no estaría lo suficientemente fresco. Así pues, y mientras K no objetase nada, la instrucción se llevaría a cabo los domingos. Era evidente que debía comparecer, ni siquiera era necesario advertirselo. Le dijeron el número de la casa: estaba situada en una calle apartada de los suburbios en la que K jamás había estado.

Una vez oído el mensaje, K. colgó el auricular sin contestar; estaba decidido a ir el domingo: con toda seguridad era necesario; el proceso se había puesto en marcha y tenía que dejar claro que esa citación debía ser la última. Aún permanecía pensativo junto al aparato, cuando escuchó detrás de él la voz del subdirector, que quería llamar por teléfono. K le obstruía el paso. —¿Malas noticias? —preguntó el subdirector sin pensar, no para saber algo, sino simplemente para apartar a K del teléfono. —No, no —dijo K, que se apartó pero no se alejó. El subdirector cogió el auricular y, mientras esperaba la conexión telefónica, se dirigió a K: —Una pregunta, señor K. ¿le apetecería venir a una fiesta que doy el domingo en mi velero? Nos reuniremos un buen grupo y encontrará conocidos suyos, entre otros al fiscal Hasterer. ¿Quiere venir? ¡Venga, animese! K intentó prestar atención a lo
concentrate on what the vice president was saying. It was not without importance for him, since this invitation from the vice president, with whom he had never got along particularly well, indicated an attempt at reconciliation on the other’s part, and showed how important K. had become to the bank, and how valuable his friendship, or at least his neutrality, must seem to the bank’s second-highest officer. The invitation humbled the vice president, even if it had merely been delivered across the receiver while waiting for a call to go through. But K. was forced to humble him a second time by replying: “Thank you very much! But unfortunately I’m busy on Sunday, I have a previous engagement.” “Too bad,” the vice president said, and returned to his call, which had just been put through. It was no brief conversation, but in his preoccupied state K. remained standing by the phone the whole time. It wasn’t until the vice president hung up that he came to himself with a start and said, to excuse himself somewhat for having simply stood around, “I just received a call asking me to go somewhere, but they forgot to tell me the time.” “Call them back and ask,” said the vice president. “It’s not that important,” said K., although in doing so his previous excuse, which was already weak enough, crumbled even further. As they walked away the vice president talked of other things, and K. forced himself to answer, but he was really thinking that it would be best to arrive Sunday morning at nine, since that was when courts opened session on workdays.

The weather was dull on Sunday, and K. was very tired, having stayed at the tavern celebrating with the regulars late into the night, so that he almost overslept. He dressed hastily, without having time to think things over or review the various plans he’d worked out during the week, and skipping breakfast, hurried to the suburb they had indicated. Strangely enough, although he had little time to look about, he ran across the three clerks who were involved in his affair: Rabensteiner, Kullych, and Kaminer. The first two were riding in a tram that crossed K.’s path, but Kaminer que decía el subdirector. No carecía de importancia para él, pues esa invi- tación del subdirector, con el que nunca se había llevado bien, suponía un intento de reconciliación de su parte y, al mismo tiempo, mostraba la importancia que K. había acquiri- do en el banco, así como lo valiosa que le parecía al segundo funciona- rio más importante del banco su amistad o, al menos, su imparciali- dad. Esa invitación suponía, además, una humillación del subdirector, por más que la hubiera formulado por encima del auricular mientras espe- raba la conexión telefónica. Pero K. se vio obligado a ocasionarle una segunda humillación, dijo:

—¡Muchas gracias! Pero por desgracio el domingo no tengo tiempo, tengo un compromiso.

—Es una pena—dijo el subdirector, que se concentró en su conversación telefónica. No fue una conversación corta y K permaneció todo el tiempo pensa- tivo al lado del teléfono. Cuando el subdirector colgó, K. se asustó y dijo para disculpar su pasiva permanencia allí:

—Me acaban de llamar por teléfono, tendría que ir a algún sitio, pero se les ha olvidado decirme la hora.

—Pregunte usted—dijo el subdirector.

—No es tan importante—dijo K, aunque así dejaba sin funda- mento su ya débil disculpa ante- rior. El subdirector habló todavía sobre algunas cosas mientras se iba, K hizo un esfuerzo para res- ponderle, pero sólo pensaba en que lo mejor sería ir el domingo a las nueve de la mañana, pues ésa era la hora en que todos los juzgados comenzaban a trabajar los días la- borables.

El domingo amaneció nublado. K. se levantó muy cansado, ya que se había quedado hasta muy tarde por la noche en una reunión de su tertu- lia. Casi se había quedado dormido. Deprisa, sin apenas tiempo para pens- ar en nada ni para recordar los dis- tintos planes que había hecho duran- te la semana, se vistió y salió co- rríendo, sin desayunar, hacia el su- burbio indicado. Curiosamente, y aunque apenas tenía tiempo para mi- rar a su alrededor, se encontró con los tres funcionarios relacionados con su causa: Rabensteiner, Kullych y Kaminer. Los dos primeros pasa- ron por delante de K. en un tranvía,
was sitting on the terrace of a coffeehouse and, just as K. was walking by, leaned inquisitively over the railing. They probably all gazed after him, wondering why their supervisor was in such a rush; some sort of stubbornness had prevented K. from taking a cab; he had an aversion to even the slightest outside help in this affair of his; he didn’t want to enlist anyone’s aid and thus initiate them in the matter even distantly; nor, finally, did he have the least desire to humble himself before the commission of inquiry by being overly punctual. Of course he was now running to get there by nine if at all possible, although he had not even been given a specific hour at which to appear.

He had thought he would recognize the building, even at a distance, by some sign he hadn’t visualized precisely, or by some unusual activity at the entrance. But Juliusstrasse, where it was supposedly located and at the top of which K. paused for a moment, was flanked on both sides by almost completely identical buildings, tall gray apartment houses inhabited by the poor. On this Sunday morning most of the windows were occupied; men in shirtsleeves leaned there smoking, or held small children with tender care at the windowsill. Other windows were piled high with bedding, above which the disheveled head of a woman briefly appeared. People called across the street to each other; one such exchange directly over K.’s head aroused loud laughter. At regular intervals along the long street, small shops offering various foodstuffs lay below street level, reached by a few steps. Women went in and out of them, or stood on the steps chatting. A fruit vendor who was offering his wares to the windows above, paying as little attention as K., almost knocked him to the ground with his pushcart. Just then a gramophone that had served its time in better sections of the city began to murder a tune.

K. continued down the street, slowly, as if he had plenty of time now, or as if the examining magistrate had seen him from some window and knew he had arrived.

Kaminer, sin embargo, estaba sentado en la terraza de un café y se inclinó con curiosidad sobre la barandilla cuando K. pasó a su lado. Todos miraron cómo se alejaba y se sorprendieron por la prisa que llevaba. Era una suerte de despacho lo que había inducido a K a no coger ningún vehículo para llegar a su destino, pues quería evitar cualquier ayuda extraña en su asunto, por pequeña que fuera; tampoco quería recurrir a nadie ni ponerle al corriente del detalle; finalmente tampoco tenía ganas de humillarse ante la comisión investigadora con una excesiva puntualidad. No obstante, corría, pero sólo para llegar alrededor de las nueve, aunque tampoco le habían citado a una hora concreta.

Había pensado que podría recono- cer la casa desde lejos por algún signo, que, sin embargo, no se había podido imaginar, o por cierto movimiento ante la puerta. Pero en la calle Julius, que era en la que debía estar, y en cuyo inicio permaneció K un rato, sólo se alineaban a ambos lados casas grises de alquiler, altas y uniformes, habitadas por gente pobre. En aquella mañana de domingo estaban todas las ventanas ocupadas, hombres en camiseta se apoyaban en los antepechos y firmaban o sostenían cuidadosamente entre sus brazos a niños. En otras ventanas colgaba la ropa de cama, sobre la que de vez en cuando aparecía por un instante la cabeza desgreñada de alguna mujer. Se llamaban unos a otros a través de la calle: una de esas llamadas provocó risas sobre K. Repartidas con regularidad, a lo largo de la calle se encontraban, algo por debajo del nivel de la acera, algunas tiendas a las que se descendía por unas escaleras y en las que se vendían distintos alimentos. Se veía cómo entraban y salían mujeres de ellas: otras permanecían charlando ante la puerta. Un mercader de fruta, que pregonaba su mercancía y circulaba sin prestar atención, casi atropella a K., también distraído, con su carro. En ese momento comenzó a sonar un gramófono de un modo criminal: era un viejo aparato que sin duda había conocido tiempos mejores en un barrio más elegante.

K avanzó lentamente por la calle, como si tuviera tiempo o como si el juez de instrucción le estuviera viendo desde una ventana y supiera que K iba a comparecer. Pasaban pocos
It was shortly after nine. The building stretched some distance; it was almost unusually extensive, the entrance gate in particular was high and broad. It was evidently intended for heavy wagons belonging to the various warehouses, now locked shut, which lined the inner courtyard, with signs bearing the names of firms, some of which K. knew from the bank. Contrary to his normal habit, he was taking close note of all these surface details, and he paused a while at the entrance to the courtyard. On a crate nearby sat a barefoot man reading a newspaper. Two boys rocked back and forth on a handcart. A frail young girl in her night jacket stood at a pump and gazed at K. as the water poured into her jug. In one corner of the courtyard a line with wash to be dried already dangling from it was being stretched between two windows. A man stood below and directed the task with a few shouts.

K. turned to the stairs to find the room for the inquiry, but then paused as he saw three different staircases in the courtyard in addition to the first one; moreover, a small passage at the other end of the courtyard seemed to lead to a second courtyard. He was annoyed that they hadn’t described the location of the room more precisely: he was certainly being treated with strange carelessness or indifference, a point he intended to make loudly and clearly. Finally he decided to go up the first set of stairs after all, his mind playing with the memory of the remark the guard Willem had made that the court was attracted by guilt, from which it actually followed that the room for the inquiry would have to be located off whatever stairway K. chanced to choose.

On his way up he disturbed several children who were playing on the steps and who looked angrily at him as he passed through their midst. “The next time I’m to come,” he said to himself, “I’ll either have to bring candy to win them over or my cane to flog them.” Shortly before reaching the first floor he even had to pause for a moment until a marble had completed its journey, while two little boys with the pinched faces of grown tramps held minutes de las nueve. La casa quedaba bastante lejos, era extraordinariamente ancha, sobre todo la puerta de entrada era muy elevada y amplia. Aparentemente estaba destinada a la carga y descarga de mercancías de los distintos almacenes que rodeaban el patio y que ahora permanecían cerrados. En las puertas de los almacenes se podían ver los letreros de las empresas. K conocía a algunas de ellas por su trabajo en el banco. Aunque no era su costumbre, permaneció de rato en la entrada del patio dedicándose a observar detenidamente todos los pormenores. Cerca de él estaba sentado un hombre descalzo que leía el periódico. Dos muchachos se columpiaban en un carro. Una niña débil, con la camisa del pijama, estaba al lado de una bomba de agua y miraba hacia K mientras el agua caía en su jarra. En una de las esquinas del patio estaban tendiendo un corredor entre dos ventanas, del que colgaba la ropa para secarse. Un hombre permanecía debajo y dirigía la operación con algunos gritos.

K se volvió hacia la escalera para dirigirse al juzgado de instrucción, pero se quedó parado, ya que aparte de esa escalera veía en el patio otras tres entradas con sus respectivas escaleras y, además, un pequeño corredor al final del patio parecía conducir a un segundo patio. Se enojó porque nadie le había indicado con precisión la situación de la sala del juzgado. Le habían tratado con una extraña desidia o indiferencia, era su intención dejarlo muy claro. Finalmente decidió subir por la primera escalera y, mientras lo hacía, jugó en su pensamiento con el recuerdo de la máxima pronunciada por el vigilante Willem, que el tribunal se ve atraído por la culpa, de lo que se podía deducir que la sala del juzgado tenía que encontrarse en la escalera que K había elegido casualmente.

Al subir le molestaron los numerosos niños que jugaban en la escalera y, cuando pasaba entre ellos, le dirigían miradas malignas. «Si tengo que venir otra vez —se dijo—, tendré que traer caramelos para ganármelos o el bastón para golpearlos». Cuando le quedaba poco para llegar al primer piso, se vio obligado a esperar un rato, hasta que una pelota llegase, finalmente, a su destino; dos niños, con rostros espabilados de granujas adultos, le sujetaron por las perneras de los
him by the trouser legs; if he had wanted to shake them off he would have had to hurt them, and he feared their cries.

On the first floor the real search began. Since he couldn’t simply ask for the commission of inquiry he invented a carpenter named Lanz—the name occurred to him because Frau Grubach’s nephew, the captain, was called that—intending to ask at each apartment if a carpenter named Lanz lived there, hoping to get a chance to look into the rooms. That proved to be easy enough in general, however, since almost all the doors were standing open, with children running in and out. As a rule they were small, one-window rooms, where people cooked as well. A few women held babies in one arm as they worked at the stove with their free hand. Half-grown girls, apparently clad only in smocks, ran busily back and forth. In every room the beds were still in use, with someone sick or still asleep in them, or people stretched out in their clothes. K. knocked at the apartments with closed doors and asked if a carpenter named Lanz lived there. Generally a woman would open the door, listen to the question, and turn to someone in the room who rose up from the bed.

“The gentleman wants to know if a carpenter named Lanz lives here.”

“A carpenter named Lanz?” asked the one in bed.

“Yes,” K. said, despite the fact that the commission of inquiry clearly wasn’t there and therefore his task was ended. Several people believed K. badly needed to find the carpenter Lanz, thought long and hard, recalled a carpenter, but not one named Lanz, remembered a name that bore some faint similarity to Lanz, asked their neighbors, or accompanied K. to some far distant door, where they fancied such a man might possibly be subletting an apartment, or where there was someone who could provide him with better information than they could. In the end K. scarcely needed even to ask, but was instead pulled along in this manner from floor to floor. He regretted his plan, which at first seemed so practical. As he was approaching the fifth floor he decided to give up the search, took his leave from a friendly young worker who

La verdadera búsqueda comenzó en el primer piso. Como no podía preguntar sobre la comisión investigadora, se inventó a un carpintero apellidado Lanz—el nombre se le ocurrió porque el capitán, sobrino de la señora Grubach, se apellidaba así—, y quería preguntar en todas las viviendas si allí vivía el carpintero Lanz, así tendría la oportunidad de ver las distintas habitaciones. Pero resultó que la mayoría de las veces era superfluo, pues casi todas las puertas estaban abiertas y los niños salían y entraban. Por regla general eran habitaciones con una sola ventana, en las que también se cocinaba. Algunas mujeres sostenían niños de pecho en uno de sus brazos y trabajaban en el fogón con el brazo libre. Muchachas adolescentes, aparentemente vestidas sólo con un delantal, iban de un lado a otro con gran diligencia. En todas las habitaciones las camas permanecían ocupadas, yacían enfermos, personas durmiendo o estirándose. K. llamó a las puertas que estaban cerradas y preguntó si allí vivía un carpintero apellidado Lanz. La mayoría de las veces abrían mujeres,

escuchaban la pregunta y luego se dirigían a alguien en el interior de la habitación que se incorporaba en la cama.

—El señor pregunta si aquí vive un carpintero, un tal Lanz. —¿Carpintero Lanz? —preguntaban desde la cama.

—Sí— decía K, a pesar de que allí indudablemente no se encontraba la comisión investigadora y que, por consiguiente, su misión había terminado.

Muchos creyeron que K tenía mucho interés en encontrar al carpintero Lanz, intentaron recordar, nombraron a un carpintero que no se llamaba Lanz u otro apellido que remotamente poseía cierta similitud, o preguntaron al vecino, incluso acompañaron a K hasta una puerta alejada, donde, según su opinión, posiblemente vivía un hombre con ese apellido como subinquilino, o donde había alguien que podía dar una mejor información. Finalmente, ya no fue necesario que siguiese preguntando, fue conducido de esa manera por todos los pisos. Lamentó su plan, que al principio le había parecido tan práctico. Antes de llegar al quinto piso, decidió renunciar a la búsqueda, se despidió de un joven y amable trabajador que quería
wanted to lead him further upward, and started back down. But then, annoyed once more by the futility of the whole enterprise, he returned and knocked at the first door on the fifth floor. The first thing he saw in the little room was a large wall clock that already showed ten o’clock. “Does a carpenter named Lanz live here?” he asked. “This way, please,” said a young woman with shining black eyes, who was washing diapers in a tub, and pointed with her wet hand toward the open door of the adjoining room.

K. thought he had walked into a meeting. A crowd of the most varied sort-no one paid any attention to the newcomer-filled a medium-size room with two windows, surrounded by an elevated gallery just below the ceiling that was likewise fully occupied, and where people were forced to crouch with their backs and heads pushing against the ceiling. K., who found the air too stuffy, stepped out again and said to the young woman, who had probably misunderstood him: “I was looking for a carpenter, a man named Lanz?”

“Yes,” said the woman, “please go on in.” K. might not have obeyed if the woman hadn’t walked over to him, grasped the door handle and said: “I have to lock it after you, no one else is permitted in.” “Very sensible,” said K., “but it’s already too crowded.” But he went back in anyway.

Between two men who were conversing near the door-one of them was going through the motions of counting out money with outstretched hands, the other was looking him sharpely in the eye-a hand reached out for K. It was a little red-cheeked boy. “Come on, come on,” he said. K. let him lead the way; it turned out that there was indeed a narrow path free through the swirling crowd, one that possibly divided two parties; this possibility was further supported by the fact that K. saw scarcely a face turned toward him in the closest rows on his left and right, but merely the backs of people addressing their words and gestures solely to those in their own party. Most were dressed in black, in old, long, loosely hanging formal coats. This conducirle hacia arriba, y bajó las escaleras. Entonces se enojó otra vez por la inutilidad de toda la empresa. Así que volvió a subir y tocó a la primera puerta del quinto piso. Lo primero que vio en la pequeña habitación fue un gran reloj de pared, que ya señalaba las diez.

—¿Vive aquí el carpintero Lanz?
—preguntó.

—Pase, por favor—dijo una mujer joven con ojos negros y luminosos, que lavaba en ese preciso momento ropa de niño en un cubo, señalando hacia la puerta abierta que daba a una habitación contigua.

K creyó entrar en una asamblea. Una aglomeración de la gente más disparate—nadie prestó atención al que entraba—llenaba una habitación de mediano tamaño con dos ventanas, que estaba rodeada, casi a la altura del techo, por una galería que también estaba completamente ocupada y donde las personas sólo podían permanecer inclinadas, con la cabeza y la espalda tocando el techo. K., para quien el aire resultaba demasiado sofocante, volvió a salir y dijo a la mujer, que probablemente le había entendido mal:

—He preguntado por un carpintero, por un tal Lanz.

—Sí —dijo la mujer—, pase usted, por favor.

La mujer se adelantó y cogió el caparote: sólo por eso la siguió; a continuación dijo: —Después de que entre usted tengo que cerrar, nadie más puede entrar. —Muy razonable —dijo K.—, pero ya está demasiado lleno.

No obstante, volvió a entrar.

Acababa de pasar entre dos hombres, que conversaban junto a la puerta —uno de ellos hacia un ademán con las manos extendidas hacia adelante como si estuviera contando dinero, el otro le miraba fijamente a los ojos—, cuando una mano agarró a K por el codo. Era un joven pequeño y de mejillas coloradas.

—Venga, venga usted —le dijo.

K. se dejó guiar. Entre la multitud había un estrecho pasillo libre que la dividía en dos partes, probablemente en dos facciones distintas, asía impresión se veía fortalecida por el hecho de que K., en las primeras hileras, apenas veía un rostro, ni a la derecha ni a la izquierda, que se volviera hacia él, sólo veía las espaldas de personas que dirigían exclusivamente sus gestos y palabras a los de su propio partido. La mayoría de los presentes vestía de negro, con viejas y largas chaquetas sueltas, de las que se usa-
was the only thing K. found confusing; otherwise he would have taken it all for a local precinct meeting.

K. was led to the other end of the hall, where a small table had been placed at an angle on a low and equally overcrowded platform, and behind the table, near the platform’s edge, sat a fat little man, wheezing and chatting with someone standing behind him—the latter was leaning with his elbow on the back of the chair and had crossed his legs—laughing heartily all the while. Now and then he would fling his arms in the air, as if he were caricaturing someone. The boy who was leading K. found it difficult to deliver his message. Twice already he’d tried to say something, standing on tiptoe, without being noticed by the man above. It was only when one of the people up on the platform drew attention to the boy that the man turned and bent down to listen to his faint report. Then he pulled out his watch and glanced over at K. “You should have been here an hour and five minutes ago,” he said. K. was about to reply, but he didn’t have time, for the man had scarcely spoken when a general muttering arose from the right half of the hall. “You should have been here an hour and five minutes ago,” the man repeated, glancing down into the hall as well. The muttering immediately grew louder and, since the man said nothing more, died out only gradually. It was now much quieter in the hall than it had been when K. entered. Only the people in the gallery continued making comments. They seemed, as far as one could tell in the semidarkness, haze, and dust overhead, to be dressed more shabbily than those below. Some of them had brought along cushions that they placed between their heads and the roof of the hall so as not to rub themselves raw.

K. had decided to observe more than speak, and therefore waived any defense of his supposedly late arrival, merely saying: “I may have arrived late, but I’m here now.” A burst of applause followed, once again from the right half of the hall. “These people are easily won over,” thought K. and was only disturbed ban en días de fiesta. Esa forma de vestir confundió a K, que, si no, hubiera tomado todo por una asamblea política (18) del distrito.

En el extremo de la sala al que K fue conducido, había una pequeña mesa, en sentido transversal, sobre una tarima muy baja, también llena de gente, y, de trás de ella, cerca del borde de la tarima, estaba sentado un hombre pequeño, gordo y jadeante, que, en ese preciso momento, conversaba entre grandes risas con otro —que había apoyado el codo en el respaldo de la silla y cruzado las piernas—, situado a sus espaldas. A veces hacía un ademán con la mano en el aire, como si estuviera imitando a alguien. Al joven que condujo a K le costó transmitir su mensaje. Dos veces se había puesto de puntillas y había intentado llamar la atención, pero ninguno de los de arriba se fijó en él. Sólo cuando uno de los de la tarima reparó en el joven y anunció su presencia, el hombre gordo se volvió hacia él y escuchó inclinado su informe, transmitido en voz baja. A continuación, sacó su reloj y miró rápidamente a K.

—Tendría que haber comparecido hace una hora y cinco minutos —dijo.

K. quiso responder algo, pero no tuvo tiempo, pues apenas había terminado de hablar el hombre, cuando se elevó un murmullo general en la parte derecha de la sala.

—Tendría que haber comparecido hace una hora y cinco minutos —repitió el hombre en voz más alta y paseó rápidamente su mirada por la sala. El rumor se hizo más fuerte y, como el hombre no volvió a decir nada, se apagó paulatinamente. En la sala había ahora menos ruido que cuando K había entrado. Sólo los de la galería no cesaban en sus observaciones. Por lo que se podía distinguir entre la oscuridad y el polvo, parecían vestir peor que los de abajo. Algunos habían traído cojines, que habían colocado entre la cabeza y el techo para no herirse.

K. había decidido no hablar mucho y observar, por eso renunció a defenderse de los reproches de impuntualidad y se limitó a decir:

—Es posible que haya llegado tarde, pero ya estoy aquí.

A sus palabras siguió una ovación en la parte derecha de la sala.

«Gente fácil de ganar» —pensó K,
by the silence in the left half of the hall, which lay immediately behind him and from which only thinly scattered applause had arisen. He considered what he might say to win all of them over at once, or if that was not possible, at least to win the others for the time being.

“‘Yes,’ said the man, “but now I’m no longer required to examine you’”—again the muttering, but this time mistakenly, for the man waved the people off and continued”—however, I’ll make an exception for today. But such tardiness must not be repeated. And now step forward!” Someone jumped down from the platform to free a space for K., and he stepped up into it. He was standing right up against the table; the pressure of the crowd behind him was so great that he had to actively resist if he didn’t want to push the examining magistrate’s table, and perhaps even the magistrate himself, right off the platform.

The examining magistrate wasn’t worried about that, however, but sat comfortably enough in his chair and, after a closing remark to the man behind him, reached for a little notebook, the only object on his table. It resembled a school exercise book, old and totally misshapen from constant thumbing. “So,” said the examining magistrate, leafing through the notebook and turning to K. as if simply establishing a fact: “You’re a house painter?” “No,” said K., “I’m the chief financial officer of a large bank.” This reply was followed by such hearty laughter from the right-hand party below that K. had to join in. The people propped their hands on their knees, shaken as if by fits of coughing. There were even a few laughing up in the gallery. The examining magistrate, who had become quite angry and was probably powerless to do anything about the people below, tried to compensate for this by jumping up and threatening the gallery, while his ordinarily inconspicuous eyebrows contracted bushy black and large above his eyes.

The left half of the hall, however, was still silent, the people standing there in rows, their faces turned toward the platform, listening to the words exchanged above as quietly as to the clamor of the other party, now al que sólo le inquietó el silencio en la parte izquierda, precisamente a sus espaldas, y de la que sólo había surgido algún aplauso aislado. Pensó qué podría decir para ganárselos a todos de una vez o, si eso no fuera posible, para ganarse a los otros al menos temporalmente.

—Sí—dijo el hombre—, pero yo ya no estoy obligado a interrogarle—el rumor se elevó, pero esta vez era equivocado, pues el hombre continuó después de hacer un ademán negativo con la mano—, aunque hoy lo haré como una excepción. No obstante, un retraso como éste no debe volver a repetirse. Y ahora, ¡jadeléntese!

Alguien bajó de la tarima, por lo que quedó un sitio libre que K ocupó. Estaba presionando contra la mesa, la multitud detrás de él era tan grande que tenía que ofrecer resistencia para no tirar de la tarima la mesa del juez instructor o, incluso, al mismo juez.

El juez instructor, sin embargo, no se preocupaba por eso, estaba sentado muy cómodo en su silla y, después de haberle dicho una última palabra al hombre que permanecía detrás de él, cogió un libro de notas, el único objeto que había sobre la mesa. Parecía un cuaderno colegial, era viejo y estaba deformado por el uso.

—Bien—dijo el juez instructor, hojó el libro y se dirigió a K con un tono verificativo: —¿Usted es pintor de brocha gorda?

—No—dijo K.—, soy el primer gerente de un gran banco.

Esta respuesta despertó risas tan sinceras en la parte derecha de la sala que K también tuvo que reír. La gente apoyaba las manos en las rodillas y se agitaba tanto que parecía presa de un grave ataque de tos. También rieron algunos de la galería. El juez instructor, profundamente enojado, como probablemente era impotente frente a los de abajo, intentó resarcirse con los de la galería. Se levantó de un salto, amenazó a la galería, y sus cejas se elevaron espesas y negras sobre sus ojos.

La parte de la izquierda aún permanecía en silencio, los espectadores estaban en hileras, con los rostros dirigidos a la tarima y, mientras los del partido contrario formaban gran estruendo, escuchaban con tranquilidad las palabras
and then even allowing a few members within their own ranks to go along with the other side. The people in the party on the left, who were in fact less numerous, may have been no more important than those in the party on the right, but their calm demeanor made them appear more so. As K. now started to speak, he was convinced that he was expressing their thoughts.

“Your question, Your Honor, about my being a house painter—and you weren’t really asking at all, you were telling me outright—is characteristic of the way these entire proceedings against me are being conducted. You—may object that these aren’t proceedings at all, and you’re certainly right there, they are only proceedings if I recognize them as such. But I do recognize them, for the moment, out of compassion, so to speak. One can only view them compassionately, if one chooses to pay any attention to them at all. I’m not saying these proceedings are sloppy, but I would like to propose that description for your own personal consideration.”

K. interrupted himself and looked down into the hall. What he had said was harsh, harsher than he had intended, but nonetheless accurate. It should have earned applause here and there, but all was still; they were evidently waiting tensely for what was to come; perhaps in that silence an outburst was building that would put an end to everything. It was disturbing that the door at the end of the hall now opened, and the young washerwoman, who had probably finished her work, entered, drawing a few glances in spite of her painstaking caution. Only the examining magistrate gave K. direct cause for joy, for he appeared to have been struck at once by his words. As K. now paused, he slowly lowered himself back into his chair, as if hoping to keep anyone from noticing. In an attempt to regain his composure, no doubt, he took out his little notebook again.

“It’s no use, Your Honor,” K. continued, “even your little notebook confirms what I’m que se intercambiaban arriba, incluso toleraban que en un momento u otro algunos de su facción se sumaran a la otra. La gente del partido de la izquierda, que, por lo demás, era menos numeroso, en el fondo quería ser tan insignificante como el partido de la derecha, pero la tranquilidad de su comportamiento les hacía parecer más importantes. Cuando K. comenzó a hablar, estaba convencido de que hablaba en su sentido.

—Su pregunta, señor juez instructor, de si soy pintor de brocha gorda —aunque en realidad no se trataba de una pregunta, sino de una apera afirmación—, es significativa para todo el procedimiento que se ha abierto contra mí. Puede objetar que no se trata de ningún procedimiento, tiene razón, pues sólo se trata de un procedimiento si yo lo reconozco como tal. Por el momento así lo hago, en cierto modo por compasión. Aquí no se puede comparecer sino con esa actitud compasiva, si uno quiere ser tomado en consideración. No digo que sea un procedimiento caótico, pero le ofrezco esta designación para que tome conciencia de su situación.

K. interrumpió su discurso y miró hacia la sala. Lo que acababa de decir era duro, más de lo que había previsto, pero era la verdad. Se había ganado alguna ovación, pero todo permaneció en silencio, probablemente se esperaba con tensión la continuación, tal vez en el silencio se preparaba una irrupción que pondría fin a todo. Resultó molesto que en ese momento se abriera la puerta. La joven lavandera, que probablemente había concluido su trabajo, entró en la sala y a pesar de toda su precaución, atrae algunas miradas. Sólo el juez de instrucción le procuró a K. una alegría inmediata, pues parecía haber quedado afectado por sus palabras. Hasta ese momento había escuchado de pie, pues el discurso de K. le había sorprendido mientras se dirigía a la galería. Ahora que había un pausa, se volvió a sentar, aunque lentamente, como si no quisiera que nadie lo advirtiera. Probablemente para calmarse volvió a tomar el libro de notas.

—No le ayudará nada —continuó K.—, también su cuadernillo confirma lo que le he dicho.
saying.” Pleased that his own calm words alone were to be heard in that strange assembly, K. even dared to snatch the notebook from the magistrate’s hands and lift it in his fingertips by a single center page, as if he were repelled by it, so that the foxed and spotted leaves filled with closely spaced script hung down on both sides.

“These are the records of the examining magistrate,” he said, letting the notebook drop to the table. “Just keep reading through them, Your Honor, I really have nothing to fear from this account book, although it’s closed to me, since I can barely stand to touch it with the tips of two fingers.” It could only be a sign of deep humiliation, or at least so it seemed, that the examining magistrate took the notebook from where it had fallen on the table, tried to put it to rights somewhat, and lifted it to read again.

The faces of the people in the front row were turned toward K. so intently that he gazed down at them for a short time. They were all older men, a few with white beards. Perhaps they were the decisive ones, capable of influencing the whole assembly, men whom even the examining magistrate’s humiliation could not stir from the quiescent state they’d fallen into since K.’s speech.

“What has happened to me,” K. continued, somewhat more quietly than before, and constantly searching the faces of those in the front row, which made his speech seem slightly disjointed, “what has happened to me is merely a single case and, as such, of no particular consequence, since I don’t take it very seriously, but it is typical of the proceedings being brought against many people. I speak for them, not for myself.”

He had instinctively raised his voice. Someone clapped somewhere with raised hands and cried out: “Bravo! Why not? Bravo! And encore bravo!” Those in the front row pulled at their beards now and then; no one turned around at the cry. Nor did K. grant it any importance, yet it cheered him; he no longer considered it necessary for everyone to applaud, it was enough for him to remain seated.

Satisfecho al oír sólo sus sosiegadas palabras en la asamblea, K. osó arrebatar, sin consideración alguna, el cuaderno al juez de instrucción. Lo cogió con las puntas de los dedos por una de las hojas del medio, como si le diera asco, de tal modo que las hojas laterales, llenas de manchas amarillentas, escritas apretadamente por ambas caras, colgaban hacia abajo.

—Éstas son las actas del juez instructor —dijo, y dejó caer el cuaderno sobre la mesa—. Siga leyendo en él, señor juez instructor, de ese libro de cuentas no temo nada, aunque no esté a mi alcance, ya que sólo puedo tocarlo con la punta de dos dedos.

Sólo pudo ser un signo de profunda humillación, o así se podía interpretar, que el juez instructor cogiera el cuaderno tal y como había caído sobre la mesa, lo intentara poner en orden y se propusiera leer en él de nuevo.

Los rostros de las personas en la primera hilera estaban dirigidos a K con tal tensión que él los contempló un rato desde arriba. Eran hombres mayores, algunos con barba blanca. Es posible que éstos fueran los más influyentes en la asamblea, la cual, a pesar de la humillación del juez instructor, no salió de la pasividad en la que había quedado sumida desde que K había comenzado a hablar.

—Lo que me ha ocurrido — continuó K con voz algo más baja que antes, buscando los rostros de la primera fila, lo que dio a su discurso un aire de inquietud—, lo que me ha ocurrido es un asunto particular y, como tal, no muy importante, pues no lo considero grave, pero es significativo de un procedimiento que se incoa contra otros muchos. Aquí estoy en representación de ellos y no sólo de mí mismo.

Había elevado la voz involuntariamente. En algún lugar alguien aplaudió con las manos alzadas y gritó:

—¡Bravo! ¡Por qué no? ¡Otra vez bravo!

Los ancianos de las primeras filas se acariciaron las barbas, pero ninguno se volvió a causa de la exclamación. Tampoco K le atribuyó ninguna importancia, seguía animado. Ya no creía necesario que todos applaudieran, le bastaba con...
that the audience in general was beginning to think the matter over and that someone was occasionally won over by his words.

“I don’t seek success as an orator,” K. said with this in mind, “nor could I necessarily achieve it. The examining magistrate is no doubt a much better speaker; after all, it goes with his profession. What I seek is simply a public discussion of a public disgrace. Listen: Around ten days ago I was arrested; the arrest itself makes me laugh, but that’s another matter. I was assaulted in the morning in bed; perhaps they’d been ordered to arrest some house painter—that can’t be ruled out after what the examining magistrate has said—someone as innocent as I am, but they chose me. The room next door had been taken over by two coarse guards. If I had been a dangerous thief, they couldn’t have taken better precautions. These guards were corrupt ruffians as well; they talked my ear off, they wanted bribes, they tried to talk me out of my undergarments and clothes under false pretenses, they wanted money, supposedly to bring me breakfast, after they’d shamelessly eaten my own breakfast before my very eyes. And that wasn’t all. I was led into a third room to see the inspector. It was the room of a young woman for whom I have the highest respect, yet I was forced to look on while this room was defiled, so to speak, by the presence of the guards and the inspector, on my account, but through no fault of my own. It wasn’t easy to stay calm. However, I managed to, and I asked the inspector quite calmly—if he were here he’d have to confirm that—why I had been arrested. And what was the reply of this inspector, whom I still see before me, sitting on the chair of the young woman I mentioned, the very image of mindless arrogance? Gentlemen, he really had no reply at all, perhaps he actually knew nothing, he had arrested me and that was enough for him. He had taken the additional step of bringing to the young lady’s room three minor employees from my bank, who spent their time fingering photographs, the property of the lady, and mixing them all up. The presence of these employees served another purpose, of course: que la mayoría comenzase a reflexionar sobre el asunto y que al- guno, de vez en cuando, se dejara convencer.

—No quiero alcanzar ningún triunfo retórico —dijo K, sacando conclusiones de su reflexión—, tampoco podría. Es muy probable que él señor juez instructor hable mucho mejor que yo, es algo que forma parte de su profesión. Lo único que deseo es la discusión pública de una irregularidad pública. Escuchen: fui detenido hace diez días, me rio de lo que motivó mi detención, pero eso no es algo para tratarlo aquí. Me asaltaron por la mañana temprano, cuando aún estaba en la cama. Es muy posible —no se puede excluir por lo que ha dicho el juez instructor— que tuvieran la orden de detener a un pintor, tan inocente como yo, pero me eligieron a mí. La habitación contigua estaba ocupada por dos rudos vigilantes. Si yo hubiera sido un ladrón peligroso, no se hubieran podido tomar mejores medidas. Esos vigilantes eran, por añadidura, una chusma indecente, su cháchara era insufrible, se querían dejar sobornar, se querían apropiar con trucos de mi ropa interior y de mis trajes, querían dinero para, según dijeron, traerme un desayuno, después de haberse comido con desvergüenza inusitada el mío ante mis propios ojos. Y eso no fue todo. Me llevaron a otra habitación, ante el supervisor. Era la habitación de una dama, a la que aprecio mucho, y tuve que ver cómo esa habitación, por mi causa aunque no por mi culpa, fue ensuciada en cierto modo por la presencia de los vigilantes y del supervisor. No fue fácil guardar la calma. No obstante, lo conseguí, y pregunté al supervisor con toda tranquilidad —si estuviera aquí presente lo tendría que confirmar— por qué estaba detenido. ¿Y qué respondió ese supervisor, al que aún puedo ver sentado en el sillón de la mencionada dama, como la personificación de la arrogancia más estúpida? Señores, en el fondo no respondió nada, tal vez ni siquiera sabía nada, me había detenido y con eso quedaba satisfecho. Pero había hecho algo más, había introducido a tres empleados inferiores de mi banco en la habitación de esa dama, que se entretuvieron en tocar y desordenar unas fotografías, propiedad de la dama en cuestión. La presencia de esos empleados tenía, sin embargo, otra finalidad, su misión, como la
they were meant, like my landlady and her maid, to spread the news of my arrest, damage my public reputation, and in particular to undermine my position at the bank. Well, none of this met with the slightest success; even my landlady, a very simple person—I pronounce her name in all honor, she’s called Frau Grubach—even Frau Grubach was sensible enough to realize that an arrest like that means as little as a mugging on the street by teenage hoodlums. I repeat, the whole affair has merely caused me some unpleasantness and temporary annoyance, but might it not have had more serious consequences as well?"

As K. interrupted himself at this point and glanced at the silent magistrate, he thought he noticed him looking at someone in the crowd and giving him a signal. K. smiled and said: “The examining magistrate here beside me has just given one of you a secret signal. So there are those among you who are being directed from up here. I don’t know if the signal is meant to elicit hisses or applause, and I deliberately waive my opportunity to learn what the signal means by having revealed the matter prematurely. It’s a matter of complete indifference to me, and I publicly authorize His Honor the examining magistrate to command his paid employees below out loud, rather than by secret signals, and to say something like: ‘Now hiss’ and the next time: ‘Now clap.’”

The examining magistrate shifted about in his chair in embarrassment or impatience. The man behind him, with whom he had been talking earlier, bent down to him again, either to give him some general words of encouragement or to pass on special advice. The people below conversed quietly but animatedly. The two parties, which had appeared to hold such contrasting opinions before, mingled with one another, some people pointing their fingers at K., others at the examining magistrate. The foglike haze in the room was extremely annoying, even preventing any closer observation of those standing further away. It must have been particularly disturbing for the visitors in the gallery, who were forced, with timid side glances at the

de mi casera y la de la criada, consis-
tía en difundir la noticia de mi deten-
ción para dañar mi reputación y, so-
bre todo, para poner en peligro mi
posición en el banco. Pero no han
conseguido nada. Hasta mi casera,
una persona muy simple —quisiere
mencionar aquí su nombre como tim-
bre de honor, la señora Grubach—,
hasta la señora Grubach tuvo la su-
ficiente capacidad de juicio para
comprender que semejante deten-
tión no tenía más importancia que un plan ejecutado por algunos jóvenes mal vigilados en una calle-
juela. Lo repito, lo único que me ha
proporcionado todo esto han sido
contrariedades y un enojo pasajero,
pero ¿no hubiera podido tener acaso
peores consecuencias?

Cuando K dejó de hablar y miró ha-
cia el silencioso juez de instrucción, creyó notar que éste le hacía un signo con la mirada a alguien de la multi-
tud. K se rió y prosiguió:

—El juez instructor acaba de
hacer a alguien de ustedes una se-
nal secreta. Parece que entre us-
tedes hay personas que se dejan
dirigir desde aquí arriba. No sé si
esa señal debe despertar ovacio-
ones o sibidos, pero, al descubrir
tiempo el truco, renuncio a ave-
riguar el significado del signo.
Me es completamente indiferente
y autorizo públicamente al señor
juez instructor para que imparta
sus órdenes a sus empleados asa-
lariados de ahí abajo de viva voz
y no con signos secretos, que
diga algo como: «ahora silben»
or «ahora aplaudan».

A causa de su confusión o de su
impatiencia, el juez instructor no
cesaba de moverse en su silla. El
hombre que estaba detrás, y con el
que había conversado anteriormen-
te, se inclinó de nuevo hacia él, ya
fuese para insuflarle valor o para
darle un consejo. Abajo, la gente
conversaba en voz baja, pero ani-
madamente. Los dos partidos, que
en un principio parecían tener opi-
niones contrarias, se mezclaron.
Algunas personas señalaban a K con el
dedo, otras al juez instructor. La
neblina que había en la estan-
cia era muy molesta, incluso im-
pedia que el público más aleja-
do pudiera ver con claridad. Te-
nía que ser especialmente moles-
to para los de la galería, quienes,
no sin antes lanzar miradas temerosas
examining magistrate of course, to address questions under their breath to the members of the assembly in order to find out what was happening. The answers were returned equally softly, shielded behind cupped hands.

“I’m almost finished,” said K, striking his fist on the table, since no bell was available, at which the heads of the examining magistrate and his advisor immediately drew apart, startled: “I’m completely detached from this whole affair, so I can judge it calmly, and it will be to your distinct advantage to pay attention, always assuming you care about this so-called court. I suggest that you postpone your mutual discussion of what I’m saying until later, because I don’t have much time, and will be leaving soon.”

There was an immediate silence, so completely did K now control the assembly. People weren’t shouting back and forth as they had at the beginning; they no longer even applauded but seemed by now convinced, or on the verge of being so.

“There can be no doubt,” K said very quietly, for he was pleased by the keen attention with which the whole assembly was listening, a murmuring arising in that stillness that was more exciting than the most delighted applause, “there can be no doubt that behind all the pronouncements of this court, and in my case, behind the arrest and today’s inquiry, there exists an extensive organization. An organization that not only engages corrupt guards, inane inspectors, and examining magistrates who are at best mediocre, but that supports as well a system of judges of all ranks, including the highest, with their inevitable innumerable entourage of assistants, scribes, gendarmes, and other aides, perhaps even hangmen, I won’t shy away from the word. And the purpose of this extensive organization, gentlemen? It consists of arresting innocent people and introducing senseless proceedings against them, which for the most part, as in my case, go nowhere. Given the senselessness of the whole affair, how could the bureaucracy avoid becoming entirely corrupt? It’s impossible, even the highest judge couldn’t
manage it, even with himself. So guards try to steal the shirts off the backs of arrested men, inspectors break into strange apartments, and innocent people, instead of being examined, are humiliated before entire assemblies. The guards told me about depositories to which an arrested man’s property is taken; I’d like to see these depository places sometime, where the hard earned goods of arrested men are rotting away, if they haven’t already been stolen by pilfering officials.”

K. was interrupted by a shriek from the other end of the hall; he shaded his eyes so that he could see, for the dull daylight had turned the haze into a blinding white glare. It was the washerwoman, whom K. had sensed as a major disturbance from the moment she entered. Whether or not she was at fault now was not apparent. K. saw only that a man had pulled her into a corner by the door and pressed her to himself. But she wasn’t shrieking, it was the man; he had opened his mouth wide and was staring up toward the ceiling. A small circle had gathered around the two of them, and the nearby visitors in the gallery seemed delighted that the serious mood K. had introduced into the assembly had been interrupted in this fashion. K.’s initial reaction was to run toward them, in fact he thought everyone would want to restore order and at least banish the couple from the hall, but the first rows in front of him stood fast; not a person stirred and no one let K. through. On the contrary they hindered him: old men held out their arms and someone’s hand-he didn’t have time to turn around-grabbed him by the collar from behind; K. wasn’t really thinking about the couple anymore, for now it seemed to him as if his freedom were being threatened, as if he were being arrested in earnest, and he sprang from the platform recklessly. Now he stood eye-to-eye with the crowd. Had he misjudged these people? Had he overestimated the effect of his speech? Had they been pretending all the time he was speaking, and now that he had reached his conclusions, were they fed up with pretending? The faces that surrounded him! Tiny black eyes darted about, cheeks drooped like that surrounded him! Pequeños ojos negros se movían inquietos, las mejillas colgaban como las de los borrachos, las

K fue interrumpido por un griterio al final de la sala; se puso la mano sobre los ojos para poder ver mejor, pues la turbia luz diurna intensificaba el blanco de la neblina que impedía la visión. Se trataba de la lavandera, a la que K había considerado desde su entrada como un factor perturbador. Si era culpable o no, era algo que no se podía advertir. K sólo podía ver que un hombre se la había llevado a una esquina cercana a la puerta y allí se apretaba contra ella (19). Pero no era la lavandera la que gritaba, sino el hombre, que abría la boca y miraba hacia el techo. Alrededor de ambos se había formado un pequeño círculo, los de la galería parecían entusiasmados, pues se había interrumpido la seriedad que K había impedido en la asamblea (20). K quiso en un primer momento correr hacia allí, también pensó que todos estaban interesados en restablecer el orden y, al menos, expulsar a la pareja de la sala, pero las personas de las primeras filas permanecieron inmóviles en sus sitios, ninguna hizo el menor ademán ni tampoco dejaron pasar a K. Todo lo contrario, se lo impidieron violentamente. Los ancianos rechazaban a K con los brazos, y una mano —K no tuvo tiempo para volverse— le sujetó por el cuello. K dejó de pensar en la pareja; le parecía como si su libertad se viera constreñida, como si lo de detenerle fuera en serio. Su reacción fue saltar sin miramientos de la tarima. Ahora estaba frente a la multitud. ¿Acaso no había juzgado correctamente a aquella gente? ¿Había confiado demasiado en el efecto de su discurso? ¿Había disimulado.tras él hablaba y ahora que había llegado a las conclusiones ya estaban hartos de tanto disimulo? ¿Qué rostros los que le rodeaban? Pequeños ojos negros se movían inquietos, las mejillas colgaban como las de los borrachos, las...
When they pulled on them, it seemed as if they were merely forming claws, not pulling beards. Beneath the beards, however—and this was the true discovery K. made—badges of various sizes and colors shimmered on the collars of their jackets. They all had badges, as far as he could see. They were all one group, the apparent parties on the left and right, and as he suddenly turned, he saw the same badges on the collar of the examining magistrate, who was looking on calmly with his hands in his lap. “So!” K. cried and flung his arms in the air, this sudden insight demanding space; “I see you’re all officials, you’re the corrupt band I was speaking about; you’ve crowded in here to listen and snoop, you’ve formed apparent parties and had one side applaud to test me, you wanted to learn how to lead innocent men astray. Well I hope you haven’t come in vain; either you found it entertaining that someone thought you would defend the innocent or else—back off or I’ll hit you,” cried K. to a trembling old man who had shoved his way quite near to him—“or else you’ve actually learned something. And with that I wish you luck in your trade.” He quickly picked up his hat, which was lying at the edge of the table, and made his way through the general silence, one of total surprise at least, toward the exit. The examining magistrate, however, seemed to have been even quicker than K., for he was waiting for him at the door. “One moment,” he said. K. stopped, looking not at the examining magistrate but at the door, the handle of which he had already seized. “I just wanted to draw your attention to the fact,” said the examining magistrate, “that you have today deprived yourself—although you can’t yet have realized it of the advantage that an interrogation offers to the arrested man in each case.” K. laughed at the door. “You scoundrels,” he cried, “you can have all your interrogations”; then he opened the door and hurried down the stairs. Behind him rose the sounds of the assembly, which had come to life again, no doubt beginning to discuss what had occurred, as students might.

beards were stiff and scraggly, and when they pulled on them, it seemed as if they were merely forming claws, not pulling beards. Beneath the beards, however—and this was the true discovery K. made—badges of various sizes and colors shimmered on the collars of their jackets. They all had badges, as far as he could see. They were all one group, the apparent parties on the left and right, and as he suddenly turned, he saw the same badges on the collar of the examining magistrate, who was looking on calmly with his hands in his lap. “So!” K. cried and flung his arms in the air, this sudden insight demanding space; “I see you’re all officials, you’re the corrupt band I was speaking about; you’ve crowded in here to listen and snoop, you’ve formed apparent parties and had one side applaud to test me, you wanted to learn how to lead innocent men astray. Well I hope you haven’t come in vain; either you found it entertaining that someone thought you would defend the innocent or else—back off or I’ll hit you,” cried K. to a trembling old man who had shoved his way quite near to him—“or else you’ve actually learned something. And with that I wish you luck in your trade.” He quickly picked up his hat, which was lying at the edge of the table, and made his way through the general silence, one of total surprise at least, toward the exit. The examining magistrate, however, seemed to have been even quicker than K., for he was waiting for him at the door. “One moment,” he said. K. stopped, looking not at the examining magistrate but at the door, the handle of which he had already seized. “I just wanted to draw your attention to the fact,” said the examining magistrate, “that you have today deprived yourself—although you can’t yet have realized it of the advantage that an interrogation offers to the arrested man in each case.” K. laughed at the door. “You scoundrels,” he cried, “you can have all your interrogations”; then he opened the door and hurried down the stairs. Behind him rose the sounds of the assembly, which had come to life again, no doubt beginning to discuss what had occurred, as students might.

largas barbas eran ralas y estaban tiesas, si se las cogía era como si se cogiesen garras y no barbas. Bajo las barbas, sin embargo —y éste fue el verdadero hallazgo de K—, en los cuellos de las chaquetas, brillaban distintivos de distinto tamaño y color. Todos tenían esos distintivos. Todos pertenecían a la misma organización, tanto el supuesto partido de la izquierda como el de la derecha, y cuando se volvió súbitamente, descubrió los mismos distintivos en el cuello del juez instructor, que, con las manos sobre el vientre, lo contemplaba todo con tranquilidad.

—¡Ah! —gritó K, y elevó los brazos hacia arriba, como si su repentina descubrimiento necesitase espacio—. Todos vosotros sois funcionarios, como ya veo, vosotros sois la banda corrupta contra la que he hablado, hoy os habéis apretado aquí como oyentes y fisgones, habéis formado partidos ilusorios y uno ha aplaudido para ponerme a prueba. Queríaos poner en práctica vuestras manías para embauar a inocentes. Bien, no habéis venido en balde. Al menos os habréis divertido con alguien que esperaba una defensa de su inocencia por vuestra parte. ¡Déjame o te doy! —gritó K a un anciano tembloroso que se había acercado demasiado a él—. Realmente espero que hayáis aprendido algo. Y con esto os deseo mucha suerte en vuestra empresa.

Tomó con rapidez el sombrero, que estaba en el borde de la mesa, y se abrió paso entre el silencio general, un silencio fruto de la más completa sorpresa, hacia la salida. No obstante, el juez instructor parecía haber sido mucho más rápido que K, pues ya le esperaba ante la puerta.

—Un instante—dijo.

K se detuvo, pero no miró al juez instructor, sino a la puerta, cuyo picaporte ya había cogido.

—Sólo quería llamarle la atención, pues no parece consciente de algo importante —dijo el juez instructor—, de que hoy se ha privado a sí mismo de la ventaja que supone el interrogatorio para todo detenido.

K rió ante la puerta.

—¡Pordioseros! —gritó—. Os regalo todos los interrogatorios.

Abrió la puerta y se apresuró a bajar las escaleras. Detrás de él se levantó un gran rumor en la asamblea, otra vez animada, que probablemente comenzó a discutir lo acaecido como lo harían unos estudiantes.
K. waited from day to day throughout the following week for further notification; he couldn't believe they had taken his waiver of interrogations literally, and when the expected notification had not arrived by Saturday evening, he took it as an implicit summons to appear again in the same building at the same time. So he returned on Sunday, but this time he went straight up the stairs and along the passageways; a few people who remembered him greeted him from their doors, but he no longer needed to ask the way and soon reached the right door. It opened at once at his knock, and without even glancing at the familiar face of the woman, who remained standing by the door, he headed directly for the adjoining room.

"There's no session today," the woman said. "Why wouldn't there be a session?" he asked, not really believing it. But the woman convinced him by opening the door to the next room. It was indeed empty and in its emptiness looked even more sordid than it had last Sunday. On the table, which stood unchanged on the platform, lay several books.

"Can I look at the books?" K. asked, not out of any particular curiosity, but simply so that his presence was not entirely pointless. "No," said the woman and shut the door again, "that's not

Durante la semana siguiente K esperó día tras día una notificación: no podía creer que hubieran tomado literalmente su renuncia a ser interrogado y, al llegar el sábado por la noche y no recibir nada, supuso que había sido citado tácitamente en la misma casa y a la misma hora. Así pues, el domingo se puso en camino, pero esta vez fue directamente, sin perderse por las escaleras y pasillos; algunas personas que se acordaban de él le saludaron, pero ya no tuvo que preguntarle a nadie y encontró pronto la puerta correcta. Le abrieron inmediatamente después de llamar y, sin ni siquiera mirar a la mujer de la otra vez, que permaneció al lado de la puerta, quiso entrar en seguida a la habitación contigua.

—Hoy no hay sesión —dijo la mujer.
—¿Por qué no? —preguntó K sin creérselo. Pero la mujer le convenció al abrir la puerta de la sala. Realmente estaba vacía y en ese estado se mostraba aún más desolador que el último domingo. Sobre la mesa, que seguía situada sobre la tarima, había algunos libros.

—¿Puedo mirar los libros? —preguntó K, no por mera curiosidad, sino sólo para aprovechar su estancia allí.
—No —dijo la mujer, y cerró la puerta—. No está permitido. Los li-
allowed. Those books belong to the examining magistrate."

“Oh, I see,” said K. and nodded, “they’re probably law books, and it’s in the nature of this judicial system that one is condemned not only in innocence but also in ignorance.”

“It must be,” said the woman, who hadn’t really understood him.

“Well, then I’ll leave,” said K. “Shall I give the examining magistrate any message?” asked the woman. “You know him?” K. asked. “Of course,” said the woman, “after all, my husband is a court usher.”

Only then did K. see that the room, which had contained only a washtub last time, was now a fully furnished living room. The woman noticed his astonishment and said:

“Yes, we live here rent free, but we have to move our furniture out on days when the court is in session. My husband’s job has a few disadvantages.”

“It’s not so much the room that astonishes me,” said K., giving her an angry look, “as the fact that you’re married.”

“Are you referring perhaps to the incident last session, when I interrupted your speech?” asked the woman. “Of course,” said K., “today that’s all over and practically forgotten, but it really angered me at the time. And now you yourself say you’re a married woman.”

“It wasn’t to your disadvantage to have your speech interrupted. You were judged quite unfavorably afterwards.” “That may be,” said K. brushing the remark aside, “but that doesn’t excuse you.”

“I’m excused in the eyes of those who know me,” said the woman, “the man who was embracing me has been persecuting me for a long time. I may not be tempting in general, but I am to him. Here I have no protection, even my husband has finally come to terms with it; he has to put up with it if he wants to keep his job, because the man involved is a student and will presumably become even more powerful. He’s always after me; he left just before you arrived.”

“It fits in with all the rest,” said K., “I’m not surprised.” “You’d probably like to improve a few things around here?” the woman asked slowly and tentatively, as if she were saying something dangerous for her as well as for K.

“I gathered that from your speech, which personally I liked a lot. Of course I heard only part of it, since
I missed the beginning and at the end I was on the floor with the student.”

“It’s so disgusting here,” she said after a pause, and took K.’s hand. “Do you think you’ll be able to improve things?” K. smiled and turned his hand slightly in her soft hands. “Actually,” he said, “it’s not my job to improve things here, as you put it, and if you said that to someone like the examining magistrate you’d be laughed at or punished. I certainly wouldn’t have become involved in these matters of my own free will, and I would never have lost any sleep over the shortcomings of this judicial system. But because I was supposedly placed under arrest—I’ve been arrested, you see—I’ve been forced to take action in my own behalf. But if I can be of any help to you in the process, I’ll of course be happy to do so. Not simply out of compassion, but because you can help me in turn.”

“How could I do that?” asked the woman. “By showing me those books on the table now, for example.” “But of course,” cried the woman, dragging him quickly after her. They were old dog-eared books; one of the bindings was almost split in two at the spine, the covers barely hanging by the cords. “How dirty everything is,” said K., shaking his head, and before K. could reach for the books, the woman wiped at least some of the dust off with her apron. K. opened the book on top, and an indecent picture was revealed. A man and a woman were sitting naked on a divan; the obscene intention of the artist was obvious, but his ineptitude was so great that in the end there was nothing to be seen but a man and woman, emerging far too corporeally from the picture, sitting rigidly upright, and due to the poor perspective, turning toward each other quite awkwardly. K. didn’t leaf through any further, but simply opened to the frontispiece of the second book, a novel entitled The Torments Grete Suffered at the Hands of Her Husband Hans.

“So these are the law books they study,” said K. “I’m to be judged by such men.” “I’ll help you,” said the woman. “Do you want me to?” “Could you really do so without endangering yourself, after all, you said before that your husband was highly dependent on his superiors.” “Even so, I’ll help you,” said the woman. “Come on, we have to discuss it. Forget comienzo y al final estaba en el sue- lo con el estudiante. Esto es tan re- pugnante —dijo después de una pau- sa y tomó la mano de K—. ¿Cree us- ted que podrá lograr alguna mejora?

K. sonrió y acarició ligeramente su mano.

—En realidad —dijo—, no pre- tendo realizar ninguna mejora, como usted se ha expresado, y si usted se lo dijera al juez instructor, se rei- ría de usted o la castigaría. Jamás me hubiera injerido voluntariamente en este asunto y las necesidades de mejora de esta justicia no me habrían quitado el sueño. Pero me he visto obligado a intervenir al ser detenido —pues ahora estoy realmente detenido—, y sólo en mi defensa. Pero si al mismo tiem- po puedo serle útil de alguna ma- nera, estaré encantado, y no sólo por altruismo, sino porque usted también me puede ayudar a mí.

—¿Cómo podría? —preguntó la mujer.

—Por ejemplo, mostrándome los libros que hay sobre la mesa.

Se trataba de libros viejos y usados; la cubierta de uno de ellos estaba rota por la mitad, sólo se mantenía gracias a unas tiras de papel celo.

—Qué suelo está todo esto —dijo K moviendo la cabeza, y la mujer limpió el polvo con su delantal ante- tes de que K cogiera los libros.

K abrió el primero y apareció una imagen indecorosa: un hom- bre y una mujer sentados desnudos en un canapé; la intención obscena del dibujante era clara, no obstante, su falta de habilidad había sido tan notoria que sólo se veía a un hombre y a una mujer, cu- yos cuerpos destacaban demasiado, sentados con excesiva rigidez y, de- bido a una perspectiva errónea, apenas distinguibles en su actitud. K no siguió hojeando, sino que abrió la tapa del segundo volu- men: era una novela Con el título: Las vejaciones que Grete tuvo que sufrir de su marido Hans.

—Estos son los códigos que aquí se estu- dian —dijo K—. Los hombres que leen estos libros son los que me van a juzgar.

—Le ayudaré —dijo la mujer. —¿Quieres?

—¿Puede realmente hacerlo sin ponerse en peligro? Usted ha dicho que su esposo depen- de mucho de sus superiores.

—A pesar de todo quiero ayudar- le —dijo ella. —Venga, hablaremos del asunto. Sobre el peligro que po-
about my danger; I only fear danger when I want to. Come on." She pointed to the platform and asked him to sit with her on the step. “You have beautiful dark eyes,” she said, after they were seated, looking up into K.’s face, “they say I have beautiful eyes as well, but yours are much more beautiful. By the way, I was struck by them right away, the first time you came here. They were the reason I came into the assembly room later, which I never do otherwise; in fact, ’tis more or less forbidden.” “So that’s all it is,” thought K., “she’s offering herself to me; she’s depraved, like everyone else around here, she’s had her fill of court officials, which is understandable, so she accosts any stranger who comes along with a compliment about his eyes.” And K. stood up without saying anything, as if he had spoken his thoughts aloud and thus explained his conduct to the woman. “I don’t think you can help me,” he said, “to be of real help a person would have to have connections with higher officials. But I’m sure you only the low-level employees who hang around here in such great numbers. Of course those you know quite well, and you might be able to get somewhere with them, I don’t doubt that, but the best you could hope to achieve through them would have no effect whatsoever on the final outcome of the trial. And you would have lost a few friends in the process. I don’t want that. Keep your present relationship with these people, it seems to me you really can’t do without it. I say that with some regret, because, to return your compliment at least in part, I like you, especially when you look at me as sadly as you do right now, although you really have no reason to. You’re part of the group I have to fight, but you’re quite comfortable among them; you even love the student, or if you don’t love him, you at least prefer him to your husband. That was easy to tell from what you said.” “No,” she cried, remaining seated and simply reaching for K.’s hand, which he failed to withdraw quickly enough, “you can’t leave now, you mustn’t go away having judged me falsely. Could you really bring yourself to leave now? Am I dría correr, no diga una palabra más. Sólo temo al peligro donde quiero temerlo. Venga conmigo —y señaló la tarima, haciendo un gesto para que se sentara allí con ella. —Tiene unos ojos negros muy bonitos —dijo ella después de sentarse y contemplar el rostro de K—. Me han dicho que yo también tengo ojos bonitos, pero los suyos lo son mucho más. Me llamaron la atención la primera vez que le vi. Fueron el motivo por el que entré en la asamblea, lo que no hago nunca, ya que, en cierta medida, me está prohibido. «Así que es eso —pensó K—, se está ofreciendo, está corrupta como todo a mi alredeedor; está harta de los funcionarios judiciales, lo que es comprensible, y saluda a cualquier extraño con un cumplido sobre sus ojos». K se levantó en silencio, como si hubiera pensado en voz alta y le hubiese aclarado así a la mujer su comportamiento. —No creo que pueda ayudarme —dijo él—. Para poder hacerlo realmente, debería tener relaciones con funcionarios superiores. Pero usted sólo conoce con seguridad a los empleados inferiores que pululan aquí entre la multitud. A éstos los conoce muy bien, y podrían hacer algo por usted, eso no lo dudo, pero lo máximo que podrían conseguir carecería de importancia para el definitivo desenlace del proceso y usted habría perdido el favor de varios amigos. No quiero que ocurra eso. Mantenga la relación con esa gente, me parece, además, que le resulta algo indispensable. No lo digo sin lamentarlo, pues, para corresponder a su cumplido, le diré que usted también me gusta, especialmente cuando me mira con esa tristeza, para la que, por lo demás, no tiene ningún motivo. Usted pertenece a la sociedad que yo combato, pero se siente bien en ella, incluso ama al estudiante o, si no lo ama, al menos lo prefiere a su esposo. Eso se podría deducir fácilmente de sus palabras. —¡No! —exclamó ella, permaneciendo sentada y cogiendo la mano de K, quien no pudo retirarla a tiempo—. No puede irse ahora, no puede irse con una opinión tan falsa sobre mi. ¿Sería capaz de irse ahora? ¿Soy tan poco valiosa
really so worthless that you won’t even do me the kindness of staying here a tiny bit longer?” “You misunderstand me,” said K, sitting down, “if it means so much to you for me to stay, I’ll do so gladly; after all, I have plenty of time, since I came here today thinking there would be a hearing. All I meant by what I said earlier was that you shouldn’t try to do anything about my trial for me. But there’s no reason to feel hurt by that either, knowing that I’m not at all concerned about the outcome of the trial, and would only laugh at a conviction. Assuming the trial ever comes to an actual conclusion, which I greatly doubt. I think it much more likely that the proceedings have already been dropped through laziness or forgetfulness or perhaps even fear on the part of the officials, or that they will be dropped in the near future. Of course it’s always possible that they’ll seem to continue the trial in hopes of some sort of sizable bribe, totally in vain, I can tell you right now, for I won’t bribe anyone. You would be doing me a favor, however, if you would tell the examining magistrate, or some other person who enjoys spreading important information, that I will never bribe anyone, nor be brought to do so by any of the rich store of tricks these gentlemen no doubt possess. There’s no chance of success, you can tell them that quite frankly. But they may well have realized that already, and even if they haven’t, it makes no real difference to me for them to find out now. After all, it would only spare these gentlemen work, and me a few annoyances as well of course, ones I’ll happily accept, if I know that each is a blow against them in turn. And I’ll make sure that that’s the case. Do you really know the examining magistrate?” “Of course,” said the woman, “in fact he’s the first person I thought of when I offered to help. I didn’t know he was only a low-level official, but since you say so, that’s probably right. Even so, I think that the report he sends to his superiors still has some influence, and he writes so many reports. You say the officials are lazy, but surely not all, and particularly not this examining magistrate, he writes a lot. Last para usted que no me quiere hacer el favor de permanecer aquí un rato?

—No me interprete mal —dijo K, y se volvió a sentar—, si es tan importante para usted que me que de, lo haré encantado, tengo tiempo, pues vine con la esperanza de que hoy se celebre una reunión. Con lo que le he dicho anteriormente, sólo quería pedirle que no emprendiese nada en mi proceso. Pero eso no la debe enojar, sobre todo si piensa que a mí no me importa el desenlace del proceso y que, en caso de que me condenaran, sólo podría reírme. Eso suponiendo que realmente se llegue al final del proceso, lo que dudo mucho. Más bien creo que el procedimiento, ya sea por pura desidia o olvido, o tal vez por miedo de los funcionarios, ya se ha interrumpido o se interrumpirá en poco tiempo. No obstante, también es posible que hagan continuar un proceso aparente con la esperanza de lograr un buen soborno, pero será en vano, como muy bien puedo afirmar hoy, ya que no sobornaré a nadie. Siempre sería una amabilidad de su parte comunicarle al juez instructor, o a cualquier otro que le guste propagar buenas noticias, que nunca lograrán, ni siquiera empleando trucos, en lo que son muy duchos, los sobornos. No tendrán la menor perspectiva de éxito, se lo puede decir abiertamente. Por lo demás, es muy posible que ya lo hayan advertido, pero en el caso contrario, tampoco me importa mucho que se enteren ahora. Así los señores podrían ahorrarse el trabajo, y yo algunas incomodidades, las cuales, sin embargo, soportaré encantado, si al mismo tiempo suponen una molestia para los demás. ¿Conoce usted al juez instructor?

—Claro —dijo la mujer—, en él pensé al principio, cuando ofrecí mi ayuda. No sabía que era un funcionario inferior, pero como usted lo dice, será cierto. Sin embargo, pienso que el informe que él proporciona a los escalafones superiores posee alguna influencia. Y él escribe tantos informes. Usted dice que los funcionarios son vagos, no todos, especialmente este juez instructor no lo es, él escribe mu-
Sunday, for example, the session went on almost into the evening. Everyone left, but the examining magistrate remained behind in the hall, and had me bring him a lamp; all I had was a little kitchen lamp, but he was satisfied with it and immediately started writing. In the meantime my husband, who had been off duty that particular Sunday, returned, we carried in our furniture, arranged our room once more, then some neighbors arrived, we talked a while longer by candlelight, in short, we forgot the examining magistrate and went to bed. Suddenly, that night, it must have been late at night by then, I awake and find the examining magistrate standing by my bed, shielding the lamp with his hand so that no light falls upon my husband, a needless precaution, since the way my husband sleeps the light wouldn’t have awakened him anyway. I was so startled I almost screamed, but the examining magistrate was very friendly, cautioned me against crying out, whispered that he had been writing till then, that he was bringing the lamp back now, and that he would never forget the picture I made when he found me sleeping. I’m telling you all this simply to show that the examining magistrate really does write a lot of reports, especially about you: for your hearing was certainly one of the major events of the Sunday session. Such long reports surely can’t be totally meaningless. But you can also see from this incident that the examining magistrate is interested in me, and it’s precisely at this early stage, for he must have just noticed me, that I can have a major influence on him. And I now have other indications that he sets great store by me. Yesterday he sent me silk stockings through the student, whom he trusts, and who is his colleague, supposedly because I tidy up the courtroom, but that’s only an excuse, because after all that’s my duty and my husband gets paid for it. They’re pretty stockings, see—she stretched out her legs, pulled her dress up to her knees, and viewed her legs herself as well—“they’re pretty stockings, but really they’re too nice, and not suitable for me.”

Suddenly she interrupted
herself, placed her hand on K.'s as if to calm him, and whispered: “Hush, Bertold is watching us!” K. slowly lifted his gaze. In the doorway to the courtroom stood a young man; he was short, with slightly crooked legs, and attempted to lend himself an air of dignity by means of a short, scraggly reddish beard he kept fingering. K. looked at him with curiosity; he was the first student of the unknown system of jurisprudence he’d met on more or less human terms, a man who would presumably advance at some stage to higher official positions. The student, on the other hand, seemed to pay no attention at all to K., but simply gestured to the woman with one finger, which he removed for a moment from his beard, and walked over to the window; the woman bent down to K. and whispered: “Don't be angry with me, please, please don’t, and don't think badly of me; I have to go to him now, to this horrible man, just look at his bandy legs. But I'll come right back, and then I’ll go with you; if you’ll take me along, I’ll go anywhere you wish, you can do with me what you like, I’ll be happy to get out of here for as long as I can, the best of course would be forever.” She stroked K.’s hand once more, sprang up, and ran to the window. Instinctively, K. grabbed for her hand in the empty air. The woman did tempt him, and no matter how hard he thought about it, he could see no good reason not to give in to that temptation. The fleeting objection that the woman was ensnaring him on the court’s behalf he easily brushed aside. How could she ensnare him? Wouldn’t he still be free enough to simply smash the entire court, at least insofar as it touched him? Couldn’t he grant himself that small degree of self-confidence? And her offer of help sounded sincere, and was perhaps not without value. And there was perhaps no better way to revenge himself upon the examining magistrate and his retinue than taking this woman away from them for himself. Then the time might come when, late one night, after long hours of exhausting labor on his false reports about K., the examining magistrate would find the bed of su mano sobre la de K, como si quisiera tranquilizarle y musitó: —¡Silencio, Bertold nos está mirando! K levantó lentamente la mirada. En la puerta de la sala de sesiones había un hombre joven: era pequeño, tenía las piernas algo arqueadas y ____________, un hombre que, probablemente, llegaría a ser un funcionario superior. El estudiante, sin embargo, no se preocupaba en absoluto de K, se limitó a hacer una seññ a a la mujer llevándose un dedo ___________ a la barba y, a continuación, se fue hacia la ventana. La mujer se inclinó hacia K y susurró: —No se enoje conmigo, se lo suplico, tampoco piense mal de mí, ahora tengo que irme con él, con ese hombre horrible, sólo tiene que mirar esas piernas torcidas. Pero volveré en seguida y, si quiere, entonces me iré con usted, a donde usted quiera. Puede hacer conmigo lo que desee, estaré feliz si puedo abandonar este sitio el mayor tiempo posible, aunque lo mejor sería para siempre. Acarició la mano de K, se levantó y corrió hacia la ventana. Involuntariamente, K trató de coger su mano en el vacío. La mujer le había seducido y, después de reflexionar un rato, no encontró ningún motivo sólido para no ceder a la seducción. La efímera objeción de que la mujer lo podía estar capturando para el tribunal, la rechazó sin esfuerzo. ¿Cómo podría hacerlo? ¿Acaso no permanecía él tan libre que podía destruir, al menos en lo que a él concernía, todo el tribunal? ¿No podía mostrar algo de confianza? Y su solicitud de ayuda parecía sincera y posiblemente valiosa. Además, no podía haber una venganza mejor contra el juez instructor y su séquito que quitarle esa mujer y hacerla suya. Podría ocurrir que un día el juez instructor, después de haber trabajado con esfuerzo en los informes mendaces sobre K, encontrarse por la noche la cama
the woman empty. And empty because she belonged to K., because this woman at the window, this voluptuous, supple, warm body in a dark dress of heavy, coarse material, belonged to K., and K. alone.

Once he had overcome his doubts about the woman in this way, the low conversation at the window grew too long for him, and he rapped on the platform with his knuckle, then with his fist. The student glanced briefly at K. over the woman’s shoulder, but continued undisturbed; in fact he drew even closer to the woman and put his arms around her. She lowered her head as if she were listening closely to him, and he kissed her loudly on the neck as she leaned over, not even really interrupting what he was saying. Seeing in this a confirmation of the tyranny the student exercised over the woman, as she had complained, K. rose and paced up and down the room. Glancing sideways toward the student, he contemplated the quickest way to get rid of him, and so he was happy enough when the student, apparently disturbed by K.’s pacing, which had meanwhile degenerated into full-blown tromping, remarked: “If you’re impatient, why don’t you leave? You could have left even earlier, no one would have missed you. In fact you should have left the moment I arrived, and as quickly as possible.”

This remark may have been an outburst of utmost anger, but it contained as well the arrogance of a future court official speaking to an unpopular defendant. K. paused quite close to him and said with a smile: “I’m impatient, that’s true, but the easiest way to alleviate my impatience is for you to leave. But if by chance you came here to study—I hear you’re a student—I’ll gladly leave you to yourself and go off with this woman. By the way, you have a lot more studying to do before you can become a judge. I don’t really know much about your judicial system yet, but I take it that crass language alone, of the sort you’re certainly shamelessly good at already, is hardly sufficient.

“They shouldn’t have allowed him to run around so freely,” said the student, as if offering the woman vacía de la mujer. Y vacía porque ella pertenecía a K, porque esa mujer de la ventana, ese cuerpo voluptuoso, flexible y cálido, cubierto con un vestido oscuro de tela bas-ta, sólo le pertenecía a él.

Después de haber ahuyentado de esa manera las dudas contra la mujer, la conversación en voz baja que sostenían en la ventana le pareció demasiado larga, así que golpeó con un nudillo la tarima y, luego, con el puño. El estudiante miró un instante hacia K sobre el hombro de la mujer, pero no se dejó interrumpir, incluso se apretó más contra ella y la rodeó con los brazos. Ella inclinó la cabeza, como si le escuchara atentamente, el estudiante la besó ruidosamente en el cuello, sin detener, aparentemente, la conversación. K vio confirmada la tiranía que el estudiante, según las palabras de la mujer, ejercía sobre ella, se levantó y anduvo de un lado a otro de la habitación. Pensó, sin dejar de lanzar miradas de soslayo al estudiante, cómo podría arrebatársela lo más rápido posible, y por eso no le vino nada mal cuando el estudiante, irritado por los pasos de K, que a ratos derivaban en un pataleo, se dirigió a él:

—Si está tan impaciente, pue-de irse. Se podría haber ido mu-cho antes, nadie le hubiera echa-do de menos. Sí, tal vez debiera haberse ido cuando yo entré y, además, a toda prisa.

En esa advertencia se ponia de manifiesto la cólera que dominaba al estudiante, pero sobre todo salía a la luz la arrogancia del futuro funcionario judicial que hablaba con un acusado por el que no sentía ninguna simpatía. K se detuvo muy cerca de él y dijo sonriendo:

—Estoy impaciente, eso es cier-tamente, pero esa impaciencia desaparecerá en cuanto nos deje en paz. No obstante, si usted ha venido a es-tudiar—he oído que es estudiante—, estaré encantado de dejarle el espacio suficiente y me iré con la mujer. Por lo demás, tendrá que es-tudiar mucho para llegar a juez. No conozco muy bien este tipo de justicia, pero creo que con esos malos discursos que usted pronuncia con tanto descaro aún no alcanza el nivel exigido.

—No deberían haber dejado que se moviese con tanta libertad —dijo como si quisiera dar una explicación
an explanation for K.’s insulting remarks, “it was a mistake. I told the examining magistrate so. He should at least have been confined to his room between interrogations. Sometimes I just don’t understand the examining magistrate.” “You’re wasting your breath,” said K., stretching out his hand toward the woman. “Come on.” “Aha,” said the student, “no, no, you’re not going to get her,” and with a strength one wouldn’t have expected, he lifted her in one arm and ran to the door, his back bent, gazing up at her tenderly. A certain fear of K. was unmistakable in his action, yet he dared to provoke K. even further by stroking and squeezing the woman’s arm with his free hand. K. ran along beside him a few steps, ready to grab him, and if necessary to throttle him; when the woman said: “It’s no use, the examining magistrate has sent for me, I can’t go with you, this little monster,” she said, stroking the student’s face, “this little monster want me to go.” “And you don’t want to be freed,” yelled K., placing his hand on the shoulder of the student, who snapped at it with his teeth. “No,” the woman cried out, and pushed K. away with both hands. “No, no, don’t do that, what do you think you’re doing! I’ll be ruined. Let go of him, oh please, let go of him. He’s just following the examining magistrate’s orders and carrying me to him.” “Then let him go, and I hope I never see you again,” said K. in enraged disappointment, and shoved the student in the back so sharply that he stumbled for a moment, only to leap higher into the air with his burden in joy at not having fallen. K. followed them slowly; he realized that this was the first clear defeat he had suffered at the hands of these people. Of course there was no reason to let that worry him, he had suffered defeat only because he had sought to do battle. If he stayed home and led his normal life he was infinitely superior to any of these people, and could kick any one of them out of his path. And he pictured how funny it would be, for example, to see this miserable student, this a la mujer sobre las palabras insultantes de K—. Ha sido un error. Se lo he dicho al juez instructor. Al menos se le debería haber con-
finado en su habitación durante el interrogatorio. El juez instructor es, a veces, incomprendible (21).

—Palabras inútiles —dijo K., y extendió su mano hacia la mu-
jer—. Venga usted.

—¡Ah, ya! —dijo el estudiante—, no, no, usted no se la que-
dá —y con una fuerza insop-se-
chada levantó a la mujer con un brazo y corríó inclinado, mirándo-
la tiernamente, hacia la puerta.

No se podía ignorar que en esa ac-
ción había intervenido cierto miedo hacia K, no obstante osó irritar más a K al acercar y estrechar con su mano libre el brazo de la mujer. K corró unos metros a su lado, presto a echarse sobre él y, si fue-
ra necesario, a e strangularlo, pero la mujer dijo:

—Déjelo, no logrará nada, el juez instructor hará que me recojan, no puedo ir con usted, este pequeño es-
pantajo —y pasó la mano por el rostro del estudiante——, este pequeño espantajo no me deja.

—¡Y usted no quiere que la libe-
ren! —gritó K, y puso la mano sobre el hombro del estudiante, que intentó morderla.

—No —gritó la mujer, y re-
chazó a K con ambas manos—, no, ¿en qué pien sa u s-
t e d ? Eso sería mi perdición. ¡Déjele! ¡Por favor, déjele! Lo único que hace es cumplir las órdenes del juez instructor, me lleva con él.

—Entonces que corra todo lo que quiera. A usted no la quiero volver a ver más —dijo K furioso ante la decepción y le dio al estudiante un golpe en la espalda; el estudiante tropezó, pero, conten-
to por no haberse caído, corrió aún más ligero con su carga. K le siguió cada vez con mayor lentitud, era la primera derrota que sufría ante esa gente. Era eviden-
te que no suponia ningún motivo para asustarse, sufrió la derrota simplemente porque él fue quien buscó la lucha. Si permaneciera en casa y llevara su vida habitual, sería mil veces superior a esa gen-
te y podría apartar de su camino con una patada a cualquiera de ellos. Y se imaginó la escena tan ridícula que se produciría, si ese patético estudiante, ese
puffed-up child, this bandy-legged, bearded fellow, kneeling at Elsa’s bedside, clutching his hands and begging for mercy. This vision pleased K. so greatly that he decided, if the opportunity ever arose, to take the student along to Elsa one day.

Out of curiosity, K. hurried to the door, wanting to see where the woman was being taken; the student surely wouldn’t carry her through the streets in his arms. It turned out the path was much shorter. Directly across from the apartment door a narrow flight of wooden stairs led upward, probably to an attic area; they made a turn, so you couldn’t see where they ended. The student was carrying the woman up these stairs, very slowly now, and groaning, for he was weakened by his previous efforts. The woman waved down at K., and tried to show by a shrug of her shoulders that the abduction wasn’t her fault, but there wasn’t a great deal of regret in the gesture. K. looked at her without expression, like a stranger, wishing to show neither his disappointment, nor that he could easily overcome it.

The two had already disappeared, but K. was still standing in the doorway. He could only assume that the woman had not only deceived him, but lied to him as well by saying she was being carried to the examining magistrate. The examining magistrate surely wasn’t sitting around waiting for her in the attic. The wooden steps explained nothing, no matter how long one stared at them. Then K. noticed a small sign beside the stairs, walked over, and read in a childish, awkward script: “Law Court Offices Upstairs.” So the law court offices were in the attic of this apartment building? That was an arrangement scarcely calculated to inspire much respect, and for a defendant it was reassuring to imagine what limited funds this court must have at its disposal if its offices were located where tenants who were themselves among the poorest of the poor tossed their useless trash. Of course the possibility could not be ruled out that there was enough

niño engreído, ese barbudo de piernas torcidas, se arrodillaría ante la cama de Elsa y le suplicaría gracia con las manos entrelazadas. A K le gustó tanto esta idea que decidió, si se presentaba la oportunidad, llevar al estudiante a casa de Elsa.

K llegó hasta la puerta sólo por curiosidad, quería ver adónde se llevaba a la mujer; no creía que el estudiante se la llevara así, en vilo, por la calle. Comprobó que el camino era mucho más corto. Justo frente a la puerta de la vivienda había una estrecha escalera de madera que probablemente conducía al desván, pero como hacia un giro no se podía ver donde terminaba. El estudiante se llevó a la mujer por esa escalera; ya estaba muy cansado y jadeaba, pues había quedado debilitado por la carrera. La mujer se despidió de K con la mano y alzó los hombros para mostrarle que el secuestro no era culpa suya, pero el gesto no resultaba muy convincente. K la miró inexpressivo, como a una extraña, no quería traicionar ni que estaba decepcionado ni que podía superar fácilmente la decepción.

Los dos habían desaparecido por la escalera; K, sin embargo, aún permaneció en la puerta. Se vio obligado a aceptar que la mujer no sólo le había traicionado, sino que le había mentido al contarle que el estudiante la llevaba con el juez instructor. Éste no podía esperar sentado en el desván. La escalera de madera tampoco aclaraba nada, al menos a primera vista. Entonces K advirtió una pequeña nota al lado de la escalera, fue hacia allí y leyó las siguientes palabras escritas con letra infantil y tosa: «Subida a las oficinas del juzgado». ¿Aquí, en el desván de una casa de alquiler se encontraban las oficinas del juzgado? No era un lugar que infundiera mucho respeto; por lo demás, era tranquilizante para un acusado imaginar la falta de medios que estaban a disposición de un juzgado que albergaba sus oficinas donde los inquilinos, pertenecientes a las clases más pobres, arrojaban todos sus trastos inútiles. No obs-}

53
money, but that the officials grabbed it before it could be used for the court’s purposes. Based on K.’s prior experience that even seemed likely, and although such a dissolute court was humiliating for a defendant, in the end it was even more reassuring than a poverty-stricken court would have been. Now K. could see why they’d been ashamed to invite the defendant to these garrets for the initial interrogation, and chose instead to pester him in his lodgings. What a position K. was in, after all, compared to the judge who sat in a garret, while he himself had a large office in the bank, with a waiting room, and could look down upon the busy city square through a huge plate-glass window. Of course he received no supplementary income from bribes or embezzlement, and he couldn’t have an assistant carry a woman in his arms to his office for him. But K. would gladly waive that right, at least in this life.

K. was still standing in front of the sign when a man came up the stairs, peered through the open door into the living room, from which the hall of inquiry could be seen as well, and finally asked K. if he had seen a woman there a short while ago. “You’re the court usher, aren’t you?” K. asked. “Yes,” said the man, “oh, you’re the defendant K., now I recognize you too, welcome.” And he held out his hand to K., who hadn’t expected that at all. “Hoy no hay prevista ninguna sesión —dijo el ujier al ver que K. permanecía en silencio. —Hoy no hay prevista ninguna sesión —dijo el ujier al ver que K. permanecía en silencio.

K. was still standing in front of the sign when a man came up the stairs, peered through the open door into the living room, from which the hall of inquiry could be seen as well, and finally asked K. if he had seen a woman there a short while ago. “You’re the court usher, aren’t you?” K. asked. “Yes,” said the man, “oh, you’re the defendant K., now I recognize you too, welcome.” And he held out his hand to K., who hadn’t expected that at all. “But there’s no session scheduled today,” the court usher said, as K. remained silent. “I know,” K. said, and observed the court usher’s civilian jacket, which, in addition to the normal buttons, bore as sole emblem of his office two gold buttons, which seemed to have been taken off an old officer’s uniform. “I spoke with your wife a short while ago. She’s not here anymore. The student carried her off to the examining magistrate.” “You see,” said the court usher, “they’re always taking her away from me. Today is Sunday, and I have no official duties, but just to get me out of the way, they send me off with a message that’s meaningless anyway. And in fact I’m not sent far, so that the hope remains that if I really hurry, I might get back in time. I run as fast...
as I can to the office they’ve sent me to, shout my message so breathlessly through the half-open door that they probably don’t understand it, and race back again, but the student has moved even faster than I have, and of course he doesn’t have as far to go, he has only to run down the attic stairs. If I weren’t so dependent on them, I would have long since crushed the student against this wall. Right here next to the sign. I keep dreaming about it. He’s squashed flat a little above floor level here, his arms stretched out, his fingers spread, his crooked legs curved in a circle with blood spattered all about. But it’s just been a dream up to now.”

“There’s nothing else you can do?” K. asked with a smile.

“I don’t know of anything,” said the court usher. “And now it’s getting worse: up to this point he’s just carried her off for himself, but now, as I’ve been expecting for some time of course, he’s carrying her to the examining magistrate as well.”

“Does your wife bear no blame at all in the matter?” asked K.; he had to control himself as he asked this question, so strong was the jealousy he too now felt. “Of course,” said the court usher, “she bears the greatest blame of all. She threw herself at him. As for him, he chases all the women. In this building alone, he’s already been thrown out of five apartments he wormed his way into. Of course my wife is the most beautiful woman in the building, and I’m the only one who doesn’t dare protect him.”

“If that’s the way it is, then obviously nothing can be done,” said K. “Why not?” asked the court usher. “Someone needs to give the student, who’s a coward, a thorough flogging the next time he tries to touch my wife, so he’ll never try it again. But I can’t do it myself, and no one will do me the favor, because they all fear his power. Only a man like you could do it.”

“Yes,” said K., “but I should fear his influence all the more, not on the outcome of the trial perhaps, but at least on the preliminary investigation.”

“Yes, of course,” said the court usher, as if K.’s opinion tanto como puedo, grito sin alien-
to mi mensaje a través del resqui-
to de la puerta en el organismo
al que me han mandado, tan rápi-
do que apenas me entienden, y re-
greso también corriendo, pero el
estudiante se ha dado más prisa
que yo, además él tiene que reco-
rerr un camino más corto, sólo tie-
ne que bajar las escaleras. Si no
fuese tan dependiente hace tiem-
po que habría estampado al estu-
diante contra la pared. Aquí, jun-
to a la nota. Sueño con hacerlo
algun día. Le veo ahí, aplastado
en el suelo, los brazos extendidos,
las piernas retorcidas, las
rojas lleno de sangre. Pero hasta
ahora sólo ha sido un sueño.

―¿No hay otra posibili-
dad? —dijo K sonriendo.

―No la conozco —
dijo el ujier—. Y aho-
ra es aún peor, antes se la llevaba a su casa, pero ahora, como yo ya presagiaba, se la lleva al juez instructor.

―¿No tiene su mujer ninguna culpa? —preguntó K. Se vio obligado a realizar esa pregunta, tanto le espoleaban los celos.

―Pues claro —dijo el ujier—, ella es incluso la que tiene más culpa. Ella se lo ha buscado. En lo que a él respecta, corre detrás de todas las mujeres. Sólo en esta casa ya le han echado de cinco vivien-
das en las que se había desli-
zado. Por lo demás, mi mujer es la más bella de toda la casa, y yo no puedo defenderme.

―Si todo es como usted lo cuenta, entonces no hay otra posibilidad—dijo K.

―Por qué no? —preguntó el ujier—. Cada vez que el estudiante, que, por cierto, es un cobardé, tocase a mi mujer habría que pegarle tal paliza que no se atreviera a hacerlo más. Pero no puedo, y otros tampoco me hacen el favor, pues todos temen su poder. Sólo un hombre como usted podría hacerlo.

―¿Por qué yo? —preguntó K asombrado—. —A usted le han acusado, ¿no?

―Sí —dijo K—, pero entonces debería temer con más razón que una acción así pudiera influir en el desarrollo del proceso o, al menos, en la preinstrucción.

―Sí, es verdad —dijo el ujier, como si la opinión de K fuese tan cier-
were equally valid. "But as a rule we don't conduct pointless trials."
"I don't share your opinion," said K., "but that needn't keep me from dealing with the student when the occasion arises."
"I would be very grateful to you," said the court usher somewhat formally, not really seeming to believe that his greatest wish could ever be fulfilled.
"There may be other officials," K. went on, "perhaps all of them, who deserve the same treatment."
"Oh, yes," said the court usher, as if that were self-evident. Then he gazed at K. with a look of trust he hadn't shown before, in spite of all his friendliness, and added: "People are always rebelling."
But the conversation appeared to have taken a slightly uncomfortable turn in his opinion, for he broke it off by saying: "Now I have to report to the law court offices. Do you want to come along?"
"I don't have any business there," said K. "You could look around the offices. No one will bother you."
"Are they worth seeing?" asked K. hesitantly, but feeling a strong urge to go along. "Well," said the court usher, "I just thought you'd be interested.
"Fine," said K. at last, "I'll come along," and he ran up the stairs more quickly than the court usher.

As he entered he almost stumbled, for there was an extra step beyond the door. "They don't show much consideration for the public," he said. "They show no consideration of any kind," said the court usher, "just look at this waiting room."
It was a long hallway, with ill-fitting doors leading to the individual offices of the attic. Although there was no direct source of light, it was not completely dark, since some of the offices had been constructed with open wooden grillwork instead of solid wooden boards facing the hall, reaching to the ceiling to be sure, through which some light penetrated, and beyond which a few officials were visible writing at desks, or standing for the moment near the grille, looking out through the gaps at the people in the hallway. There were very few people in the hallway, probably because it was Sunday. They made a very modest impression.

---

As a punto de caerse nada más entrar, pues había un escalón detrás de la puerta. —No tienen mucha consideración con el público —dijo él.
—No tienen consideración alguna —dijo el ujier —, si no mire aquí sala de espera.
Era un largo corredor en el que había puertas toscamente labradas que conducían a los distintos departamentos del desván. Aunque no había ninguna entrada directa de luz, no estaba completamente oscuro, pues algunos departamentos no estaban separados del corredor por una pared, sino por unas rejas de madera que llegaban hasta el techo, a través de las cuales penetraba algo de luz y se podía ver cómo algunos funcionarios escribían o simplemente permanecían en las rejas observando a la gente que esperaba en el corredor. Había poca gente esperando, probablemente porque era domingo. Daban una pobre impresión.
Spaced out at nearly regular intervals, they sat in two rows on long wooden benches situated on both sides of the hallway. All of them were carelessly dressed, in spite of the fact that most, to judge by their expression, their posture, the style of their beards, and numerous other small details difficult to pin down, belonged to the upper classes. Since no coat-hooks were available, they had placed their hats beneath the bench, probably following each other's lead. As those sitting closest to the door caught sight of K. and the court usher, they rose in greeting; when those behind them noticed, they thought they had to do so as well, so that all of them rose as the two men passed by. They never straightened entirely; backs bowed and knees bent, they stood like beggars in the street. K. waited for the court usher, who was a few steps behind him, and said: “How humbled they must be.” “Yes,” said the court usher, “they’re defendants, everyone you see is a defendant.” “Really?” said K. “Then they’re my colleagues.” And he turned to the closest one, a tall slim man whose hair was already turning gray. “What is it you’re waiting for?” K. asked politely. The unexpected question, however, confused the man, which was even more embarrassing since he was obviously a man of the world, who would certainly have retained his self-confidence elsewhere and did not easily relinquish the superiority he had attained over so many others. But here he couldn’t even answer such a simple question and looked at the others as if it were their duty to come to his aid, and as if no one could expect an answer from him if such aid were not forthcoming. Then the court usher stepped forward and said, trying to calm the man and lend him encouragement: “The gentleman is only asking what you’re waiting for. Go ahead and answer.” The no doubt familiar voice of the court usher was more effective: “I’m waiting—” he began, and hesitated. He had apparently chosen this opening in order to answer the question exactly as it was posed, but could not think how to go on now. A few among those waiting had drawn near and gathered about them; the court usher said to them:
“Get back, get back, keep the hallway clear.” They retreated somewhat, but did not return to their original places. In the meantime the man who had been questioned had pulled himself together and even managed a faint smile as he answered: “A month ago I submitted several petitions to hear evidence in my case, and I’m waiting for them to be acted upon.”

“You seem to be taking great pains,” said K. “Yes,” said the man, “after all, it’s my case.”

“Not everyone shares your view,” said K., “for example I’m a defendant too, but I’ll be blessed if I’ve submitted a petition to hear evidence or done anything at all of that sort. Do you really think it’s necessary?”

“I’m not certain,” said the man, once more completely unsure of himself; he apparently thought K. was making fun of him, and would have evidently preferred to repeat his earlier answer in full, for fear of making some new mistake, but in the face of K.’s impatient gaze he simply said: “For my part, I’ve submitted petitions to hear evidence.”

“You probably don’t think I’m really a defendant,” K. said. “Oh, yes, certainly,” said the man, and stepped aside slightly, but anxiety, not belief, lay in his reply. “So you don’t believe me?” asked K., seizing the man by the arm, unconsciously provoked by his humbleness, as if he wished to compel him to believe. He had no intention of hurting him, however, and squeezed quite gently, but even so the man screamed as if K. had applied a pair of red-hot pincers, and not merely two fingers. With this ridiculous outcry K. finally had enough of the man; if he didn’t believe he was a defendant, so much the better; perhaps he even took him for a judge. And now, in parting, he indeed squeezed him harder, pushed him back down onto the bench, and walked on.

“Most defendants are so sensitive,” said the court usher. Behind them almost all those who were waiting gathered around the man, who had already stopped screaming, apparently quizzing him closely about the incident. K. was now approached by a guard, who could be recognized chiefly by a saber whose scabbard, to judge by its color, was made of ––Vamos, vamos, dejen el corredor libre.

—No todos piensan como usted ---dijo K. ---No se cree que yo sea un acusado ---dijo el hombre.--. Yo, por ejemplo, también soy un acusado, pero, por más que desee una absolución, no he presentado una solicitud de prueba ni he emprendido nada similar. ¿Cree usted que eso es necesario?

—En lo que a mí concierne, he presentado solicitudes de prueba. ---Usted no se cree que yo sea un acusado ---dijo K.

—Oh, por favor, claro que sí ---dijo el hombre, y se echó a un lado, pero en la respuesta no había convicción, sino miedo.

—¿Entonces no me cree? ---preguntó K. ---Y le cogió del brazo, impulsado inconscientemente por la actitud humillada del hombre, como si quisiera obligarle a que le creyese. Aunque no quería causarle daño alguno, en cuanto le tocó ligeramente, el hombre gritó como si K en vez de con dos dedos le hubiese agarrado con unas tenazas ardiendo. Ese grito ridículo terminó por hartar a K. Si no se creía que era un acusado, mucho mejor. Quizá le tomaba por un juez. Y para despedirse lo cogió con más fuerza, lo empujó hacia el banco y siguió adelante.

—La mayoría de los acusados son muy sensibles ---dijo el usher. Detrás de ellos, todos los que habían estado esperando se arremolinaron alrededor del hombre, que ya había dejado de gritar, y parecían preguntarle detalladamente sobre el incidente. Al encuentro de K vino ahora un vigilante; al que identificó por el sable, cuya vaina, al menos por el color, parecía he-
aluminum. K. was amazed by this and even reached out toward it. The guard, who had been drawn by the screams, asked what had happened. The court usher attempted to pacify him with a few words, but the guard said he’d have to look into it himself, saluted and hurried on, taking extremely rapid but quite short steps, probably hindered by gout.

K. soon ceased worrying about him and the people in the hallway, particularly since he saw, about halfway down the hall, a turn to the right through an opening with no door. He checked with the court usher whether it was the right way, the court usher nodded, and K. took the turn. It annoyed him that he always had to walk a pace or two ahead of the court usher, since, given the location, it might appear that he was an arrested man under escort. So he slowed up several times for the court usher, who, however, kept hanging back. Finally, to put an end to his discomfort, K. said:

“Well, I’ve seen what things look like here, and I’m ready to leave.”

“You haven’t seen everything yet,” said the court usher, completely without guile.

“I don’t want to see everything,” said K., who was in fact feeling quite tired, “I want to leave, where’s the exit?”

“You haven’t seen everything yet,” said the court usher, completely without guile.

“I don’t want to see everything,” said K., who was in fact feeling quite tired, “I want to leave, where’s the exit?” “Surely you’re not lost already,” asked the court usher in amazement, “you go to the corner there, turn right and go straight down the hall to the door.”

“Come with me,” said K. “Show me the way; I’ll miss it, there are so many ways here.” “It’s the only way,” said the court usher, reproachfully now, “I can’t go back with you; I have to deliver my report, and I’ve already lost a good deal of time because of you.”

“Come with me,” K. repeated more sharply, as if he had finally caught the court usher in a lie. “Don’t shout so,” whispered the court usher, “there are offices all around here. If you don’t want to go back by yourself, then come along with me a ways, or wait here until I’ve delivered my report, then I’ll gladly go back with you.” “No, no,” said K., “I won’t wait and you have to go with me now.” K. hadn’t even looked...
around the room he was in; not until one of the many wooden doors surrounding him opened did he glance over. A young woman, no doubt drawn by K.’s loud voice, stepped in and asked: “May I help you, sir?” Behind her in the distance a man could be seen approaching in the semidarkness. K. looked at the court usher. After all, he’d said that no one would pay any attention to K., and now here came two people already; it wouldn’t take much and the official bureaucracy would notice him and demand an explanation for his presence. The only reasonable and acceptable one was that he was a defendant trying to discover the date of his next hearing, but that was precisely the explanation he didn’t wish to give, particularly since it wasn’t true, for he had come out of pure curiosity or, even less acceptable as an explanation, out of a desire to confirm that the interior of this judicial system was just as repugnant as its exterior. And it seemed that he had been right in that assumption; he had no wish to intrude any further, he was inhibited enough by what he had already seen, and he was certainly in no mood now to confront some high official who might appear from behind any door; he wanted to leave, with the court usher or alone if need be.

But the way he was silently standing there must have been striking, and the young woman and the court usher were actually looking at him as if they thought he was about to undergo some profound metamorphosis at any moment, one they didn’t want to miss. And in the doorway stood the man K. had noticed in the background earlier, holding on tightly to the lintel of the low door and rocking back and forth slightly on the tips of his toes, like an impatient spectator. It was the young woman, however, who first realized that K.’s behavior was the result of a slight indisposition; she brought him a chair and asked: “Wouldn’t you like to sit down?” K. sat down immediately and propped his elbows on the arms of the chair for better support. “You’re a little dizzy, aren’t you?” she asked him.

para comprobar dónde se hallaba, sólo ahora, **cuando** una de las muchachas puertas____ que le rodeaban se abrió, miró a su alrededor. Una muchacha, que había salido al oír el tono elevado de K, le preguntó:
—¿Qué desea el señor?

Detrás, en la lejanía, se podía ver en la semioscuridad a un hombre que se aproximaba. K miró al ujier. Éste había dicho que nadie se fijaría en K y ahora venían dos personas, poco más se necesitaba para que todos los funcionarios se fijasen en él y pidieran una explicación de su presencia. La única explicación comprensible y aceptable era hacer valer su condición de **acusado**; podía aducir que quería conocer la fecha de su próximo interrogatorio, pero ésa era precisamente la explicación que no quería dar, sobre todo porque no era toda la verdad, pues sólo había venido por pura curiosidad o, lo que era imposible de aducir como explicación, para comprobar que el interior de esa justicia era tan repugnante como el exterior. Y parecía que con esa suposición tenía razón, no quería adentrarse más, ya se había **deprimido** lo suficientemente con lo que había visto. Ahora no estaba en condiciones de encontrarse con un funcionario superior, como el que podía surgir detrás cada puerta; quería irse y, además, con el ujier, o solo si no había gira manera.

**Pero quedarse allí mudo sería llamativo y,** en realidad, la muchacha y el ujier ya le miraban cómo si se estuviera produciendo en él una extraña metamorfosis que no querían perderse de ningún modo. Y en la puerta estaba el hombre que K había visto en la lejanía: se mantenía aferrado a la parte de arriba del umbral y se balanceaba ligeramente sobre las puntas de los pies, como un espectador impaciente. La muchacha, sin embargo, fue la primera en reconocer que el comportamiento de K tenía como causa un ligero malestar, así que trajo una silla y le preguntó:
—¿No quiere usted sentarse?

K se **sentó en seguida y apoyó** los codos en los brazos de la silla para mantener mejor el equilibrio.

—**Está un poco mareado,** ¿verdad? —le preguntó.
Her face was now quite near; it bore the severe expression some young women have precisely in the bloom of youth. “Don’t worry,” she said, “there’s nothing unusual about that here, almost everyone has an attack like this the first time. You are here for the first time? Well, you see then, it’s nothing at all unusual. The sun beats down on the attic beams and the hot wood makes the air terribly thick and stifling. That’s why this isn’t such a good location for the offices, in spite of the many other advantages it offers. But as far as the air is concerned, on days when the traffic of involved parties is heavy you can hardly breathe, and that’s almost daily. Then if you take into consideration that a great deal of wash is hung out here to dry as well—the tenants can’t be entirely forbidden from doing so—it will come as no surprise that you feel a little sick. But one gets quite used to the air. When you come here the second or third time, you’ll hardly notice the stuffiness at all. Do you feel better yet?” K. didn’t reply; he was too embarrassed that this sudden weakness had placed him at these people’s mercy; moreover, now that he knew the cause of his nausea he didn’t feel better, but instead a little worse. The young woman noticed this right away, picked up a hooked pole leaning against the wall and, to give K. a little fresh air, pushed open a small hatch directly above K. that led outside. But so much soot fell in that the young woman had to close the hatch again immediately and wipe the soot from K.’s hands with her handkerchief, since K. was too tired to do it himself. He would gladly have remained sitting there quietly until he had gathered the strength to leave, and the less attention they paid to him, the sooner that would happen. But now the young woman added: “You can’t stay here, we’re interrupting the flow of traffic” —K. looked around to see what traffic he could possibly be interrupting—“if you want, I’ll take you to the infirmary.” “Help me please,” she said to the man in the doorway, who approached at once. But K. didn’t want to go to the infirmary; that was precisely what he wanted to avoid, being led farther on, for the

Su rostro estaba ahora cerca del suyo, mostraba la expresión severa que tienen algunas mujeres en lo mejor de su juventud.

—No se preocupe—dijo ella—, aquí no es nada extraordinario, casi todos padecen un ataque similar cuando vienen por primera vez. ¿Usted viene por primera vez? Bien, no es nada extraordinario, ya le digo. El sol cae sobre el tejado y la madera caliente provoca este aire tan enrecedido. El lugar no es el más adecuado para instalar despachos, por más ventajas que ofrezca en otros sentidos. Pero en lo que concierne al aire, los días en que hay mucha gente, y eso ocurre prácticamente todos los días, se torna casi irrespirable. Si considera, además, que aquí se cuelga ropa para que se seque —es algo que no se puede prohibir a los inquilinos—, entonces no se sorprenderá de haber sufrido un ligero mateo. Pero uno llega a acostumbrarse muy bien a este aire. Si viene por segunda o tercera vez, apenas notará este ambiente opresivo. ¿Se siente ya mejor?

K no respondió, le parecía algo lamentable depender de aquellas personas a causa de esa debilidad repentina; por añadidura, al conocer los motivos de su mareo, no se sintió mejor, sino un poco peor. La muchacha lo notó en seguida y, para refrescar a K., asió un gancho que colgaba de la pared y abrió un pequeño tragaluz, situado precisamente encima de K. Pero cayó tanto hollín que la joven tuvo que cerrarlo de inmediato y limpiar la mano de K con un pañuelo, pues K estaba demasiado cansado como para ocuparse de sí mismo. Le habría gustado permanecer allí sentado hasta que hubiera recuperado las fuerzas suficientes para irse, y eso ocurriría antes si no se ocupaban de él. Pero en ese momento añadió la muchacha:

—Aquí no puede quedarse, interrumpimos el paso.

K preguntó con la mirada a quién interrumpían el paso. —Le llevaré, si lo desea, al botiquín.

—Ayúdeme, por favor—le dijo ella al hombre de la puerta, que ya se había acercado. Pero K no quería que lo llevaran al botiquín, precisamente eso era lo que quería evitar, que lo siguieran adentrando en las
farther he went, the worse things would get. So he said, “I can walk now,” and stood up shakily, spoiled by the comfort of sitting. But then he couldn’t hold himself upright. “I can’t do it,” he said, shaking his head, and sat down again with a sigh. He remembered the court usher, who could easily lead him out in spite of everything, but he appeared to be long gone; K. peered between the young woman and the man, who were standing in front of him, but couldn’t find the court usher.

“I believe,” said the man, who was elegantly dressed, with a striking gray waistcoat that ended in two sharply tailored points, “the gentleman’s illness can be traced to the air in here, so it would be best, and please him most, if we simply skipped the infirmary and led him out of the law offices.”

“That’s it,” K. cried out, so overjoyed he barely let the man finish his sentence, “I’m sure I’ll feel better soon, I’m not that weak, I just need a little support under the arms, I won’t be much trouble, it’s not very far, just take me to the door, I’ll sit on the steps a bit and be fine soon, I never have attacks like this, it surprised me too. After all, I’m an official myself and I’m used to office air, but it does seem really bad here, you say so yourself. Would you be so kind as to help me a little, I’m dizzy, and I feel sick when I stand on my own.” And he lifted his shoulders to make it easier for the others to grab him under the arms.

But the man didn’t follow his suggestion; instead he kept his hands calmly in his pockets and laughed aloud. “You see,” he said to the young woman, “I hit the nail on the head. It’s only here that the gentleman feels unwell, not in general.”

The young woman smiled too, but she tapped the man lightly on the arm with her fingertips, as if he’d carried a joke with K. too far. “Oh, don’t worry,” the man said, still laughing, “of course I’ll show the gentleman out.”

“All right then,” said the young woman, inclining her charming head for a moment.

oficinas; cuanto más avanzase, peor.
—Ya puedo irme —dijo por esta razón, y se levantó temblando, acostumbrado a la cómoda silla. Pero no pudo mantenerse de pie.
—No, no puedo —dijo moviendo la cabeza y volvió a sentarse con un suspiro. Se acordó del ujier, que a pesar de todo le podría conducir fácilmente hacia la salida, pero parecía haberse ido hace tiempo. K atisbó entre la joven y el hombre, que permanecían de pie ante él, pero no pudo encontrar al ujier.

—Creo —dijo el hombre, que vestía elegantemente: sobre todo llamaba la atención un chaleco gris que terminaba en dos largas puntas—, creo que la indisposición del señor se debe a la atmósfera de estas estancias; sería lo mejor, y probablemente lo que él preferiría, que no se le llevase al botiquín, sino fuera de las oficinas.

—Así es —exclamó K, que de la alegría había interrumpido al hombre—, me sentiré mucho mejor, tampoco estoy tan débil, sólo necesito un poco de apoyo, no les caerán muchas molestias, el camino no es largo, conduzcanme hasta la puerta, me sentaré un rato en los escalones y me recuperaré, nunca he padecido este tipo de mareos, yo mismo estoy sorprendido. También soy funcionario y estoy acostumbrado al aire de las oficinas, pero aquí es muy malo, usted mismo lo ha dicho. ¿Tendrían la amabilidad de acompañarme un trecho? Estoy algo mareado y me pondré peor si me levanto sin ayuda—. Levantó los hombros para facilitarles que le cogieran bajo los brazos.

Pero el hombre no siguió sus indicaciones, sino que se mantuvo tranquilo, con las manos en los bolsillos y rió en voz alta.

—Ve le dijo a la muchacha—, he acertado. Al señor no le sentará aquí.

La muchacha rió también y dio un golpecito con la punta del dedo en el brazo del hombre, como si se hubiese permitido una broma pesada con K.

—Pero, ¿qué piensa? —dijo el hombre entre risas—. Yo mismo conduciré al señor hasta la salida.

—Entonces está bien —dijo la muchacha inclinando un instante su bonita cabeza—.
“Don’t attach too much meaning to his laughter,” the young woman said to K., who had tapped into dejection again, staring vacantly, and didn’t seem in need of any explanation, “this gentleman—may I introduce you?” (the man gave his permission with a wave of his hand) “—this gentleman is our information officer. He provides waiting parties with any information they may need, and since our judicial system is not very well known among the general population, a great deal of information is requested. He has an answer for every question; you can try him out if you feel like it. But that’s not his only asset, a second is his elegant dress. We—the staff that is—decided that the information officer, who’s always the first person the parties meet and the one they deal with most often, should be dressed elegantly, to create a respectable first impression. The rest of us, sadly enough, are, as you can see in my own case, poorly dressed, in old-fashioned clothes; it doesn’t make much sense to spend anything on clothing, since we’re almost always in the offices, and even sleep here. But as I said, in the information officer’s case we thought fancy clothes were necessary. But since we couldn’t get them from the administration, which is funny about that sort of thing, we took up a collection—the parties pitched in too—and we bought him this handsome suit and a few others as well. So everything was set to make a good impression, but he ruins it by the way he laughs, which startles people.”

“So it does,” the man said with an annoyed air, “but I don’t understand, Fräulein, why you’re telling this gentleman all our intimate secrets, or more accurately, forcing them upon him, since he has no interest in knowing them. Just look at him sitting there, obviously immersed in his own affairs.” K. didn’t even feel like objecting; the young woman probably meant well; perhaps she was trying to take his mind off things, or give him a chance to pull himself together, but she’d chosen the wrong method.

“I had to explain why you laughed,” the young woman said. “After all, it was insulting.” “I think he’d forgive much worse insults if I would just show him the way out.”

No le dé mucha importancia a la risa—dijo la joven a K., que se había vuelto a entristecer, miraba fijamente ante sí y no parecía necesitar ninguna explicación—; este señor, ¿puedo presentarle? —el hombre dio su permiso con un gesto—, este señor es el informante. Él da a las partes que esperan toda la información que necesitan y, como nuestra justicia no es muy conocida entre la población, se reclama mucha información. Conoce la respuesta a todas las preguntas. Si alguna tiene ganas, puede probar. Pero no sólo posee ese mérito, otra de sus virtudes es su elegante forma de vestir. Nosotros, es decir los funcionarios, opinamos que el informante, como es el primero en tratar con las partes, debe vestir con elegancia para dar una impresión digna. Los demás, como puede comprobar conmigo, nos vestimos muy mal y pasados de moda. No tiene sentido gastar mucho en vestir, ya que estamos casi todo el tiempo en las oficinas, incluso dormimos aquí. Pero como he dicho, creemos que el informante tiene que vestir bien. Como no había dinero disponible para ropa elegante en nuestra administración, que en este sentido es algo peculiar, hicimos una colecta—en la que también participaron los acusados—y le compramos ese bonito traje y otros. Ahora está preparado para dar una buena impresión, pero lo estropea todo con su risa y asusta a la gente.

—Así es —dijo el hombre con tono burlón—, pero no entiendo, señorita, por qué le cuenta a este señor todas nuestras intimidades, o mejor, le obliga a oírlas, pues no creo que tenga ganas de conocerlas. Mire si no cómo permanece ahí sentado ocupado en sus propios asuntos.

No tenía ganas de contradecirle. La intención de la muchacha podía ser buena, tal vez pretendía distraerle para darle la posibilidad de recuperarse, pero el medio elegido era inadecuado.

—Quería aclararle el motivo de su risa—dijo la muchacha—, era insultante. —Creo que me perdonaría peores ofensas a cambio de que le condujera a la salida.
K. said nothing, he didn’t even look up; he put up with the fact that the two were discussing him like a case, indeed, he preferred it that way. But suddenly he felt the hand of the information officer on one arm and the hand of the young woman on the other.

“Up with you now, you feeble fellow,” said the information officer. “Thank you both very much,” said K. pleasantly surprised, rose slowly, and guided the others’ hands to the places where he most needed their support.

“It seems like I’m overly concerned to place the information officer in a good light,” the young woman said softly in K.’s ear, as they approached the hallway, “but believe me, what I say is true. He’s not hardhearted. It’s not his duty to accompany sick parties out and yet he does, as you can see. Perhaps none of us is hardhearted, perhaps we’d all like to help, but as court officials it can easily appear that we’re hard-hearted and don’t want to help anyone. That really bothers me.”

“Wouldn’t you like to sit here for a bit?” asked the information officer; they were already in the hallway, directly in front of the defendant K. had spoken to earlier. K. was almost ashamed to face him: earlier he had stood so erect before him, while now two people had to hold him up, the information officer balanced his hat on his outspread fingers, and his tousled hair fell across his sweat-covered brow. But the defendant seemed to notice none of this; he stood humbly before the information officer, who stared right past him, and merely attempted to excuse his presence.

“I realize there can’t be any response to my petitions today,” he said. “But I came anyway; I thought I could at least wait here, since it’s Sunday, and I have plenty of time and won’t disturb anyone.”

“You don’t have to be so apologetic about it,” said the information officer, “your concern is quite praiseworthy; of course you’re taking up space unnecessarily, but as long as it doesn’t begin to annoy me, I certainly won’t hinder you from following the course of your affair in detail. Having seen others who scandalously neglect their duty, one learns to be patient with people like you. You may be
seated." “He really knows how to talk to the parties,” whispered the young woman. K. nodded, but immediately flared up as the information officer asked him again: “Wouldn’t you like to sit down here?” “No,” said K., “I don’t want to rest.” He had said it as firmly as he could, but in reality it would have done him a great deal of good to sit down; he felt seasick. He thought he was on a ship, rolling in heavy seas. It seemed to him that the waters were pounding against the wooden walls, there was a roar from the depths of the hallway like the sound of breaking waves, the hallway seemed to pitch and roll, lifting and lowering the waiting clients on both sides. That made the calm demeanor of the young woman and man who led him even more incomprehensible. He was at their mercy; if they let go of him, he would fall like a plank. Sharp glances shot back and forth from their small eyes; K. felt their steady tread without matching it, for he was practically carried along from step to step. He realized at last that they were speaking to him, but he couldn’t understand them; he heard only the noise that filled everything, through which a steady, high-pitched sound like a siren seemed to emerge. “Louder,” he whispered with bowed head, and was ashamed, for he knew that they had spoken loudly enough, even though he hadn’t understood. Then finally, as if the wall had split open before him, a draft of fresh air reached him, and he heard beside him: “First he wants to leave, then you can tell him a hundred times that this is the exit and he doesn’t move.” K. saw that he was standing at the outer door, which the young woman had opened. Instantly, all his strength seemed to return; to get a foretaste of freedom he stepped down immediately onto the first step and from there took leave of his escorts, who bowed to him. “Thank you very much,” he said again, shaking hands with both of them repeatedly, stopping only when he thought he noticed that they were unable to bear the comparatively fresh air from the stairway, accustomed as they were to the air in the offices of the court. They could hardly reply, and the young woman might have fallen had K. not shut the door

---

Cómo sabe hablar con los acusados. -- susurró la muchacha a K. Éste asintió, pero se sobresaltó cuando el informante le preguntó de nuevo:

—¿No quiere sentarse aquí?
—No —dijo K. — no quiero descansar.

Lo dijo con decisión, pero en realidad le habría venido muy bien sentarse. Se sentía mareado, como si estuviera en un barco en plena tormenta. Le parecía oír cómo el agua del mar golpeaba las paredes de madera, como si del fondo del corredor llegase el bramido de una catarata, y luego sintió que el corredor se balanceaba y le dio la impresión de que los acusados subían y bajaban. La tranquilidad de la muchacha y del hombre que le acompañaban le parecía, en esa situación, completamente incomprensible. Dependía de ellos: si le dejaban, caería al suelo como una tabla. Lanzaban miradas penetrantes a un lado y a otro, K. sentía sus pasos regulares, pero no los podía imitar, pues prácticamente le llevaban en vilo. Finalmente, notó que le hablaban, pero no entendía lo que decían, sólo escuchaba un ruido que lo abarcaba todo, a través del cual se podía distinguir lo que podría ser el sonido de una sirena.

—Hablen más alto —musitó con la cabeza inclinada, aunque sabía que habían hablado con voz lo suficientemente alta.

De repente, como si se hubiese derrumbado la pared ante él, sintió una corriente de aire fresco y oyó que decían a su lado:

—Al principio quería salir, luego se le repite mil veces que ésta es la salida y no se mueve.

K. notó que se hallaba en la puerta de salida, que la muchacha acababa de abrir. Le pareció como si le regresaran todas las fuerzas de una vez. Para sentir un anticipo de la libertad, bajó uno de los escalones y se despidió desde allí de sus acompañantes, que en ese instante se inclinaban sobre él.

—Muchas gracias —repitió, estrechó las manos de ambos y las dejó cuando creyó ver que ellos, acostumbrados al aire de las oficinas, difícilmente soportaban el aire fresco que subía por la escalera. Apenas pudieron responder, y la muchacha tal vez se hubiera caído si K. no hubiese cerrado...
as quickly as possible. K. stood quietly for a moment, smoothed his hair into place with the help of a pocket mirror, picked up his hat, which was lying on the landing below—the information officer must have tossed it there—and then raced down the steps with such long, energetic leaps that he was almost frightened by the sudden change. His normally sound constitution had never provided him with such surprises before. Was his body going to rebel and offer him a new trial, since he was handling the old one so easily? He didn't entirely rule out the thought of consulting a doctor at the first opportunity; in any case—and here he could advise himself—he would spend his Sunday mornings more profitably than this from now on.

A few evenings later, as K., passed through the corridor that led from his office to the main staircase—he was almost the last to leave that night, only two assistants in shipping were still at work in the small circle of light from a single bulb—he heard the sound of groans behind a door that he had always assumed led to a mere junk room, though he had never seen it himself. He stopped in amazement and listened again to see if he might not be mistaken—it was quiet for a little while, but then the groans came again. At first, feeling he might need a witness, he was about to call one of the assistants, but then he was seized by such uncontrollable curiosity that he practically tore the door open. It was, as he had suspected, a junk room. Old obsolete printed forms and overturned empty ceramic ink bottles lay beyond the threshold. In the little room itself, however, stood three men, stooping beneath the low ceiling. A candle stuck on a shelf provided light. “What’s going on here?” K. blurted out in his excitement, but

la puerta a toda prisa. K. permaneció un momento en silencio, se atuvo el pelo con ayuda de un espejo de bolsillo, se puso el sombrero, que había dejado en el siguiente escalón—el informante lo había arrojado al suelo—and bajó las escaleras tan fresco y con pasos tan largos que casi tuvo miedo del cambio repentino que acababa de experimentar. Su estado de salud, por otro lado siempre bastante bueno, jamás le había procurado una sorpresa semejante. ¿Acaso pretendía su cuerpo hacer una revolución e incitarle un nuevo proceso, ya que soportaba el otro con tanto esfuerzo? No descartó del todo la idea de ver a un médico, pero lo que si se afianzó en su mente fue el firme propósito—en esto él mismo se podía aconsejar—de emplear mejor las mañanas de los domingos.

THE FLOGGER

Cuando K, una de las noches siguientes, pasó por el pasillo que separaba su despacho de las escaleras—esta vez se iba a casa uno de los últimos, sólo en el departamento de expedición quedaban dos empleados en el pequeño radio luminoso de una bombilla—, oyó detrás de una puerta, que siempre había creído que daba a un trastero, aunque nunca lo había constatado con sus propios ojos, una serie de quejidos. Se detuvo asombrado y escuchó detenidamente para comprobar si se había equivocado. Durante un rato todo quedó en silencio, pero los suspiros comenzaron de nuevo. Al principio pensó en traer a uno de los empleados—tal vez necesitara un testigo—, pero le invadió una curiosidad tan indomable que él mismo abrió la puerta. Se trataba, como había supuesto, de un trastero. Detrás del umbral se acumulaban formularios inservibles y frascos de tinta vacíos. Pero también había tres hombres inclinados en un espacio de escasa altura. Una vela situada en un estante les iluminaba.

—¿Qué hacen aquí? —preguntó K, precipitándose por la excitación,
not loudly. One man, who was apparently in charge of the others and drew K.’s attention first, was got up in some sort of dark leather garment that left his neck and upper chest, as well as his entire arms, bare. He didn’t reply. But the other two cried out: “Sir! We’re to be flogged because you complained about us to the examining magistrate.” And only then did K. recognize that it was indeed the guards Franz and Willem, and that the third man held a rod in his hand to flog them with. “Well now,” said K. staring at them, “I didn’t complain, I just told them what went on in my lodgings. And your behavior wasn’t exactly impeccable.” “Sir,” said Willem, while Franz apparently tried to seek safety behind him from the third man, “if you knew how poorly we’re paid, you’d judge us more kindly. I have a family to feed and Franz here wants to get married, you try to make money however you can, just working isn’t enough, no matter how hard you try. I was tempted by your fine undergarments, guards are forbidden to act that way of course, it was wrong, but it’s a tradition that the undergarments belong to the guards, it’s always been that way, believe me; and you can see why, what difference do such things make to a person unlucky enough to be arrested. If he makes it public, of course, then punishment must follow.” “I didn’t know any of that, and I certainly didn’t demand your punishment, it was a matter of principle.” “Franz,” Willem turned to the other guard, “didn’t I tell you the gentleman didn’t demand our punishment? Now, as you hear, he didn’t even realize we’d have to be punished.” “Don’t be swayed by that sort of talk,” the third man said to K., “their punishment is as just as it is inevitable.” “Don’t listen to him,” said Willem, interrupting himself only to lift a hand, across which he had received a blow of the rod, quickly to his mouth, “we’re only being punished because you reported us. Otherwise nothing would have happened, even if they had found out what we had done. Do you call that justice? Both of us have proved ourselves as guards over a long period of pero no en voz alta. Uno de los hombres, que parecía dominar a los otros y que fue el primero que atrae su atención, estaba embutido en una suerte de traje oscuro, que dejaba al aire el cuello hasta el pecho y todo el brazo. No respondió. Pero los otros dos gritaron:

—¡Señor! Nos tienen que azotar porque te has quejado de nosotros ante el juez instructor.

Y ahora comprobó K que, en efecto, se trataba de los vigilantes Franz y Willem. El tercer sostenia un látigo para azotarlos.

—Bueno —dijo K, y los miró fijamente—, no me he quejado, sólo he dicho lo que ocurrió en mi habitación. Y desde luego no os compor-tasteis de una manera irreprochable.

—Señor —dijo Willem, mientras Franz intentaba protegerse del tercero detrás de él—, si usted supiera lo mal que nos pagan, nos juzgaría mejor. Yo tengo que alimentar a una familia y Franz quiere casarse; uno intenta ganar dinero como puede, sólo con el trabajo no es posible, ni siquiera con el más fatigoso: a mí me tentó su fina ropa blanca. Por supuesto que está prohibido que los vigilantes actúen así, es injusto, pero es tradición que la ropa blanca pertenezca a los vigilantes, así ha sido siempre, créame. Además, es muy comprensible, pues ¿qué significan esas cosas para una persona tan desgraciada como para ser detenida? No obstante, si el detenido habla de ello públicamente, la consecuencia es el castigo.

—No sabía lo que me estás diciendo. Tampoco he reclamado ningún castigo para vosotros; para mí es una cuestión de principios.

—Franz —se dirigió Willem al otro vigilante—, ¿no te dije que el señor no había reclama-do que nos castigasen? Ya has oído que ni siquiera sabía que nos tenían que castigar.

—No te dejes convencer por esos discursos —dijo el tercero a K—, el castigo es tan justo como inevitable.

—No lo escuches —dijo Willem, y se calló sólo para llevar rápidamente la mano, que acababa de recibir un azote, a la boca—, nos casti-gan sólo porque tú nos has denuncia-do, en otro caso no nos hubiera pasado nada, incluso si se hubiera sabido lo que habíamos hecho. ¿Se puede llamar a esto justicia? Nosotros dos, y sobre todo yo, somos vigilantes desde hace mucho
time, especially me-you have to admit we did a good job from the authorities’ point of view—we had prospects for advancement and would soon have been floggers ourselves, like him, who was simply fortunate enough never to be reported by anyone, for such reports are really quite rare. And now everything is lost, sir, our careers are finished, we’ll have to work at a much lower level than a guard, and undergo this terribly painful flogging as well.”

“Can a rod cause that much pain?” K. asked, and examined the rod, which the flogger swung before him.

“We have to strip completely,” said Willem.

“Oh, I see,” said K., looking more closely at the flogger, who had a sailor’s tan and a savage, ruddy face.

“Is there any possibility of sparing these two a flogging?” he asked him.

“No,” said the flogger, and shook his head with a smile.

“Strip,” he ordered the guards. And to K. he said: “You mustn’t believe everything they say. They’re already a bit weak in the head because they’re so afraid of the flogging. What this one was saying, for example”—he pointed at Willem—“about his prospective career is totally ridiculous. Look how overweight he is—the first blows of the rod will be lost in fat. —Do you know how he got so fat? He’s in the habit of eating the breakfast of anyone who’s arrested. Didn’t he eat yours as well? Well, what did I tell you? —No! —dijo el azotador, sacudiendo la cabeza sonriente—. Quítatela la ropa—ordenó a los vigilantes y, a continuación, le dijo a K:

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No! —dijo el azotador, sacudiendo la cabeza sonriente. —Qui- taos la ropa—ordenó a los vigilantes y, a continuación, le dijo a K: —No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.

—No tienes que creer todo lo que te dicen. Su mente se ha debilitado por el miedo a los azotes. Lo que éste —y señaló a Willem— te ha contado sobre su posible carrera es completamente ridículo. Mira lo gordo que está, los primeros azotes se perderán en la grasa. ¿Sabes por qué se ha puesto tan gordo? —le preguntó K.
I wouldn't be trying to buy them off. I could simply shut the door, close my eyes and ears, and head home. But I'm not doing that, instead I'm serious about getting them off; if I'd suspected they'd be punished, or even known they faced possible punishment, I would never have mentioned their names. Because I don't even consider them guilty; it's the organization that's guilty, it's the high officials who are guilty."

"That's right," cried the guards, and immediately received a blow across their now bare backs. "If you had a high judge here beneath your rod," said K., pressing down the rod, which was about to rise again as he spoke, "I really wouldn't stop you from flailing away; on the contrary, I'd pay you extra, to strengthen you in your good work."

"I believe what you say," said the flogger, "but I can't be bribed. I've been hired to flog, and flog I will."

The guard Franz, who had kept somewhat in the background up to that point, perhaps in hope of a favorable outcome based on K.'s intervention, now stepped to the door dressed only in his trousers, fell to his knees, and clinging to K.'s arm whispered: "If you can't manage to get us both off, please try to at least save me. Willem is older than me, less sensitive in every way, and he already received a minor flogging once a few years ago, but I've never been disgraced that way, and was only following the lead of Willem, my mentor in all things good and bad. My poor bride is waiting for me below in front of the bank; I'm so terribly ashamed." He dried his tearstained face on K.'s jacket.

"I'm not waiting any longer," said the flogger, seized the rod with both hands, and laid into Franz, while Willem rumiaba in a corner and peeked over without daring to turn his head. The scream that Franz expelled was steady and unchanging, scarcely human, as if it came from some tortured instrument; the whole corridor rang with it, the entire building would hear. "Don't scream," cried K., unable to stop himself, and as he looked intently in the direction from which the assistants would be...
coming, he pushed Franz, not hard, but hard enough that the witless man fell to the floor and clawed convulsively about with his hands; he didn’t escape the blows, however, the rod found him on the floor as well, as he writhed beneath it, its tip swung up and down steadily. And in the distance an assistant had already appeared, and a few steps behind him a second one. K. slammed the door quickly, stepped up to a nearby courtyard window, and opened it. The screams had ceased completely. To keep the assistants from coming nearer, he called out: “It’s me.”

“Good evening, sir,” the call came back. “Has anything happened?” “No, no,” K. replied, “it’s just a dog howling in the courtyard.” When the assistants still didn’t stir, he added: “You can go on with your work.” And to avoid getting involved in a conversation with them, he leaned out the window. When he looked down the corridor again a while later, they were gone. But now K. remained at the window; he didn’t dare go into the junk room, and he didn’t want to go home either. The small, rectangular courtyard he looked down upon was lined with offices; all the windows were dark by now, only the highest ones catching a reflection of the moon. K. peered down intently, trying to penetrate the darkness of a corner of the and where several pushcarts had been shoved together. It tormented him that he had been unable to prevent the flogging, but it wasn’t his fault; if Franz hadn’t screamed—of course it must have hurt terribly, but at critical moments you have to control yourself—if he hadn’t screamed, K. could very probably have still found some way to convince the flogger. If the entire lowest level of the bureaucracy was made up of ruff-raff, why should the flogger, who had the most inhuman job of all, be an exception; K. had also taken close note of the way his eyes gleamed at the sight of the bank note; he had obviously taken the flogging so seriously solely to raise the amount of the bribe. And K. wouldn’t have been stingy, he really wanted to get the guards off, having already begun to fight corruption in the judicial system, no muy fuerte pero lo suficiente como para que cayera al suelo y allí se arrastrara, convulso, con ayuda de las manos. Pero ni aun así pudo evitar los azotes, el látigo supo encontrarle también en el suelo; mientras él se agitaba bajo los golpes, la punta del látigo bajaba y subía con perfecta regularidad. Y entonces apareció en la lejanía uno de los empleados, y dos pasos detrás, el segundo. K salió y cerró la puerta a toda prisa, se acercó a una pequeña ventana que daba al patio y la abrió. El vigilante dejó de gritar. Para no dejar que los empleados se acercaran, gritó:

—¡Soy yo!

—Buenas noches, señor gerente —le respondieron—, ¿ha ocurrido algo? —No, no —respondió K—, es sólo un perro en el patio.

Como los empleados no se movían añadió: —Pueden seguir con su trabajo.

Para no continuar con la conversación, se inclinó por la ventana. Cuando, transcurrido un rato, miró por el pasillo, ya se habían ido. K, sin embargo, permaneció en la ventana, no se atrevió a volver al trastero y tampoco quería regresar a casa. Se limitó a contemplar el patio cuadrado que tenía ante él; alrededor había oficinas, todas las ventanas estaban oscuras, sólo las más altas recibían el reflejo de la luna. K se esforzó por discernir una de las oscuras esquinas del patio, en el que había dos carretas de mano. Le atormentaba no haber podido detener los azotes, pero no era culpa suya no haberlo logrado. Si Franz no hubiese gritado—cierto, tuvo que hacerle mucho daño, pero en determinados momentos decisivos hay que saber dominarse—, si no hubiera gritado, K habría encontrado con toda seguridad un medio para convencer al azotador. Si todos los empleados inferiores eran canalla, ¿por qué iba a constituir una excepción el azotador, que, además, ejercía el cargo más inhumano? K había observado muy bien cómo le habían brillado los ojos al ver los billetes. Posiblemente se había tomado en serio lo de los azotes para subir un poco la suma del soborno. Y K no habría ahorrado medios, realmente hubiera querido liberar a los vigilantes. Si había comenzado a combatir la corrupción de esa ju-
the distance he heard the steps of the assistants; in order not to attract their attention, he closed the window and walked toward the main staircase. He stopped for a moment at the door of the junk room and listened. Silence reigned. The man might have beaten the guards to death; Silence reigned. The man might have beaten the guard...
understandable of course, intended solely to awaken greater pity.

The next day K. still couldn't get the guards off his mind; he had difficulty concentrating on his work, and in order to finish up he had to stay at the office slightly longer than he had the day before. As he passed by the junk room again on his way home, he opened the door as if by habit. What he saw, in place of the expected darkness, bewildered him completely. Everything was unchanged, just as he had found it the previous evening when he opened the door. The print forms and ink bottles just beyond the threshold, the flogger with the rod, the guards, still completely clothed, the candle on the shelf, and the guards began to wail, crying out: "Sir!" K. slammed the door shut at once and pounded his fists against it, as if to close it more tightly. Almost in tears, he ran to the assistants, who were working quietly at the copying press and paused in their work with astonishment.

"Clear out that junk room once and for all," he cried. "We're drowning in filth." The assistants said they would be happy to do it the next day, and K. nodded; he couldn't force them to do it this late in the evening, as he had at first intended. He sat down for a moment to keep the assistants around a while longer, shuffled through a few copies, trying to give the impression that he was checking them over, and then, since he realized the assistants wouldn't dare leave with him, he headed for home, tired and with his mind a blank.

si bien disculpable, cuyo único objetivo había sido despertar una mayor compasión.

El día siguiente K. siguió pensando en los vigilantes. Como no se podía concentrar en el trabajo, decidió obligarse a permanecer más tiempo en el banco que el día anterior. Cuando pasó por el trastero para irse a casa, abrió la puerta como si fuera una costumbre. Quedó desconcertado ante la inesperada escena que se mostró ante sus ojos. Todo estaba exactamente igual que la noche anterior, cuando abrió la puerta. Los formularios y los frascos de tinta se acumulaban detrás del umbral; el azotador con el látigo; los vigilantes, completamente vestidos; la vela sobre el estante. Los vigilantes comenzaron a quejarse y gritaron:

—¡Señor!

K cerró la puerta de inmediato y la golpeó con los puños, como sí sólo así pudiera quedar cerrada del todo. Al borde de las lágrimas se fue a ver a los empleados, que trabajaban tranquilamente con una multicopista y permanecían absortos en su actividad.

—¡Ordenad de una vez el trastero! —gritó—. La inmundicia nos va a llegar al cuello.

Los empleados se mostraron dispuestos a hacerlo al día siguiente. K. asintió con la cabeza. No podía obligarles a realizar el trabajo tan tarde, como había previsto antes. Se sentó un rato, para tener a los empleados cerca, desordenó algunas copias, queriendo dar la impresión de que estaba examinando algo, pero comprobó que los empleados no se atreverían a salir con él, así que se fue a casa cansado y con la mente en blanco.
One afternoon—it was just before the final mail pickup and K. was very busy—K.’s Uncle Karl, a small landowner from the country, shoved his way between two assistants carrying in documents and entered the room. K. felt less alarm at seeing him than he had some time ago imagining his arrival. His uncle was bound to come, K. had been sure of that for over a month. Even back then he could picture him, slightly stooped, his Panama hat crushed in his left hand, his right hand already stretched out toward him from afar, thrusting it across the desk in reckless haste, knocking over everything in his way. His uncle was always in a hurry, for he was constantly driven by the unfortunate notion that he had to accomplish everything he’d set out to do within the single day to which his visits to the capital were always limited, nor did he dare let slip any opportunity for conversation, business, or pleasure that might happen to arise. K., who was particularly indebted to him because he was his former guardian, had to assist him in every way and put him up for the night as well. He called him “the Specter from the Countryside.”

As soon as he’d said hello—he didn’t have time to sit down in the armchair K. offered him—he asked K. for a brief private conference. “It’s necessary,” he said, swallowing with difficulty, “it’s necessary for my peace of mind.” K. sent the assistants from the room at once, with instructions to admit no one. “What’s this I hear, Josef?” cried his uncle, once they were alone, seating himself on the desk and stuffing various papers under him without looking at them, to make himself more comfortable. K. said nothing. He knew what was coming, but released suddenly from the strain of work as he was, he gave himself up first to a pleasant languor and gazed out the window toward the opposite side of the street, of which only a small triangular section could be seen from his chair, a stretch of empty wall between two window displays. “Stop staring out the window,”

Inmediatamente después de saludarse —no tenía tiempo para seguir la invitación de K y sentarse en el sillón—, le pidió a K si podían conversar a solas. —Es necesario—dijo, tragando con esfuerzo—, es necesario para mi tranquilidad.

K hizo salir a los empleados del despacho con instrucciones de que no dejaran pasar a nadie.

—¿Qué ha llegado a mis oídos, Josef? —exclamó el tío en cuanto se quedaron solos. A continuación, se sentó sobre la mesa y, sin verlos, puso varios papeles debajo para sentarse con más comodidad.

K no respondió: sabía lo que venía a continuación, pero, repentinamente relajado al dejar el fatigoso trabajo, se apoderó de él una agradable lasitud, por lo que se limitó a mirar por la ventana hacia la calle de enfrente, de la que desde su sitio sólo se podía ver una pequeña esquina, la pared desnuda de una casa entre dos escaparates de tiendas.

—¿Y te dedicas a mirar por la ventana!
his uncle cried with uplifted arms, 
“for heaven’s sake, Josef, answer me. Is it true, can it be true then?”

“Dear Uncle,” said K., tearing himself out of his reverie, “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Josef,” said his uncle warningly, “to the best of my knowledge you’ve always told the truth. Should I take your last words as a bad sign.”

“I can guess what you want,” said K. submissively, “you’ve probably heard about my trial.”

“That’s right,” said his uncle, nodding slowly, “I’ve heard about your trial.”

“From whom?” K. asked.

“Erna wrote to me about it,” said his uncle, “she doesn’t see anything of you of course, you don’t take any real interest in her, sadly enough, but she found out about it anyway. I received her letter today and of course came here immediately. For no other reason, since this seemed reason enough. I can read you the passage that concerns you.”

He pulled the letter from his wallet.

“Here it is. She writes: ‘It’s been a long time since I’ve seen Josef, I was in the bank once last week, but Josef was so busy I couldn’t see him; I waited for over an hour, but then I had to return home for my piano lesson. I would have liked to have talked with him, maybe I’ll get a chance to before long. He sent me a big box of chocolates on my name day, it was very sweet and thoughtful. I forgot to write you about it earlier, but now that you asked, I remember. As I’m sure you know, chocolate disappears instantly at the boarding-house, you hardly realize you’ve been given chocolates and they’re gone. But regarding Josef, there’s something else I wanted to tell you: As I mentioned, I couldn’t get into him because he was busy with a gentleman. After I’d waited patiently for a while, I asked an assistant whether the appointment would last much longer. He said that it might, since it probably had something to do with the trial the chief financial officer was involved in. I asked what sort of a trial it was, whether he might

—exclamó el tío alzando los brazos—. ¡Por amor al Cielo, Josef ¡Respóndeme! ¿Es verdad? ¿Puede ser verdad?

—Querido tío —dijo K., y salió de su ensimismamiento—, no sé qué quieres de mí.

—Josef —dijo el tío advirtiéndole—, siempre has dicho la verdad, por lo que sé. ¿Acaso tengo que tomar tus últimos palabras como un mal signo?

—Supongo lo que quieres —dijo K sumiso—. Probablemente has oído hablar de mi proceso.

Así es —respondió el tío, asintiendo con la cabeza lentamente—, he tenido noticia de tu proceso.

—¿Quién te lo ha dicho? —preguntó K.

—Erna (23) me lo ha escrito —dijo el tío—. No tiene ningún trato contigo, por desgracia no te preocupas mucho de ella, sin embargo se ha enterado. Hoy he recibido la carta y he venido de inmediato. Por ningún otro motivo, pues me parece motivo suficiente. Te puedo leer la parte de la carta que se refiere a ti.

Sacó la carta del bolsillo.

—Aquí está. Escribe: «Hace tiempo que no veo a Josef, hace una semana estuve en el banco, pero Josef estaba tan ocupado que no me dejaron verle. Estuve esperando casi una hora, pero tuve que irme a casa porque tenía la lección de piano. Me hubiera gustado hablar contigo, es posible que se presente otra oportunidad. Para mi cumpleaños me envió una gran caja de bombones de chocolate, fue muy atento y cariñoso. Se me olvidó escribirlo, pero ahora que me preguntas, lo recuerdo. Los bombones no duran mucho en la pensión, apenas tiene uno conciencia de que le han regalado bombones, cuando ya se han acabado. En lo que concierne a Josef os quería decir algo más. Como os he mencionado, en el banco no me dejaron entrar a verle porque en ese momento estaba tratando algo importante con un hombre. Después de esperar tranquilamente durante un buen rato, pregunté a un empleado si la reunión duraría mucho más. Él contestó que podría ser, pues probablemente tenía que ver con el proceso que se había incoado contra el gerente. Pregúnté qué proceso y si no
be mistaken, but he said it was no mistake, it was a trial and a serious one at that, but that’s all he knew. He said he’d like to help the chief financial officer himself, because he was a good and honest man, but he didn’t know how to go about it, and he could only hope that influential people would intervene in his behalf. He thought that would surely happen and that things would turn out well, but for the moment, as he gathered from the chief financial officer’s mood, things didn’t look at all good. I didn’t attach much importance to his words of course, and tried to calm the simple-minded fellow, telling him not to mention it to anyone else, and I’m sure the whole thing is just idle talk. Nevertheless, it might be a good idea if you, dear Father, looked into the matter the next time you’re here; you could easily find out more about it and, if truly necessary, intervene through your wide circle of influential friends. If, as is most likely, that doesn’t prove necessary, it will at least give your daughter an opportunity to embrace you soon, which would give her great joy.

“A good child,” his uncle said as he finished reading the letter, wiping a few tears from his eyes. K. nodded; he had completely forgotten Erna due to the various recent disturbances, had even forgotten her birthday, and the story of the chocolates had obviously been invented merely to cover for him with his aunt and uncle. It was very touching, and the theater tickets he now meant to send her on a regular basis would hardly make up for it, but right now he didn’t feel up to visits at her boardinghouse and chats with a seventeen-year-old high school girl. “And now what do you have to say?” asked his uncle, who because of the letter had temporarily forgotten his haste and agitation, and was apparently reading it through once again. “Yes, Uncle,” said K., “it’s true.” “True?” his uncle cried out. “What’s true? How can it be true? What kind of a trial? Surely not a criminal trial?” “A criminal trial,” K. replied. “And you sit there calmly with...
a criminal trial hanging over your head?” cried his uncle, who kept getting louder. “The calmer I am, the better, as far as the outcome is concerned,” K. said wearily. “Don’t worry.” “That scarcely sets my mind at rest,” cried his uncle, “Josef, dear Josef, think of yourself, think of your relatives, of our good name. You’ve always been our pride and joy, you mustn’t disgrace us now. Your attitude,” he looked at K. with his head sharply cocked, “doesn’t please me at all, that’s not how an innocent man acts who still has his strength. Just tell me quickly what it’s all about, so I can help you. It’s something with the bank of course?”

“No,” said K., standing up, “but you’re talking too loudly, dear Uncle, the assistant’s probably eavesdropping at the door. I don’t like that. We should go somewhere else. Then I’ll answer all your questions as best I can. I’m well aware that I owe the family an explanation.”

“Yes,” his uncle burst out, “quite right, but hurry, Josef, hurry.” “I still have a few instructions to give,” said K. and summoned his administrative deputy by phone, who entered a few moments later. His uncle, still agitated, gestured toward K. to show that he was the one who had called, which was clear enough anyway. K., standing before his desk, went through various papers, explaining quietly to the young man, who listened calmly but attentively, what still needed to be done that day in his absence. His uncle disturbed him by standing there biting his lips and staring wide-eyed, without listening of course, but just his presence was disturbing enough. Then he started pacing back and forth in the room, pausing now and then by the window or at a picture, and breaking out with: “Me es completamente incomprensible” or “ahora dime adónde va a ir a parar todo esto”. The young man acted as if he didn’t notice a thing, listened calmly until K. had finished his instructions, took a few notes, and departed, after bowing to both K. and his uncle, who however had turned his back to him to stare out the window, clutching the curtains in his outstretched hands. The door had barely closed when his uncle burst out:
“At last that jumping jack is gone, now we can leave too. Finally!”

Out in the lobby, unfortunately, there was no way he could get his uncle to stop asking questions about the trial, although several assistants and officers were standing about, and the vice president himself was just passing by.

“Now, Josef,” his uncle began, responding to the bows of the people standing about with a brief salute, “now tell me frankly what sort of trial this is.”

K. made a few noncommittal remarks, gave a laugh or two, and only when he was on the steps did he explain to his uncle that he hadn’t wanted to speak openly in front of other people.

“Right,” said his uncle, “but now talk.”


They were standing on the front steps, leading to the street; since the doorman seemed to be listening, K. drew his uncle down the stairs; the busy traffic on the street enveloped them. The uncle, who had taken K.’s arm, no longer inquired about the trial so insistently, and they even walked along for a while in silence.

“But how did it happen?” his uncle finally asked, stopping so suddenly that the people walking behind him were startled and had to step to the side. “These things don’t happen all at once, they build up over a long period of time; there must have been some indications, why didn’t you write to me? You know I’ll do anything for you; I’m still your guardian in a sense, and until today I’ve been proud of it. Of course I’ll still help you, but it’s going to be very difficult now that the trial is already under way. In any case it would be best for you to take a brief vacation and visit us in the countryside. You’ve lost some weight too, I can see it now. You’ll regain your strength in the country, which is a good thing, since this is obviously going to require a good deal of effort. And you’ll be placed beyond the reach of the court somewhat. Here they have all sorts of instruments of power and they will necessarily,
automatically use them against you; but in the country they would first have to delegate agents, or try to get at you entirely by letter or by telegaph or by telephone. Naturally that weakens the effect; it doesn’t free you of course, but it gives you some breathing room.” “They might forbid me to leave,” said K., who was starting to be drawn in by his uncle’s line of thought, “I don’t think that they’ll do that,” his uncle said pensively, “they wouldn’t lose that much power if you left town.” “I thought,” said K., taking his uncle by the arm to keep him from stopping again, “that you would attach even less importance to the whole matter than I did, and now you’re taking it so hard.” “Josef,” his uncle cried, trying to twist away from him so he could pause, which K. prevented, “you’ve undergone a total metamorphosis; you’ve always had such a keen grasp of things, has it deserted you now, of all times? Do you want to lose this trial? Do you know what that means? That you’ll simply be crossed off. And that all your relatives will be drawn in, or at least dragged through the mud. Pull yourself together, Josef. Your indifference is driving me crazy. Looking at you almost makes me believe the old saying: ‘Trials like that are lost from the start.’” “Dear Uncle,” said K., “there’s no use getting excited, it won’t help either of us. Trials aren’t won by getting excited, let my practical experience count for something, just as I’ve always valued yours and still do, even when I’m surprised by it. Since you say that the family will suffer too because of the trial—which for my part I really can’t understand, but that’s beside the point—I’ll gladly do as you say in all things. Except that I don’t think a stay in the country would be to my advantage, even in the sense you intend, because it would imply and a guilty conscience. And although they certainly follow me more closely here, I can also take a more active role in the case.” “Right,” said his uncle as if they were at last on the same track, “I only made that suggestion because I was afraid if you remained here your case would be damaged by your own indifference, and I thought it better to act in your behalf. But if you intend to pursue it as
strongly as possible yourself, that’s obviously far better.”

“So we seem to be in agreement on that,” said K. “And now do you have a suggestion as to what I should do next?”

“I still have to think the matter over of course,” his uncle said, “you’ve got to remember that I’ve spent the past twenty years almost exclusively in the countryside, where one tends to lose the flair for this sort of thing. Various important connections with well-placed persons who might know more about such matters have weakened over time. I’ve been somewhat isolated in the countryside, as you well know. That’s something you don’t really realize yourself until something like this comes up. And your case has caught me partly by surprise, although in a strange way I suspected something like this after Erna’s letter, and knew almost for certain the moment I saw you today. But that’s beside the point, the important thing now is not to lose any time.”

Even as he was speaking he rose up on tiptoe and waved for a cab, and now he pulled K. after him into the car as he called out an address to the driver.

“Now we’re going to see Huld, the lawyer,” he said, “he was my classmate in school. You know the name of course? No? That’s odd. He has a considerable reputation as a defense counsel and poor man’s lawyer. But it’s his human qualities I place my trust in.”

“Anything you want to do is fine with me,” K. said, in spite of the fact that the hasty and aggressive manner with which his uncle was handling the matter made him uncomfortable. As a defendant, it wasn’t very pleasant to be heading for a poor man’s lawyer.

“I didn’t know,” he said, “that a person could engage a lawyer in this sort of case too.”

“But of course,” his uncle said, “that goes without saying. Why not? And now tell me everything that’s happened up to now, so I’m fully informed about the matter.”

K. began telling him immediately, without concealing anything; his total frankness was the only protest he could allow himself against his uncle’s opinion that the trial was a terrible disgrace. He mentioned Fräulein Bürstner’s name only once to y con todas tus fuerzas, será desde luego mucho mejor.

—Entonces estamos de acuerdo —dijo K—. ¿Tienes algún consejo sobre lo que podría hacer? —Aún tengo que meditar algo sobre el asunto —dijo el tío—. Como sabes, vivo innterradamente en el campo desde hace veinte años y así se pierde el instinto para estas cosas. Mis contactos con gente importante, que tal vez conozcan mejor estos asuntos, se han debilitado con el tiempo. En el campo estoy algo solo. Precisamente uno lo nota cuando se producen este tipo de incidentes. Además, todo esto ha sido inesperado, por más que después de la carta de Erna sospechaste algo, que se convirtió en certeza nada más verte. Pero eso no tiene importancia, lo más importante es no perder el tiempo.

Mientras hablaba había hecho señas a un taxi, poniéndose de puntillas, y cuando éste paró, subió, le dijo una dirección al conductor e introdujo a K en el interior.


—Me parece bien todo lo que emprendes —dijo K, aunque la manera precipitada de actuar del tío le causara cierto malestar. No era muy agradable visitar a un abogado para pobres siendo un acusado.

—No sabía —dijo— que en un asunto así se podía consultar a un abogado.

—Pues claro, naturalmente, ¿por qué no? Y ahora cuéntame todo para que esté bien informado de lo que ha ocurrido.

K se lo comenzó a contar, sin silenciar nada. Su completa sinceridad fue la única protesta que se pudo permitir contra la opinión del tío de que el proceso era una gran vergüenza. El nombre de la señorita Bürstner lo men-
in passing, but that didn’t detract from his frankness, since Fräulein Bürstner wasn’t connected with the trial in any way. As he spoke he looked out the window and noticed that they were approaching the very suburb where the law court offices were located; he pointed this out to his uncle, who, however, did not find the coincidence particularly striking. The cab stopped in front of a dark building. His uncle rang the bell at the first door on the ground floor; while they waited he bared his large teeth in a smile and whispered: “Eight o’clock, an unusual hour for a client to visit. But Huld won’t hold it against me.” At a peephole in the door appeared two large dark eyes, stared at the two visitors for a moment, then disappeared; the door, however, did not open. K. and his uncle mutually confirmed the fact that they had seen two eyes. “A new maid who’s afraid of strangers,” his uncle said, and knocked again. Once more the eyes appeared; they could almost be considered sad now, but that might well have been a mere illusion produced by the open gas flame that burned with a hiss directly over their heads but shed little light. “Open up,” his uncle called out, and pounded his fist against the door, “we’re friends of Herr Huld.” “Herr Huld is ill,” came a whisper from behind them. In a doorway at the other end of the narrow hall stood a man in a dressing gown who delivered this message in the softest voice possible. His uncle, who was already furious at the long wait, turned around abruptly and cried out: “Ill? You say he’s ill?” and walked over to him almost menacingly, as if the man were the illness. “The door’s open now,” the man said, pointed to the lawyer’s door, gathered up his dressing gown, and disappeared. The door had indeed opened, and a young girl—K. recognized the dark, slightly protruding eyes—was standing in a long white apron in the entranceway, holding a candle in her hand. “Next time open more quickly,” his uncle said instead of a greeting, while the girl made a small curtsey. “Come on, Josef,” he said to K., who made his way slowly past the
girl. “Herr Huld is ill,” said the girl, since K.’s uncle was hurrying toward the door without pausing. K. was still staring at the girl as she turned around to rellock the apartment door; she had a round, doll-like face, her pale cheeks and chin forming a circle completed by her temples and forehead.

“Josef,” his uncle cried again, and asked the girl: “Is it his heart condition?”

“I think so,” said the girl, who had found time to precede them with the candle and open the door.

In a corner of the room the candlelight did not yet reach, a face with a long beard rose in the bed.

“Leni, who is it?” asked the lawyer, who, blinded by the candle, did not yet recognize the guests. “It’s your old friend Albert,” his uncle said.

“Oh, Albert,” said the lawyer and fell back upon the pillows, as if he didn’t have to pretend for this visit. “Are things really so bad?” asked his uncle, and sat down on the edge of the bed. “I don’t believe it. It’s just your heart acting up again; it will pass as it has before.”

“Possibly,” the lawyer said softly, “but it’s worse than it’s ever been. I have a hard time breathing, I can’t sleep at all, and I’m getting weaker every day.”

“I see,” said K.’s uncle, and pressed his Panama hat firmly down on his knee with his large hand. “That’s bad news. Are you sure you’re receiving proper care? It’s so dark and gloomy here, too. It’s been a long time since I was here, but it seemed more cheerful in the past. And this little maid of yours doesn’t seem very jolly, or else she’s hiding it.”

The girl was still standing by the door, holding the candle; as far as one could judge from her vague gaze she was looking at K. rather than his uncle, even now that the latter was talking about her. K. was leaning against a chair he had placed near the girl.

“When you’re as sick as I am,” said the lawyer, “you need peace and quiet. I don’t find it gloomy.”

After a brief pause he added: “And Leni takes good care of me, she’s a good girl.” But that didn’t convince K.’s uncle; he was obviously prejudiced muchacha. Cuando ella se volvió para impedir la entrada. Tenía un rostro rendiendo como el de una muchacha, pero no sólo las pálidas mejillas y la barbi lla poseían una forma rendienda, sino también las sienes y la frente.

—Josef —volvió a llamar el tío y, a continuación, le preguntó a la joven: —¿Es el corazón?

—Creo que sí —dijo ella, había tenido tiempo para avanzar con la vela y abrir la puerta de la habita ción. En una de las esquinas, aún no iluminada, se elevó de la cama un rostro con una larga barba.

—Leni, ¿quién viene? —preguntó el abogado, que, deslumbrado por la luz de la vela, aún no había podido reconocer a los visitantes.

—Soy Albert, tu viejo amigo —dijo el tío.

—¡Ah!, Albert —dijo el abogado, y se dejó caer sobre la almohada, como si esa visita no necesitara ninguna atención especial.

—¿Tan mal estás? —preguntó el tío, y se sentó al bor de de la cama—. No lo creo. Es una de tus recaídas, pero pasará como las anteriores.

—Es posible —dijo el abogado en voz baja—, pero es peor que otras veces. Respiro con dificul tad, no duermo y voy perdiendo fuerzas día a día.

—Vaya —dijo el tío, y presionó su sombrero de jipijapa contra la rodilla—, son malas noticias. ¿Te están cuidando bien? Esto está tan triste, tan oscuro. Ha pasado ya mucho tiempo desde la última vez que estuve aquí, pero antes esto era más agradable. Tampoco tu pequeña señorita parece muy alegre, o tal vez disimula.

La muchacha permanecía con la vela cerca de la puer ta. Parecía fijarse más en K que en el tío, aun cuando éste se refirió a ella. K. se apoyó en una silla que él mismo había desplazado hasta las proximidades de la joven.

—Cuando se está tan enfermo como yo —dijo el abogado—, hay que tener tranquilidad, a mí no me parece triste.

Después de una pequeña pausa añadió: —Y Leni me cuida muy bien, es muy buena (26).

El tío, sin embargo, no se dejó convencer. Tenía un prejuicio con-

(26) A continuación, tachado en el manuscrito: «Esa alabanza no hizo efecto alguno en la muchacha, ni siquiera le impresionó lo que el tío dijo a continuación: «Puede ser. No obstante, te enviaré lo más pronto posible, incluso hoy mismo, una enfermera. Si no cumple con sus obligacio nes, la despides, pero hazme el favor e inténtalo: en este ambiente y con este silencio no se puede vivir». «No siempre es tan silencioso —dijo el abogado—. Sólo tomaré a tu enfermera si es algo obligatorio». «Lo es» —dijo el tío.
against the nurse, and although he didn’t contradict the sick man, he eyed her sternly as she now approached the bed, placed the candle on the nightstand, bent over the sick man, and whispered to him as she now approached the bed, placed the candle on the nightstand, bent over the sick man, and whispered to him as she straightened his pillows. Almost forgetting his consideration for the sick man, he stood up and paced back and forth behind the nurse, and K. would not have been surprised to see him seize her from behind by the skirts and pull her away from the bed. K. himself watched all this calmly; in fact the lawyer’s illness was not wholly unwelcome, for he had not been able to stem his uncle’s zeal with regard to his case, and now he was glad to see that zeal deflected through no fault of his own. Then, perhaps merely intending to wound the nurse, his uncle said: “Young lady, please leave us alone for a while, I have a personal matter I wish to discuss with my friend.” The nurse, who was still leaning across the sick man and was just smoothing the covers next to the wall, merely turned her head and said calmly, in striking contrast to his uncle, who had first choked with rage before bursting out in speech: “You can see he’s too ill to discuss any personal matter.” She’d probably repeated his uncle’s words for simplicity’s sake; nevertheless, even a neutral observer could have taken it for mockery, and his uncle naturally reacted as if he’d been stabbed. “You damned—” he said somewhat indistinctly in his first gurgle of agitation; K. was startled even though he’d expected something of the sort, and ran over to his uncle, firmly intending to cover his mouth with both hands. Fortunately, however, the sick man rose up behind the girl; K.’s uncle made a bitter face, as if he were swallowing something particularly nasty, and then said more calmly: “We haven’t taken leave of our senses of course; if what I’m requesting weren’t reasonable, I wouldn’t request it. Now please leave.” The nurse stood beside the bed, facing K.’s uncle fully, one hand, as K. thought he noticed, stroking the lawyer’s hand. “You can say anything in front of Leni,” the sick man said, in

La enfermera que se había inclinado aún más sobre el enfermo y precisamente en ese momento alisaba la sábana, volvió la cabeza y dijo con toda tranquilidad, que contrastaba con el silencio furioso y la verborrea del tío: —Ya ve, el señor está muy enfermo, no puede hablar de ningún asunto personal. Probablemente había repetido las palabras del tío sólo por comodidad, pero por alguna persona ajena se podría haber tomado como una burla. El tío, naturalmente, se comportó como si le hubieran acuchillado. —Tú, condenada —logró decir con voz gutural y casi incomprehensible por la excitación. K. se asustó, aunque había esperado una reacción semejante, así que corrió hacia él con la intención de taparle la boca con las manos. Felizmente, el enfermo se incorporó detrás de la muchacha. El rostro del tío se tornó sombrío, como si se estuviera tragando algo repugnante, y dijo algo más tranquilo: —Por supuesto que aún no hemos perdido la razón; si lo que reclamo no fuera posible, no lo habría dicho. Por favor, váyase. La enfermera estaba de pie al lado de la cama, mirando al tío, y con una de sus manos, como creyó advertir K., acariciaba la mano del ahogado. —Puedes decir lo que quieras en presencia de Leni —dijo el enfermo
a clearly imploring tone.
“But this doesn’t concern me,” said K.’s uncle, “it is not my secret.”
And he turned around as if he had no intention of discussing the matter further but would give him a little more time to think it over.

“Whom does it concern then?” the lawyer asked, his voice fading, and lay back down.

“My nephew,” said the uncle, “and I’ve brought him along.”

Then he introduced him: “Chief Financial Officer Josef K.”

“Oh,” said the sick man much more energetically, and put out his hand toward K., “please excuse me, I didn’t see you at all.”

“Go on, Leni,” he then said to his nurse, who put up no further resistance, and gave her his hand as if they were parting for some time.

“So,” he said at last to K.’s uncle, who had also drawn nearer, appeased, “you didn’t come to pay a sick call, you came on business.”

It was as if this image of a sick call had paralyzed the lawyer up till then, so rejuvenated did he now appear, propping himself up on one elbow, which must have been something of a strain in itself, and repeatedly tugging at a strand in the middle of his beard.

“You look much better already,” K.’s uncle said, “now that that witch is gone.” He broke off, whispered: “I’ll bet she’s eavesdropping,” and sprang to the door. But there was no one behind the door; his uncle returned, not in disappointment, for her not listening struck him as an even greater act of malice, but no doubt embittered.

“You misjudge her,” said the lawyer, without defending her further; perhaps he wished to show by this that she needed no defense. But he continued in a much more engaged tone:

“As far as the matter with your nephew is concerned, I would of course count myself fortunate if my strength were equal to this most difficult of tasks; I greatly fear it won’t be, but I’ll certainly try everything I possibly can; if I’m not equal to the task someone else can be brought in as well. To be honest, the affair interests me far too much for me to give up being involved in some way. If my heart can’t take it, it will at least offer a worthy occasion for it to fail entirely.”

K. felt he hadn’t understood a word con un tono de súplica.

—No me concierne a mí —dijo el tío—, no es mi secreto.

Y se dio la vuelta, como si no pensara participar en más negociaciones, pero concediera un periodo de reflexión.

—Entonces, ¿a quién concierne?

—preguntó el abogado con voz apagada, y volvió a echarse.

—A mi sobrino —dijo el tío—, lo he traído conmigo.

Se lo presentó: —Ge- rente Josef K.

—¡Oh! —dijo el enfermo con súbita vivacidad, y le extendió la mano—, disculpe, no había advertido su presencia.

—Retírate, Leni —dijo a la enfermera, que ya no se opuso, y le dio la mano como si se despidiera por largo tiempo.

—Así que no has venido a hacer una visita a un enfermo —dijo finalmente al tío, que se había acercado ya reconciliado—, vienes por motivos profesionales.

Era como si la idea de una visita a un enfermo hubiese paralizado hasta ese momento al abogado, tan fortalecido aparecía ahora. Permaneció apoyado en el codo, lo que tenía que ser bastante fatigoso, y tiró una y otra vez de un pelo de su barba.

—Parece —dijo el tío— que te has recuperado algo desde la salida de esa bruja. Se interrumpió y musitó:

—Apuesto a que está escuchando —y saltó hacia la puerta. Pero detrás de la puerta no había nadie. El tío regresó, pero no decepcionado, sino amargado, pues creía ver en el comportamiento recto de la muchacha una mayor maldad.

—No la conoces —dijo el abogado, sin proteger más a la enfermera. Tal vez sólo quería expresar con ello que no necesitaba protección. Pero prosiguió en un tono más interesado:

—En lo que se refiere al asunto de tu señor sobrino, me consideraría feliz si mis fuerzas bastasen para una tarea tan extremadamente difícil; me temo, sin embargo, que no bastarán, pero tampoco quiero dejar de inten-

K. no creyó comprender ni una
of this entire speech; he looked at his uncle, seeking some explanation there, but he was sitting with the candle in his hand on the little nightstand, from which a medicine bottle had already rolled onto the carpet, nodding at everything the lawyer said, agreeing with everything, and glancing at K. now and then, urging the same assent from him. Had his uncle perhaps already informed the lawyer about his trial, but that was impossible, everything up to now spoke against it. So he said: “I don’t understand.” “Oh, have I perhaps misunderstood you?” asked the lawyer, as surprised and embarrassed as K. “Perhaps I spoke too soon. What was it you wanted to talk to me about then? I thought it concerned your trial.” “Of course,” said K.’s uncle, and then asked K.: “What’s bothering you?” “Yes, but how do you know about me and my trial?” asked K. “Oh, I see,” said the lawyer with a smile, “I’m a lawyer after all, I move in legal circles, various trials are discussed, and the more striking ones stick in one’s memory, particularly when they concern the nephew of a friend. There’s nothing unusual in that.” “What’s bothering you?” the uncle asked K. again. “You’re so agitated.” “You move in those legal circles,” K. asked. “Yes,” said the lawyer. “You’re asking questions like a child,” said his uncle. “With whom should I associate, if not my professional colleagues?” the lawyer added. It sounded so irrefutable that K. didn’t even answer. “But you work at the court in the Palace of Justice, not at the one in the attic,” was what he wanted to say, but he couldn’t bring himself to actually do so. “You must consider the fact,” the lawyer continued in a perfunctory tone, as if explaining something self-evident, superfluously and merely in passing, “you must consider the fact that such associations offer major advantages for my clients, in many respects, one can’t always even discuss them. Of course I’m a bit hampered now by my illness, but I’m still visited by good friends from court and learn a few things. More perhaps than some people in perfect health.

sola palabra de lo que había dicho. Miró al tío para encontrar una explicación, pero éste estaba sentado en la mesilla de noche, de la que se acababa de caer sobre la alfombra un frasco de medicinas. Con la vela en la mano, el tío asentía a lo que decía el abogado, se mostraba de acuerdo en todo y miraba de vez en cuando a K como si requiriera un asenso similar. ¿Acaso había hablado ya el tío con el abogado acerca del proceso? Pero eso era imposible, todo lo acaecido hablaba en contra. Por esta causa, dijo:

—No entiendo.
—¿Acaso le he interpretado mal?
—preguntó el abogado tan asombrado y confuso como K.—. Tal vez me he precipitado. ¿Sobre qué quería hablarme conmigo? Creía que se trataba de su proceso.

—Naturalmente —dijo el tío, que entonces preguntó a K—: Pero ¿qué te pasa? —Sí, pero, ¿de qué me conoce y cómo sabe de mi proceso? —inquirió K.
—¡Ah, ya! —dijo el abogado sonriendo—, soy abogado, trato con miembros de los tribunales, se habla de distintos procesos, sobre todo de los más llamativos, y cuando afectan al sobrino de un amigo se quedan en la memoria. No es nada extraño.

—Haces preguntas de niño —dijo el tío.

—¿Con quién voy a tratar si no es con gente de mi gremio? —añadió el abogado.

Sonó tan irrefutable que K. fue incapaz de contestar. «Usted trabaja en las estancias del Palacio de justicia pero no en las del desván», hubiera querido decir, pero no se atrevió.

—Tiene que tener en cuenta— continuó el abogado, como si le estuviera explicando algo evidente y superfluo— que de ese trato saco muchas ventajas para mis clientes y, además, en múltiples sentidos, pero de eso no se puede hablar. Naturalmente estoy algo impedido a causa de mi enfermedad; no obstante sigo recibiendo visitas de buenos amigos de los tribunales y me entero de algunas cosas. Es posible que me entere de mucho más de lo que se pueden
who spend all day at court. For example I have a special visitor this very moment.” And he pointed into a dark corner of the room.

“Where?” K. demanded almost rudely, in his initial surprise. He looked around uncertainly; the light of the little candle fell far short of the opposite wall. And indeed something began to stir there in the corner. In the light of the candle his uncle now held high, an older gentleman could be seen sitting by a little table. He must not have even been breathing, to have remained unnoticed for so long. Now he arose laboriously, apparently displeased that he had been brought to their attention. It seemed as if he wanted to wave off all greetings and introductions with his hands, which he flapped like small wings, as if he wished under no circumstances to disturb the others by his presence, imploring them to return him once more to darkness, to forget his presence. But that could no longer be granted. “You caught us by surprise, you see,” the lawyer said by way of explanation, waving encouragingly to the gentleman to draw nearer, which he did, slowly, looking about hesitantly, and yet with a certain dignity, “here’s the Chief Clerk of the Court—oh, I beg your pardon, I haven’t introduced you—this is my friend Albert K., his nephew, Chief Financial Officer Josef K., and this is the Chief Clerk of the Court—the Chief Clerk was kind enough to pay me a visit. Only an insider, who knows how overburdened the Chief Clerk is with work, can fully appreciate the value of such a visit. Yet even so he came, and we were conversing quietly, as far as my weakened state allows; we hadn’t forbidden Leni to admit visitors, for none were expected, but we certainly thought we’d be left to ourselves; but then came the blows of your fist on the door, Albert, and the Chief Clerk moved into the corner with his table and chair, although it now turns out that we may have a common matter to discuss, that is, if you want to, and we may just as well sit back down together. Please, my dear sir,” he said with bowed head and a subservient smile, pointing to an armchair near the bed.

“Unfortunately I can only stay a few minutes longer,” the chief clerk of the court said amiably,
settling comfortably into the armchair and looking at the clock, “duty calls. In any case I don’t want to miss the opportunity to meet a friend of my friend.” He bowed slightly toward K.’s uncle, who seemed quite pleased by this new acquaintance, but being by nature incapable of expressions of humble respect, responded to the chief clerk’s words with a loud and embarrassed laugh. An ugly sight! K. could observe everything at his leisure, for no one paid any attention to him; the chief clerk, now that he had been drawn forth, took the lead in the conversation, as seemed to be his custom; the lawyer, whose initial weakness may have been intended simply to cut short the new visit, listened attentively, his hand at his ear; K.’s uncle, the candle bearer—he balanced the candle on one thigh, the lawyer kept looking anxiously—had soon overcome his embarrassment and was now simply delighted, both by the chief clerk’s words and by the gentle, undulating gestures with which he accompanied them. K., who was leaning against the bedpost, was totally ignored by the chief clerk, perhaps even intentionally, and functioned merely as an auditor for the old men. Moreover he scarcely knew what they were talking about, and was thinking instead one moment about the nurse and how his uncle had mistreated her, and the next whether he hadn’t seen the chief clerk somewhere before, perhaps even among the crowd during his initial hearing. Even if he was mistaken, the chief clerk of the court would certainly have fit perfectly into the front row of the assembly, those old men with their scraggly beards.

Then a sound like breaking china came from the hall, causing them all to prick up their ears. “I’ll go see what’s happened,” said K., and walked out slowly, as if he was giving the others a chance to stop him. He had barely stepped into the hall and was trying to find his way about in the dark when a small hand, much smaller than K.’s, placed itself upon the hand he still held against the door and closed

*anxious*
1. Inquieto, angustiado, desasosegado, preocupado: to be anxious about sthg, estar preocupado por algo
2. (entusiasmado) interesado, ansioso, con ganas: I am anxious to meet him, tengo muchas ganas de conocerle

se sentó cómodamente en la silla y miró el reloj—, pues el trabajo me llama. Pero tampoco quiero perder la oportunidad de conocer a un amigo de mi amigo.

Inclinó ligeramente la cabeza hacia el tío, quien parecía muy satisfecho por su nuevo conocido, satisfacción que, sin embargo, no supo manifestar, ya que, por su naturaleza, era incapaz de mostrar ningún sentimiento de sumisión, limitándose a acompañar las palabras del jefe de departamento con una risa confusa. ¡Una visión horrible! K. podía contemplarlo todo tranquilamente, pues nadie se preocupaba de él. El jefe de departamento, como parecía que era su costumbre, tomó la palabra. El abogado, por su parte, cuya debilidad inicial parecía que sólo había servido para expulsar a la nueva visitante, escuchaba con atención, con la mano en el oído; el tío, que mantenía la vela —la balanceaba sobre su muslo y el abogado le miraba frecuentemente con preocupación— había superado su confusión previa y seguía encantado la manera de hablar del jefe de departamento y los movimientos ondulados de manos con que éste acompañaba a sus palabras. K., que se apoyaba en la pata de la cama, era completamente ignorado por el jefe de departamento, probablemente con toda intención, y permaneció como mero oyente. Además, no sabía de qué estaban hablando y se dedicó a pensar en la enfermera, en el trato tan malo que había recibido del tío y llegó a considerar si no había visto ya al jefe de departamento, tal vez en la asamblea durante su primera comparecencia. Si se equivocaba, el jefe de departamento habría armonizado perfectamente con los participantes de las primeras fases, aquellos ancianos con sus barbas ralas.

En ese preciso momento todos se quedaron escuchando pues se había producido un ruido como el que hace la porcelana al romperse.

—Voy a ver qué ha podido ocurrir —dijo K., y salió lentamente, como si quisiera dar la oportunidad de que le detuvieran. Apenas había entrado en el vestíbulo e intentaba orientarse en la oscuridad, cuando una mano pequeña, mucho más pequeña que la de K., se posó sobre la suya, aún en el picaporte, y cerró suavemente la puerta. Era la enfermera,
it softly. It was the nurse, who had been waiting there. “It was nothing,” she whispered, “I just threw a plate against the wall to get you to come out.” In his embarrassment, K. said: “I was thinking about you too.” “All the better,” said the nurse. “Come on.” After a few steps they came to a door with frosted glass, which the nurse opened before K. “Go on in,” she said. It must have been the lawyer’s study; as far as could be seen in the moonlight, which now brightly illuminated only a small rectangle of the floor by each of the two large windows, it was furnished with old, heavy furniture. “This way,” said the nurse, and pointed toward a dark bench chest with a carved wooden back. Even as he was sitting down, K. looked around the room: it was a large and lofty room; the clients of the poor man’s lawyer must have felt lost in it. K. felt he could picture the tiny steps with which the visitors approached the massive desk. But then he forgot about that and had eyes only for the nurse, who was sitting right beside him, almost pressing him against the arm of the bench. “I thought you would come to me on your own,” she said, “without my having to call you first. It was strange. First you stared at me from the moment you entered and then you kept me waiting.” “By the way, call me Leni,” she added abruptly, as if not in the least interested in what you had to say. “Gladly,” said K. “But it’s easy enough to explain what you found so strange, Leni. First, I had to listen to the idle talk of those old men and couldn’t walk out without a reason; second, I’m not very forward, I’m more on the shy side, and you, Leni, didn’t really look like you could be had for the asking.” “That’s not it,” said Leni, laying her arm along the back of the bench and looking at K., “I didn’t please you and probably still don’t.” “Please isn’t the half of it,” said K., evasively. “Oht,” she said with a smile, and through K.’s remark and her que había estado esperando allí. —No ha ocurrido nada—surró ella—, he arrojado un plato contra la pared para sacarle de la habitación. K dijo algo confuso: —También yo he pensado en usted. —Mucho mejor—dijo la enfermera—. Venga. Llegaron a una puerta con un cristal opaco. La enfermera la abrió. —Entre—dijo ella. Era el despacho del señor abogado. Por lo que se podía apreciar a la luz de la luna, que sólo alumbraba con intensidad un espacio rectangular del suelo bajo dos grandes ventanas, los muebles eran antiguos y pesados. —Venga aquí—dijo la enfermera, y señaló un oscuro arcón con forma de asiento provisto de un respaldo de madera labrada. Cuando K se sentó, miró a su alrededor: era una habitación amplia y elevada, la clientela del abogado de los pobres se debía de sentir perdida. K creyó apreciar los pequeños pasos con los que los visitantes se acercaban al poderoso escritorio. Pero poco después lo olvidó y sólo tuvo ojos para la enfermera, que estaba sentada junto a él y casi le presionaba contra uno de los brazos del arcón. —Pensé—dijo ella— que vendría conmigo sin necesidad de llamarme. Ha sido muy extraño. Primero me estuvo mirando al entrar casi inesperadamente y luego me dejó esperando. Por lo demás, llámeme Leni—añadió rápida e inesperadamente, como si no quisiera desperdiciar ni un segundo de esa conversación. —Encantado—dijo K.—. Pero en lo que concierne a su exañena, Leni, se puede explicar fácilmente. En primer lugar, tenía que escuchar la cháchara de los dos ancianos y no podía salir sin motivo alguno; en segundo lugar, soy más bien tímido, y usted, Leni, no tenía el aspecto de poder ser conquistado en un instante. —No ha sido eso—dijo Leni, que apoyó el brazo en el respaldo y contempló a K.—, lo que pasa es que no le gustó al principio y probablemente tampoco le gusto ahora. —«Gustar» no expresaría bien lo que siento—dijo K., eludiendo una respuesta directa. —¡Oh!—exclamó ella sonriendo, y ganó gracias a las úl-
little cry gained a certain advantage. So K. remained silent for a while. Since he had already grown accustomed to the darkness of the room, he could make out various details of the furnishings. He noticed in particular a large painting hanging to the right of the door and leaned forward to see it better. It showed a man in a judge’s robe; he was sitting on a throne, its golden highlights gleaming forth from the painting in several places. The strange thing was that this judge wasn’t sitting in calm dignity, but instead had his left arm braced against the back and arm of the chair, while his right arm was completely free, his hand alone clutching the arm of the chair, as if he were about to spring up any moment in a violent and perhaps wrathful outburst to say something decisive or even pass judgment. The defendant was probably to be thought of as at the foot of the stairs, the upper steps of which, covered with a yellow carpet, could be seen in the picture. “Perhaps that’s my judge,” said K. and pointed to the picture. “I know him,” said Leni, looking up at the picture as well, “he comes here often. That’s a portrait of him when he was young, but he surely never looked like that, he’s so small he’s almost tiny. Even so, he had himself stretched out that way in the painting, since he’s ridiculously vain, like everyone here. But I’m vain too, and very unhappy that I don’t please you.” K. responded to this last remark simply by putting his arm around Leni and drawing her to him; she leaned her head quietly against his shoulder. But to the rest he said only: “What’s his rank?” “He’s an examining magistrate,” she said, taking the hand K. had around her and playing with his fingers. “Just another examining magistrate,” K. said in disappointment, “the higher judges stay in hiding. But yet he’s sitting on a throne.” “That’s all an invention,” said Leni, her head bent over K.’s hand, “he’s actually sitting on a kitchen stool with an old horse blanket folded over it. But is
ne que pensar siempre en proceso? –añadió lentamente.
—No, no, en absoluto —dijo K—, incluso creo que pienso demasiado poco en él.
—Ése no es el error que está cometiendo —dijo Leni—. Usted es demasiado inflexible, al menos eso es lo que he oído.
—¿Quién ha dicho eso? —preguntó K. Sintió su cuerpo en su pecho y contempló su mata de pelo oscuro.
—Revelaría demasiado si se lo dijera —respondió Leni—. Por favor, no pregunte nombres, pero rectifique su error, no sea tan inflexible. No hay defensa posible contra esta judicatura, hay que confesar. Haga la confesión en la próxima oportunidad que se le presente. Sólo así tendrá la posibilidad de escapar, sólo así. No obstante, le será imposible sin ayuda. No tema por esa ayuda, yo se la prestaré.
—Usted sabe mucho de esta justicia y de todas las trampas necesarias para moverse en ella —dijo K, y, como se apretaba mucho a él, decidió sentarla sobre sus rodillas.
—Así estoy bien —dijo ella, y se acomodó un poco la falda y la camisa. Luego puso las manos en torno a su cuello, se inclinó un poco hacia atrás y lo contempló durante un rato.
—Y si no confieso, ¿no me podrá ayudar? —preguntó K de prisa. Reúnió ayudantes femeninos —pensó con asombro—, primero la señorita Bürstner, luego la esposa del ujier y por último esta pequeña enfermera, que parece sentir una inexplicable atracción hacia mí. ¡Se sienta en mis rodillas como si fuese su lugar preferido!»
—No —respondió Leni y sacudió lentamente la cabeza—. En ese caso no podría ayudarle. Pero está claro que usted no quiere mi ayuda usted es obstinado y no se deja convencer. ¿Tiene una amante? —preguntó después de un rato de silencio.
—No —dijo K.
—¡Oh, sí! —dijo ella.
—Sí, claro que sí —dijo K—. La he negado y, no obstante, llevo una fotografía suya.
Siguiendo su petición, le mostró la fotografía, que ella estudió hecha un ovillo sobre sus rodillas. Era una fotografía...
Elsa was caught at the end of a whirling dance of the sort she enjoyed performing at the tavern, her dress still swirling about her, her hands on her hips, looking off to the side and laughing, her throat taut; the person at whom her laughter was directed couldn't be seen in the picture. “She’s very tightly laced,” said Leni, and pointed to the spot where, in her opinion, this was evident. “I don’t like her, she’s clumsy and rough. But perhaps she’s kind and gentle with you, you could gather that from looking at the picture. Big strong girls like that often don’t know how to be anything but kind and gentle. But would she sacrifice herself for you?” “No,” K. said, “she’s neither kind and gentle, nor would she sacrifice herself for me. But so far I haven’t demanded either of her. I’ve never even examined the picture as closely as you have.” “So you don’t care that much about her,” said Leni, “she’s not really your sweetheart. “Of course,” said K. with a smile, “that’s conceivable, but she has one major advantage over you: she doesn’t know anything about my trial, and even if she did, she wouldn’t think about it. She wouldn’t try to talk me into giving in.” “That’s no advantage,” said Leni, “If that’s her only advantage, I won’t lose heart. Does she have a physical defect of any sort?” “A physical defect?” asked K. “Yes,” said Leni, “I have a slight defect of that sort, look.” She spread apart the middle and ring fingers of her right hand, between which the connecting skin extended almost to the top knuckle of her short fingers. In the darkness, K. couldn’t see at first what it was she wanted to show him, so she guided his hand to feel it. “What a whim of nature,” K. al natural: la tomaron mientras Elsa bailaba una danza trepidante, como las que le gustaba bailar en el local donde trabajaba; su falda volaba a su alrededor agitada por sus giros y apoyaba las manos en las caderas, al mismo tiempo miraba sonriendo hacia un lado con el cuello estirado. No se podía reconocer en la foto a quién dirigía esa sonrisa.

—Se ha ceñido demasiado el corpiño —dijo Leni, y señaló el lugar donde se podía apreciar—. No me gusta, es torpe y vulgar. Tal vez sea con usted dulce y amable, eso se podría deducir de la fotografía. Mujeres tan altas y fuertes no saben a menudo otra cosa que ser dulces y amables; pero, ¿sería capaz de sacrificarse por usted?

—No—dijo K—, ni es dulce ni amable, ni tampoco se sacrificaría por mí. Aunque hasta ahora no he reclamado de ella ni lo uno ni lo otro. Y no he contemplado la fotografía con tanto detenimiento como usted.

—Entonces no tiene mucha importancia para usted —dijo Leni—, no es su amante. —Sí lo es —dijo K—, no voy a desmentirlo ahora.

—Bueno, por mucho que sea su amante —dijo Leni—, no la echaría de menos si la perdiera o la sustituyera por otra, por ejemplo por mi.

—Cierto —dijo K sonriendo—, eso sería posible, pero ella tiene una ventaja frente a usted, no sabe nada del proceso y si supiera algo, no pensaría en convencerme para que condescendiera.

—Eso no es ninguna ventaja —dijo Leni—. Si no tiene más ventajas, no perderé la esperanza. ¿Tiene algún defecto corporal?

—¿Un defecto corporal? —preguntó K.

—Sí —dijo Leni—, yo tengo un pequeño defecto, mire. Estiró los dedos corazón e índice de su mano derecha y una membrana llegaba prácticamente hasta la mitad del dedo más corto. La oscuridad impidió ver a K lo que quería mostrarle, así que ella llevó su mano hasta el sitio indicado para que él lo tocara.

—¿Qué capricho de la natura-
said, and added, when he had examined her whole hand: “What a pretty claw!” Leni watched with a kind of pride as K. opened and closed her two fingers repeatedly in astonishment, until he finally kissed them lightly and released them. “Oh!” she cried out at once, “you’ve kissed me!” Hastily, with open mouth, she climbed up his lap on her knees; K. looked up at her in near dismay; now that she was so close to him an exciting, almost bitter odor, like pepper, rose from her; she pulled his head to her and bent over it, biting and kissing his neck, even biting his hair. “You’ve traded her for me,” she cried from time to time, “you see, now you’ve traded her for me after all!” Then her knees slid from under her, and with a small cry she almost slipped to the carpet; K. put his arms around her to catch her and was drawn down with her. “Now you belong to me,” she said.

―Here’s the key to the building, come whenever you like,‖ were her last words, and an aimless kiss struck him on the back while he was still on his way out. As he stepped out the door, a light rain was falling; he was about to walk out into the middle of the street on the chance he might still see Leni at the window, when, from a car K. hadn’t noticed waiting in front of the building, his uncle suddenly emerged, grabbed him by the arms, and shoved him against the door of the building, as if to nail him fast to it. “My boy,” he cried, “how could you do it! You’ve damaged your case terribly, when it was starting out so well. You crawl off to hide with a dirty little creature who obviously happens to be the lawyer’s mistress, and stay away for hours. You don’t even look for an excuse, make no effort to cover it up, no, you’re totally open about it, run to her and stay with her. And meanwhile we’re sitting there, the uncle who’s working hard on your behalf, the lawyer who’s to be won over for you, and most important of all the chief clerk of the court, this noteworthy gentleman, who is practically in charge of your case in its present stage.

―Aquí tienes la llave de la casa, ven cuando quieras —fueron sus últimas palabras y un beso al azar le alcanzó en la espalda mientras se levar Cuando salió de la casa comprobó que caía una fina lluvia, quería llegar a la mitad de la calle para poder ver a Leni en la ventana, pero de un automóvil, que esperaba cerca de la casa, y que K no había advertido, salió el tío, le cogió del brazo y le empujó contra la puerta de la casa, como si quisiera apuntalarle contra ella.

―¡Pero cómo has podido hacerlo! —gritó—. Has dañado gravemente tu causa cuando ya iba por el buen camino. Te ocultas con esa cosa sucia que, además, es la amante del abogado y permaneces ausente durante horas. Ni siquiera buscas una excusa, no, ni disimulas, sino que abiertamente corres hacia ella y te quedas con ella. Y mientras tanto nosotros permanecemos allí sentados, tu tío, que se esfuerza por ti, el abogado, al que hay que ganarse para que te defienda y, sobre todo, el jefe de departamento, ese gran señor, que domina tu caso en su estado actual.
(30) Kafka tuvo problemas para terminar este capítulo y no quedó satisfecho. Se ha conservado otra continuación, publicada por Max Brod: «Cuando salieron del teatro lloviznaba ligeramente. K estaba cansado por la mala representación. El pensamiento de que tenía que albergar a su tío le deprimía, precisamente ese día necesitaba hablar con F. B., podría haber encontrado una oportunidad para verla. La compañía del tío, sin embargo, se lo impedía. Salía un tren nocturno que el tío podía coger, pero convencerle para que se fuera ese día, en que habían estado tan ocupados con el proceso, era completamente imposible. No obstante, K hizo el intento, aunque sin esperanzas: «Temo, tío ––dijo––, que necesitaré tu ayuda en el futuro. Aún no sé en qué, pero la necesitaré con toda seguridad». «Puedes contar conmigo ––dijo el tío––, no paro de pensar en cómo te puedo ayudar». «Eres el mismo de siempre ––dijo K––, sólo temo que la tía se enoje conmigo si te pido que vuelvas a la ciudad». «Tu asunto es mucho más importante que esas molestias». «Eres el mismo de siempre ––dijo K––, no quiero separarte inútilmente de la tía. Te necesitaré muy pronto, así que podrías irte a casa mientras tanto».

Queríamos hablar sobre cómo se podía ayudar, yo tenía que hablar cuidadosamente con el abogado y luego éste con el jefe de departamento y al menos tendrías que haberte apoyado. En vez de eso permaneces ausente. Al final ya no se puede ocultar, son hombres educados, no hablan de ello, me guardan consideración, pero llega un momento en que ya no lo pueden tolerar, y como no pueden hablar del caso, enmudecen. Hemos permanecido allí sentados minutos y minutos sin decir una palabra, escuchando si venías o no. Todo en vano. Finalmente, el jefe de departamento, que ha permanecido más tiempo del que quería, se ha levantado y se ha despedido de mí, compadeciéndome y sin poder ayudarme. Luego esperó amablemente un tiempo en la puerta y se fue. Naturalmente, yo estaba feliz de que se hubiera ido, ya no podía ni respirar. Al abogado le ha sentado mucho peor, el pobre hombre no podía hablar cuando me despedí de él. Probablemente has contribuido a que sufriese una recaída y así aceleras la muerte del hombre del que dependes. Y me dejas a mí, a tu tío, aquí, bajo la lluvia, mira, estoy empapado, he esperado horas (30).
On a winter morning—outside, snow was falling in the dull light—K. was sitting in his office, already thoroughly fatigued in spite of the early hour. To shield himself from at least minor staff members, he had given instructions to his assistant not to let any of them in, since he was working on an important project. But instead of working he swung about in his chair, moved a few items around slowly on his desk, and then, without being aware of it, left his arm outstretched on the desktop and remained sitting motionless with bowed head.

The thought of his trial never left him now. He had often considered whether it might not be advisable to prepare a written defense and submit it to the court. In it he would offer a brief overview of his life, and for each event of any particular importance, explain why he had acted as he did, whether in his present judgment this course of action deserved approval or censure, and what reasons he could advance for the one or the other. The advantages of such a written defense over simply leaving things in the hands of his lawyer, who was far from perfect anyway, were obvious. After all, K. had no idea what action his lawyer was taking; in any case it wasn't much, it had been over a month now since he'd summoned him, nor had any of these earlier consultations given K. the impression the man would be able to do much for him. In the first place, he scarcely asked any questions. And yet there was so much to ask. Questions were the main thing. K. had the feeling he could ask all the necessary questions on his own. His lawyer on the other hand, instead of asking questions, did all the talking, or sat across from him in silence, leaning slightly forward over the desk, probably because of his poor hearing, tugging at a strand in the middle of his beard and looking down at the carpet, perhaps at the very spot where K. had lain with Leni. Now and then he gave K. a few empty
admonitions, as if talking to a child. Speeches as useless as they were boring, for which K. had no intention of paying one red cent in the final billing. When the lawyer seemed to feel he had humbled him adequately, he usually began to cheer him up a little again. He would tell him how he had already won or come close to winning many similar trials, trials which, if not quite so difficult in reality as his, appeared even more hopeless on the surface. He had a list of those trials right there in his drawer—with this he tapped some compartment or other in his desk—unfortunately he couldn't show him the documents, since they were officially secret. Nevertheless the extensive experience he had gained in all these trials would naturally be used to K.'s benefit. He had of course set to work immediately, and the first petition was already nearly finished. It was very important, for the first impression made by the defense often influenced the whole course of the proceedings. Unfortunately, and he felt he must point this out to K., on some occasions initial petitions were not even read by the court. They were simply put in the file with a note that for the time being the hearings and surveillance of the accused were much more important than anything put in writing. If the petitioner pressed the issue, it was added that once all the evidence had been collected, and prior to the verdict, this first petition would be considered as well, together with all other documents of course. Unfortunately that wasn't true either in most cases; the first petition was generally misplaced or completely lost, and even if it was retained to the very end, the lawyer had only heard this by way of rumor of course, it was scarcely even glanced at. All that was regrettable, but not entirely without justification; K. must not overlook the fact that the proceedings are not public, they can be made public if the court considers it necessary, but the Law does not insist upon it. As a result, the court records, and
above all the *writ of indictment*, are not available to the accused and his defense lawyers, so that in general it’s not known, or not known precisely, what the first petition should be directed against, and for that reason it can only be by chance that it contains something of importance to the case. Truly pertinent and reasoned petitions can only be devised later, when, in the course of the defendant’s interrogations, the individual points of the indictment and its basis emerge more clearly, or may be surmised. Under these conditions the defense is naturally placed in a very unfavorable and difficult position. But that too is intentional. For the defense is not actually countenanced by the Law, but only tolerated, and there is even some controversy as to whether the relevant passages of the Law can truly be construed to include even such tolerance. In the strict sense, therefore, there are no court-recognized lawyers; all those who appear before the court as lawyers are basically *shysters*. Of course that has an extremely degrading effect upon the entire profession, and the next time K. went to the law court offices, he should take a look at the Lawyers’ Room, that was quite a sight too. He would probably be shocked by the lot gathered there. The narrow, low room to which they were relegated was in itself an indication of the court’s contempt for these people. Light enters the room only through a small hatch so high up that if someone wants to look out, and incidentally get a nose full of smoke and a sooty face from the chimney just outside, he first has to find a colleague who will hoist him up on his back. For over a year now—to give just one more example of the poor conditions—there’s been a hole in the floor of the room, not large enough for a person to fall through, but big enough that one whole leg can sink in. The Lawyers’ Room is in the upper level of the attic, so if someone slips through, his leg hangs down into the lower level, right into the hall where the parties are waiting. It’s no exaggeration when such conditions are
described in lawyers’ circles as scandalous. Complaints to the administration don’t have the slightest effect, yet lawyers are strictly forbidden from changing anything in the room at their own expense. But there’s a reason they treat lawyers this way. They want to eliminate the defense as far as possible; everything is to be laid upon the defendant himself. Basically that’s not a bad position to take, but nothing would be more mistaken than to conclude from it that defendants have no need of lawyers before this court. On the contrary, there is no other court before which there is a greater need. For in general the proceedings are kept secret not only from the public but from the accused as well. Only insofar as possible, but to a very large extent it does prove possible. For even the accused has no access to the court records, and it’s very difficult to ascertain during the interrogations which documents are involved, particularly for the defendant, who after all is timid and disconcerted, and distracted by all sorts of cares. This is where the defense enters in. In general defense lawyers are not allowed to be present at the interrogations and so must question the defendant about an interrogation immediately upon its conclusion, if at all possible at the very door of the inquiry room, and deduce from the defendant’s often quite hazy accounts whatever might be of use to the defense. But that’s not what’s most important, since not much can be learned that way, though even here, as elsewhere, a skillful person can learn more than others. Nevertheless, the most important factor is still the lawyer’s personal contacts; they are the most valuable aspect of a defense. Now K. had no doubt already learned from his own experience that the lowest level of the court system is not entirely perfect, that it includes some employees who forget their duty and can be bribed, which in turn produces breaches, so to speak, in the strictly closed system of the court. Now this is where the majority of lawyers push their way in, bribing people and
pumping them for information; in fact in earlier days there were even cases of stolen files. There’s no denying a few momentary and even surprisingly positive results can be achieved on the defendant’s behalf by such means, and petty lawyers parade them proudly to lure new customers, but as far as the future progress of the trial is concerned they’re meaningless or worse. Only honest personal contacts are of true value, and with higher officials, by which is meant of course higher officials from the lower ranks. This is the sole means by which the progress of the trial can be influenced, imperceptibly at first, but more and more clearly as it moves along. Only a few lawyers can do that of course, and here K.’s choice had been fortunate indeed. There were only one or two lawyers who might possibly match Dr. Hind’s contacts. Of course these paid no attention to the lot in the Lawyers’ Room and had nothing to do with them. Their ties to the court officials, however, were correspondingly stronger. It wasn’t even always necessary for Dr. Huld to go to court, wait in the outer offices for the chance appearance of examining magistrates, and then, according to their mood, achieve what was generally a merely apparent success, and perhaps not even that. No, as K. had seen himself, officials, and relatively high ones at that, came to him, offered information willingly that was clear or at least easily interpreted, discussed the recent progress of the trial, indeed in some cases even allowed themselves to be convinced, gladly taking on the other’s point of view. Of course one didn’t dare trust them too far with respect to this latter trait; no matter how decisively they state their new intent, which is favorable to the defense, they may well go straight to their office and issue a decision for the next day that conveys the exact opposite, and perhaps even more severe with respect to the defendant than that which they had at first intended, and which they claimed to have entirely abandoned. Of course sobornaba y se espiaba, no hacía mucho tiempo, incluso, se produjeron robos de actas. No se podía dudar que de esa manera se podían conseguir resultados sorprendentemente favorables para el acusado, aunque sólo momentáneos. Los pequeños abogados los aprovechaban para hacerse publicidad y vanagloriarse, pero para el posterior transcurso del proceso no significaba nada o nada bueno. Lo que a fin de cuentas podía más proveer eran las buenas y sinceras relaciones personales y, además, con los funcionarios superiores, con lo que sólo se hacía referencia a los funcionarios superiores de los grados inferiores. Gracias a estas relaciones se podía influir en el desarrollo del proceso, al principio de una aparente inapreciable, más tarde con mayor claridad. Esto lo conseguían muy pocos abogados, y aquí la elección de K. se mostraba muy acertada. Tal vez sólo uno o dos abogados podían poseer unas relaciones similares a las suyas. Estos abogados, sin embargo, no se ocupaban de los clientes presentes en el despacho de abogados y no tenían nada que ver con ellos. Y precisamente esa circunstancia era la que fortalecía —vínculo con los funcionarios judiciales. Ni siquiera era necesario que el Dr. Huld acudiera a los tribunales, que esperase allí a la casual aparición del juez instructor y que consiguiera algún éxito, dependiendo del humor del magistrado, o ni siquiera eso. No, K ya lo había podido ver, los funcionarios, y, entre ellos, algunos superiores, se presentaban por su propia voluntad, ofrecían espontáneamente alguna información, clara o fácilmente interpretable, hablaban sobre el posterior desarrollo del proceso, sí, incluso había casos en que se dejaban convencer y adoptaban encantados los puntos de vista ajenos. No obstante, tampoco se podía confiar mucho en ellos en este último aspecto. Por muy positiva que fuese su opinión para la defensa, nada impedía que regresasen a su despacho y al día siguiente emitiesen una sentencia completamente contraria y mucho más severa para el acusado que la pensada en un primer momento, de la que, sin embargo, afirmaban estar convencidos del todo. Contra
there was no way to protect oneself against that, for what was said in private conversation was exactly that, a private conversation with no public consequences, even if the defense had not been otherwise constrained to retain the favor of those gentlemen. On the other hand, of course, it was also true that these gentlemen were not moved simply by humanitarianism, or feelings of personal friendship, to establish contact with the defense, only a competent one naturally, but did so because they were in a certain sense dependent upon them. Here the disadvantage of a court system that was grounded from its very beginnings in secrecy came to the fore. The officials lack contact with the common people; they’re well prepared for the normal, average trial, which rolls along its course almost on its own and needs only a push now and then, but faced with very simple cases or with particularly complex ones, they’re often at a loss; because they’re constantly constricted by the Law both night and day, they have no proper understanding of human relationships, and in such cases they feel that lack keenly. Then they come to the lawyer for advice, and behind him comes an assistant carrying the files, which are otherwise so secret. Many a gentleman one would least expect to find in such a situation might be discovered at this very window, gazing almost hopelessly out into the street, while at his desk the lawyer studies the files to offer his advice. Moreover one could see at such times how uncommonly seriously these gentlemen took their profession, and into what great despair they were thrown when, due to the very nature of the obstacles, they could not overcome them. In other ways too their position is no easy one, nor should one do them the injustice of regarding it as such. The gradations and ranks of the court are infinite, extending beyond the ken even of initiates. The proceedings in the courts of law are generally a mystery to the lower officials as well; therefore they can almost never follow the progress of the cases they are
working on throughout their course; the case enters their field of vision, often they know not whence, and continues on, they know not where. The lessons to be learned from the study of the individual stages of a trial, the final verdict and its basis, are lost to these officials. Their involvement is limited to that part of the trial circumscribed for them by the Law, and they generally know less about what follows, and thus about the results of their own efforts, than the defense, which as a rule remains in contact with the accused almost to the very end of the trial. So in this respect too, they can occasionally learn something of value from the defense. Was K. still surprised, bearing all this in mind, at the irritability of the officials, which sometimes expressed itself-as everyone soon learned-in an insulting manner toward the parties involved? All officials are irritable, even when they appear calm. Of course the petty lawyers suffer in particular from this. For instance the following story is told, and has every appearance of truth. An elderly official, a decent, quiet gentleman, had studied a difficult case, rendered particularly complex due to the lawyer’s petitions, for one entire day and night without a break—these officials are truly the most industrious of people. Now as morning approached, after twenty-four hours of probably not very productive work, he went to the outer door, waited in ambush, and threw every lawyer who tried to enter down the steps. The lawyers gathered on the landing below and discussed what they should do; on the one hand they have no real right to be admitted, so they can hardly start legal proceedings against the official, and as already mentioned, they have to be careful not to arouse the ire of the bureaucracy. On the other hand each day missed at court is a day lost, so it was important to them to get in. Finally they decided to try to wear the old gentleman down. One lawyer at a time...
would rush up the stairs and, offering the greatest possible passive resistance, allow himself to be thrown back down, where he would then be caught by his colleagues. That lasted for about an hour; then the old gentleman, who was already tired from working all night, grew truly exhausted and went back into his office. At first those below could hardly believe it, so they sent someone up to check behind the door to make sure there was really no one there. Only then did they enter, probably not even daring to grumble. For the lawyers-and even the least important of them has at least a partial overview of the circumstances-are far from wishing to introduce or carry out any sort of improvement in the court system, while-and this is quite characteristic-almost every defendant, even the most simple-minded among them, starts thinking up suggestions for improvement from the moment the trial starts, and in doing so often wastes time and energy that would be better spent in other ways. The only proper approach is to learn to accept existing conditions. Even if it were possible to improve specific details—which, however, is merely an absurd superstition—one would have at best achieved something for future cases, while in the process damaging oneself immeasurably by having attracted the attention of an always vengeful bureaucracy. Just don’t attract attention! Keep calm, no matter how much it seems counter to good sense. Try to realize that this vast judicial organism remains, so to speak, in a state of eternal equilibrium, and if you change something on your own where you are, you can cut the ground out from under your own feet and fall, while the vast organism easily compensates for the minor disturbance at some other spot-after all, everything is interconnected-and remains unchanged, if not, which is likely, even more resolute, more vigilant, more severe, more malicious. One should leave the task to the lawyers, instead of interfering with them. Reproaches are of little value, particularly when it seems the full import of what has caused them cannot be
conveyed, but he must say how much K. had hurt his own affair by his behavior toward the chief clerk of the court. This influential man must almost certainly be crossed off the list of those to whom one might turn on K.’s behalf. He pointedly refused to acknowledge even passing references to K.’s trial. In many ways the officials were like children. They were often so hurt by seemingly minor matters, though K.’s behavior, unfortunately, did not fall into that category, that they stopped speaking even with close friends, turning aside when they met them, and opposing them in every possible way. But then, surprisingly and for no apparent reason, they would allow themselves a laugh at some small joke attempted only because the situation seemed so hopeless, and were reconciled once more. It was both difficult and easy to relate to them; there were hardly any guidelines to go by. Sometimes it seemed amazing that an average lifetime sufficed to learn enough to work here with a modicum of success. Of course there are always dark hours, everyone has them, when it seems that one has accomplished nothing, when it seems as if the only trials that turned out well were those that were destined to do so from the very beginning, without any help at all, while all the others were lost in spite of following them so closely, in spite of all the effort, all the small apparent victories that gave such pleasure. Then of course nothing seems certain any longer, and if pressed specifically one does not even dare deny that trials that by nature should have turned out well were thrown off course precisely by the assistance offered. That too is a type of belief in oneself after all, but it is the only sort that remains. Lawyers are particularly susceptible to such attacks—they are of course mere attacks and nothing more—when a trial they have conducted satisfactorily up to a certain point is suddenly taken out of their hands. That’s probably the worst thing that can happen to a lawyer. It’s not the defendant who takes the trial neraban, y no se podía negar que K, con su actitud frente al jefe de departamento, había dañado mucho su causa. A ese hombre tan influyente, que pertenecía a aquellos que pueden hacer algo por él, ya había que tacharlo de la lista. Desoía incluso las menciones más fugaces del proceso y, además, intencionadamente. En algunas cosas los funcionarios se comportaban como niños. Con frecuencia se podían ofender por pequeñeces —y la actitud de K, por desgracia, no quedaba encuadrada en esta categoría—, y entonces dejaban de hablar incluso con buenos amigos, los evitaban y los perjudicaban en todo lo que podían. Pero de pronto, sorprendentemente, sin un motivo que lo explica, se les hacia reír con una broma, fruto de la desesperación, y se reconciliaban. El trato con ellos era al mismo tiempo difícil y fácil, no había reglas. A veces resultaba asombroso que una vida normal alcanzase para poder abarcar tanto y obtener aquí algún éxito laboral. Había, por supuesto, horas sombrías, como las que tiene cualquiera, en las que se creía no haber conseguido nada, en las que a uno le parecía que un proceso, con buenas perspectivas desde el principio hasta el final y con un buen resultado, podría haber llegado a la misma conclusión sin trabajo alguno, mientras otros muchos se habían perdido a pesar de todo el esfuerzo, de las muchas idas y venidas, de los pequeños éxitos aparentes, sobre los que uno tanto se alegraba. Entonces todo parecía inseguro y uno no osaría negar, incluso, que procesos con buenas expectativas se habían descarrilado precisamente por la ayuda prestada. También eso era una cuestión de confianza en uno mismo, y esa confianza era lo único que quedaba. A estos ataques —sólo eran pequeños ataques, caídas de ánimo, nada más— estaban expuestos los abogados cuando, de repente, se les quitaba un proceso que habían llevado durante mucho tiempo y satisfactoriamente. Esto era lo más enojoso que le podía ocurrir a un abogado. No era el acusado el que le quitaba
from them, indeed that probably never happens; once a defendant has engaged a particular lawyer, he has to stick with him no matter what. How could he possibly sustain himself alone, once he has enlisted aid? So that doesn’t happen, but it does indeed sometimes happen that the trial takes a direction the lawyer is not permitted to follow. The trial, the defendant, everything is simply withdrawn from the lawyer; in that case the best of connections with the officials are of no use, for they themselves know nothing. The trial has entered a stage where no further assistance can be given, where it is being handled by inaccessible courts of law, where even the defendant is no longer within reach of the lawyer. Then you come home one day to find on your desk all the many petitions you submitted so diligently and with such great hopes in the case; they’ve been returned; since they can’t be transferred to the new stage of the trial, they’re worthless scraps of paper. But that doesn’t mean the trial has been lost, not by any means, or at any rate there is no definitive reason to assume so, one simply knows nothing more about the trial, and won’t learn anything more either. But fortunately such cases are exceptions, and even should K.’s trial turn out to be one of them, it was still far removed from such a stage at the moment. So there was still ample opportunity for the lawyer to take action, and K. could rest assured that those opportunities would be seized. As he had mentioned, the petition had not yet been submitted, but there was no hurry about that, the preliminary discussions with the officials in charge were of much greater importance, and those had already taken place. With varying degrees of success, it must be frankly admitted. It was far better for the time being not to reveal details which might only affect K., unfavorably and make him overly hopeful or all too anxious; suffice it to say that some of them had responded quite favorably and proved quite cooperative, while others had responded less favorably, while by no means refusing their assistance. The

anxious
1 inquieto, angustiado, desasosegado, preocupado; to be anxious about sthg, estar preocupado por algo
2 (entusiastmado) interesado, ansioso, con ganas; I am anxious to meet him, tengo muchas ganas de conocerle
results were thus on the whole quite gratifying, although one mustn’t draw too many conclusions from them, since preliminary proceedings always started out that way and only further developments would reveal their true value. At any rate nothing was lost as yet, and if it still proved possible to win over the chief clerk of the court in spite of everything—various steps had already been taken toward that end—then the whole matter, as the surgeons say, was a clean wound and one could await what was to follow with confidence.

In such and similar speeches the lawyer was inexhaustible. They were repeated at every visit. Progress had always been made, but the nature of this progress could never be specified. He was always at work on the first petition, but it was never finished, which generally proved at the next visit to have been a major advantage, since the last time, and there had been no way of foreseeing this, the circumstances had been quite unfavorable for its submission. If, on occasion, exhausted by these speeches, K. remarked that even considering all the difficulties, things seemed to be progressing quite slowly, he received the rejoinder that the progress was not at all slow, but that things would doubtless be much further along had K. contacted the lawyer in a timely manner. Unfortunately he had neglected to do so, and this failure would result in further disadvantages, and not merely temporal ones.

The only welcome interruption during these visits was Leni, who always knew how to arrange things so that she served the lawyer’s tea in K.’s presence. Then she would stand behind K., apparently watching the lawyer as he bowed deeply over his cup, almost greedily, to pour his tea and drink it, while she secretly allowed K. to grasp her hand. Total silence reigned. The lawyer drank, K. squeezed Leni’s hand, and Leni sometimes dared to stroke K.’s hair softly. “You’re still here?” asked the lawyer, when he had finished. “I wanted to clear away the

dar. El resultado, por consiguiente, muy satisfactorio, aunque tampoco se podían sacar conclusiones, pues todas las vistas preliminares comenzaban así y sólo el posterior transcurso del proceso podría mostrar el valor de esas vistas. En todo caso, aún no había nada perdido y sí fuera posible ganarse al jefe de departamento —ya había emprendido algo en ese sentido—, entonces todo era como dirían los cirujanos, una herida limpia y se podía esperar el desarrollo posterior con confianza.

En discursos como éste el abogado era incansable. Se repitían en cada visita. Siempre había progresos, pero nunca podía comunicar de qué progresos se trataba. Se trabajaba sin cesar en el primer escrito, pero nunca se terminaba, lo que en la siguiente visita resultaba una gran ventaja, pues precisamente los últimos tiempos, lo que no se podía haber previsto, habían sido desfavorables para entregarlo. Si K algunas veces, agotado por el discurso, añadía que, teniendo en cuenta todas las dificultades, parecía que el asunto iba muy lento, se le replicaba que no iba nada lento, pero que ya habrían avanzado mucho más si K se hubiera dirigido al abogado en el momento oportuno. Por desgracia, había descuidado esa medida y un descuido así traería más desventajas, y no sólo temporales.

La única interrupción bienhechora en esas visitas era la aparición de Leni, que siempre sabía arreglarse para traer el té al abogado en presencia de K. Luego permanecía detrás de K., aparentando contemplar cómo el abogado se servía y sorbía inclinado el té, con una suerte de avaricia, y dejaba que K cogiese su mano en secreto. Reinaba un completo silencio. El abogado bebía, K estrechaba la mano de Leni y Leni se atrevía a veces a acariciar suavemente el cabello de K.

—¿Aún estás aquí? —preguntaba el abogado, después de haber terminado de beber.

—Quería llevarme el servicio
Was it consolation or despair the lawyer sought to produce? K. didn’t know, but he soon held it for an established fact that his defense was not in good hands. Everything the lawyer said might be true, although it was transparently clear he was primarily interested in emphasizing his own role and had probably never had a trial as important as he considered K.’s to be. But the constant emphasis on his personal contacts with officials remained suspicious. Were they being exploited solely to K.’s advantage? The lawyer never failed to remark that these were only lower-level officials, officials who were thus themselves in a position of dependence, and for whose advancement certain developments in the trials might presumably be of importance. Were they perhaps using the lawyer to effect such developments, which would of course be to the defendant’s disadvantage? Perhaps they didn’t do so in every trial, that would be unlikely; there were probably other trials in the course of which they allowed the lawyer certain advantages in exchange for his services, since they surely wished to maintain his good reputation undamaged. If that’s how things really stood, however, what tack would they take in K.’s trial, which, as the lawyer explained, was a very difficult and important one that had excited a great deal of attention at court from the very start? There couldn’t be much doubt about what they would do. Signs of it could already be seen in the fact that the first petition had still not been submitted, although the trial had already lasted for months, and that according to the lawyer everything was still in the beginning stages, which was of course admirably suited to lull the defendant to sleep and keep him in a state of helplessness, so that they could assault him suddenly with the verdict, or at least announce that the inquiry had concluded.

¿Era consuelo o desesperación lo que quería conseguir el abogado? K. no lo sabía, no obstante pronto tuvo por seguro que su defensa no estaba en buenas manos. Es posible que todo lo que el abogado contaba fuese verdad, aunque estaba claro que siempre quería permanecer en un primer plano y que muy probablemente jamás había llevado un proceso tan grande como, según su opinión, era el de K. Lo más sospechoso, sin embargo, eran las supuestas relaciones con los funcionarios, de las que no dejaba de vanagloriarse. ¿Acaso debían ser empleados sólo en beneficio de K? El abogado jamás se olvidaba de indicar que siempre se trataba funcionarios inferiores, es decir de funcionarios en puestos muy dependientes, y cuyo ascenso podría verse influido por ciertos cambios en el proceso. ¿No podrían estar utilizando al abogado para conseguir cambios que, por supuesto, siempre serían contrarios al acusado? Probablemente no lo hicieran en todos los procesos, cierto, pero seguro que habían procesos en los que podían conseguir ventajas a través del abogado, pues les interesaba mantener incólume su buen nombre. Si era así, ¿de qué modo podrían intervenir en el proceso de K., el cual, como aclaraba el abogado, era un proceso muy difícil e importante y había llamado la atención en los tribunales desde el principio? No era muy difícil sospechar lo que harían. Se podían descubrir algunas señales de esto en el mero hecho de que ni siquiera se había entregado el primer escrito, a pesar de que el proceso ya duraba meses y según las indicaciones del abogado se encontraba en los inicios, lo que, naturalmente, era muy adecuado para adormecer al acusado y mantenerlo desamparado, hasta que, de repente, se abalanzaban sobre él con la sentencia o, al menos, con la comunicación de que la investigación, concluida...
unfavorably for him and was being passed on to higher administrative authorities.

It was absolutely necessary for K. to intervene personally. It was precisely in states of extreme fatigue, as on this winter morning, when his thoughts were drifting aimlessly, that this conclusion seemed most inescapable. The contempt he had previously borne for the trial no longer applied. If he had been alone in the world he could have easily disregarded the trial, although then the trial would surely never have occurred at all. But now his uncle had already taken him to the lawyer, and family considerations were involved; his job was no longer totally independent of the course of the trial, he himself had been incautious enough to mention the trial to a few acquaintances with an inexplicable feeling of self-satisfaction, others had heard about it in unknown ways, his relationship to Fräulein Bürstner seemed to fluctuate with the trial itself—in short, it was no longer a matter of accepting or rejecting the trial, he was in the midst of it and had to defend himself. If he was tired, he was in trouble.

There was of course no reason to be overly concerned for the time being. He had managed to work his way up to a high position in the bank in a relatively short period of time, and, respected by all, maintain that position; all he had to do now was turn the abilities that had made that possible partially toward his trial and there was no doubt everything would turn out well. Above all, if he wanted to get anywhere, he had to reject the notion of any possible guilt right from the start. There was no guilt. The trial was no different than a major business deal of the sort he had often concluded advantageously for the bank, a deal in which, as was customary, various dangers lurked that must be avoided. To accomplish this, no notion of any sort of guilt dared be entertained of course, all thought must be focused as clearly as possible on one’s own advantage. From this point of view it was also unavoidable that the lawyer be en su perjuicio, se había trasladado a estancias superiores.

Era absolutamente necesario que K actuara por su propia cuenta. Precisamente en momentos de gran cansancio, como en esa mañana invernal, cuando todo pasaba en su cabeza, ese convencimiento le parecía irrefutable. El desprecio que había sentido en un principio hacia el proceso había desaparecido. Si hubiera estado solo en el mundo, habría podido despejar fácilmente el proceso, aunque estaba seguro que en ese caso no habría habido proceso. Pero el tío le había llevado al abogado, había intereses familiares que contaban. Su posición no era por completo independiente del curso del proceso, él mismo había mencionado imprudentemente el asunto, con una inexplicable satisfacción, a conocidos, otros se habían enterado a través de fuentes desconocidas, la relación con la señorita Bürstner parecía vacilar conforme al curso que tomaba el proceso, en resumen, ya no tenía la elección de aceptar o rechazar el proceso, estaba metido en él de lleno y tenía que defenderse. Si estaba cansado, peor para él.

Pero por ahora no había motivo para una preocupación exagerada. Había sabido ascender en el banco, en relativamente poco tiempo, a una posición elevada, y mantenerse en ella reconocido por todos. Sólo tenía que emplear estas capacidades, que le habían posibilitado su éxito, en el proceso y no había duda de que todo saldría bien. Ante todo, si quería lograr algo, era necesario rechazar de antemano cualquier pensamiento sobre una posible culpabilidad. No había culpa alguna. El proceso no era otra cosa que un gran negocio, como él mismo los había cerrado anteriormente con ventaja para el banco, un negocio en el cual, como era la regla, amenazaban distintos peligros, que, sin embargo, se podían evitar. Para alcanzar este objetivo, no podía perder el tiempo pensando en una posible culpa, sino aferrarse al pensamiento del beneficio propio. Considerado desde esta perspectiva, también era inevitable privar al abogado
dismissed as soon as possible, preferably that very evening. It’s true that was unheard of according to his stories, and no doubt quite insulting, but K. couldn’t allow his own efforts in the case to run into hindrances that were perhaps occasioned by his own lawyer. Once he had shaken off his lawyer, however, he would need to submit the petition immediately, and to keep pressuring them, daily if possible, to consider it. To accomplish this K. would obviously have to do more than simply sit in the hall with the others and place his hat beneath the bench. He, or the women, or some other messengers, would have to besiege the officials day after day and force them to sit down at their desks and study K.’s petition, instead of staring through the grille into the hall. These efforts must be continuous, with everything organized and supervised; for once the court was going to run into a defendant who knew how to stand up for his rights.

Aunque K. tenía la esperanza de aplicar este método, la dificultad de redactar el escrito le resultaba insuperable. Hacia una semana había pensado con un sentimiento de vergüenza que en algún momento se vería obligado a redactar él mismo ese escrito, pero jamás hubiera creído que pudiera ser tan difícil. Recordó cómo una mañana, cuando estaba desbordado por el trabajo, lo dejó repentinamente todo a un lado y tomó un cuaderno e intentó bosquejar un escrito judicial para ponerlo a disposición del abogado, y cómo precisamente en ese instante se abrió la puerta del despacho contiguo y entró el subdirector riendo. Fue muy desagradable para K., aunque, naturalmente, el subdirector no se había reído de su escrito, del que no sabía nada, sino sobre un chiste bursátil que acababa de oír, un chiste que necesitaba, para comprenderse, de un dibujo, que el subdirector, inclinado sobre la mesa de K. y con su lápiz, trazó en el cuaderno destinado a la redacción del escrito.

Today K. no longer thought of de su defensa, aquella misma noche si fuera posible. Según lo que le había contado, sería algo insólito e, incluso, insultante, pero K. no podía tolerar que sus esfuerzos en el proceso tropezasen con impedimentos que podían provenir de su propio abogado. Una vez que hubiera prescindido del abogado, tendría que presentar el escrito de inmediato e insistir todos los días para que lo tuvieran en cuenta. Para alcanzar este objetivo no sería suficiente que K. se quedara sentado como los demás en el corredor y colocara su sombrero bajo el banco. Él mismo, las mujeres o algún mensajero tendrían que perseguir a los funcionarios para obligarlos a sentarse en la mesa, en vez de mirar a través de las rejas hacia el corredor, y así presionarlos para estudiar el escrito de K. No había que cejar en estos esfuerzos, todo tenía que ser organizado y vigilado, la justicia tenía que toparse, por fin, con un acusado que sabía hacer valer sus derechos.

Pero K. ya no conocía la ver-
shame; the petition had to be written. If he couldn’t find time for it at the office, which was quite likely, he would have to do it nights at home. And if the nights weren’t sufficient, he would have to take a leave of absence. Anything but stop halfway, that was the most senseless course of all, not only in business, but anywhere, at any time. Admittedly, the petition meant an almost endless task. One needn’t be particularly faint of heart to be easily persuaded of the impossibility of ever finishing the petition. Not because of laziness or deceit, the only things that kept the lawyer from finishing, but because without knowing the nature of the charge and all its possible ramifications, his entire life, down to the smallest actions and events, would have to be called to mind, described, and examined from all sides. And what a sad job that was. Perhaps, someday after retirement, it might provide a suitable occupation for a mind turned childish, and help to while away the lengthening days. But now, when K. needed all his wits for his work, when, given that he was still on the rise and already a threat to the vice president, every hour went speeding by, and when he wished to enjoy the brief evenings and nights as a young man, now he was supposed to start writing his petition. Otra vez sus pensamientos se tornaron en quejas. Casi sin advertirlo, sólo para ponerles fin, apretó el botón del timbre que se oía en el antedespacho. Mientras lo presionaba miró la hora. Eran las once, habían transcurrido dos horas; con sus reflexiones había perdido un tiempo precioso y estaba más cansado que antes. De todos modos, tampoco había perdido el tiempo del todo. Había tomado decisiones que podían ser muy valiosas. El empleado trajo además del correo dos tarjetas de visita pertenecientes a dos señores que ya esperaban a K desde hacía un tiempo. Precisamente se trataba de importantes clientes del banco a los que no se les debería haber hecho esperar en ningún caso. ¿Por qué habían venido en un momento tan poco propicio y por qué, parecían preguntarse aquellos señores detrás de la puerta cerrada, por qué empleaba el laborioso K el
business time for his private affairs. Tired from what he had already gone through, and tiredly awaiting what was yet to come, K. rose to greet the first of them.

He was a short, jovial gentleman, a manufacturer K. knew well. He apologized for interrupting K. in the midst of important work, while K. apologized in turn for keeping the manufacturer waiting so long. But even this apology was delivered so mechanically and with such false emphasis that the manufacturer, had he not been entirely engrossed in the business at hand, would surely have noticed it. Instead he hurriedly pulled figures and tables from every pocket, spread them before K., explained various entries, corrected a small error in the calculations that he’d caught in even this hasty survey, reminded K. of a similar transaction he had concluded with him around a year ago, mentioned in passing that this time another bank was making great sacrifices to secure the deal, and finally fell silent to hear K.’s reaction. K. had actually followed the manufacturer’s explanations closely at first and had been caught up by the thought of a major business deal, but unfortunately not for long; he soon stopped listening, nodded a while longer at the more emphatic exclamations of the manufacturer, but in the end abandoned even that and limited himself to staring at the bald head bent over the papers, wondering when the manufacturer would finally realize that his entire presentation was in vain. As he now fell silent, K. actually believed at first it was meant to give him an opportunity to confess he could no longer listen. But to his regret he saw from the expectant gaze of the manufacturer, who was obviously prepared for any possible rejoinder, that the business conference was going to continue. So he ducked his head as if at an order and began moving his pencil back and forth above the papers, stopping here and there to stare at a number. The manufacturer sensed objections: perhaps the figures weren’t really firm, perhaps they weren’t truly conclusive, in any

Era un señor pequeño y alegre. Lamentó haber molestado a K en un trabajo importante y K lamentó por su parte haber hecho esperar al fabricante tanto tiempo. Pero esa disculpa la expresó de un modo tan maquinal, con una acentuación tan falsa, que el fabricante, si no hubiera estado tan sumido en sus asuntos de negocios, lo habría advertido. En vez de eso, sacó a toda prisa, de todos sus bolsillos, cuartillas llenas de cifras y tablas, las extendió ante K., le aclaró algunos detalles y corrigió un pequeño error de cálculo que le había llamado la atención al supervisarlo superficialmente, luego recordó a K. que hacía un año había cerrado con él un negocio similar y añadió de pasada que esta vez había otro banco que se interesaba en el proyecto. Finalmente, se calló para oír la opinión de K. Éste había seguido al principio la explicación del fabricante, también él había reconocido la importancia del negocio, pero, por desgracia, no por mucho tiempo; pronto perdió el hilo, se limitó a asentir con la cabeza a las aclaraciones del fabricante y, poco después, omitió hasta eso, dedicándose simplemente a contemplar la cabeza calva inclinada sobre el papel y a preguntarse cuándo se daría cuenta el fabricante de que todos sus esfuerzos eran inútiles. Cuando se calló, K. creyó en un principio que eso sólo ocurriría para darle la oportunidad de reconocer que era incapaz de escuchar nada. Por desgracia, notó en la mirada tensa del fabricante, quien parecía estar preparado para cualquier eventualidad, que la entrevista de negocios tenía que continuar. Así que inclinó la cabeza, como si se le hubiera impartido a orden y comenzó a desplazar el lápiz por los papeles, deteniéndose un lugar u otro y contemplando fugazmente alguna cifra. El fabricante supuso que tenía objeciones, era posible que las cifras no cuadraran, tal vez no fueran lo decisivo, en
case the manufacturer placed his hand on the papers and, drawing right up against K., launched once more into a general description of the project. “It’s complicated,” K. said, pursing his lips, and since the papers, the only thing he could grasp, were covered, he slumped against the arm of his chair. He glanced up only weakly even when the door to the head office opened and, somewhat blurred, as if behind a gauzy veil, the figure of the vice president appeared. K. gave this no further thought, but simply observed the result, which pleased him greatly. For the manufacturer immediately jumped up from his chair and rushed toward the vice president; K. would have had him move ten times faster however, for he feared the vice president might disappear. His fear was unwarranted: the gentlemen met, shook hands, and walked together toward K.’s desk. The manufacturer complained because the financial officer had shown so little inclination for the project and pointed toward K. who, beneath the vice president’s gaze, bent over the papers once more. As the two leaned against the desk and the manufacturer now began to try to win over the vice president, it seemed to K. as if the two men, whose size he mentally exaggerated, were negotiating with each other about him. Slowly he tried to ascertain with cautiously upturned eyes what was happening above him, took one of the sheets of paper from the desk without looking at it, placed it on the palm of his hand, and lifted it at last to the men as he himself stood up. He had nothing in particular in mind as he did so, but simply acted in the belief that he would have to behave thus when he finally prepared the grand petition that would totally exonerate him. The vice president, who had followed the conversation with the closest attention, simply glanced at the sheet, not even bothering to read it, since whatever was of importance to the financial officer was of no importance to him, took it from K.’s hand, said: “Thanks, I already know all about it,” and laid it back calmly on the desk. K. gave him a bitter sidelong glance. But the vice president didn’t notice at all, or if he did notice, it only amused him; he todo caso el fabricante tapó los papeles con la mano y, aproximándose más a K, comenzó a dar una idea general del negocio.

―Es difícil —dijo K frunciendo los labios y reclinándose contra el brazo de su sillón, ya que los papeles, lo único legible, estaban tapados. Incluso miró débilmente hacia arriba cuando se abrió la puerta del despacho contiguo y apareció, algo borroso, como si estuviera detrás de un velo, el subdirector. K ya no pudo reflexionar más, simplemente auspició el resultado, que sería satisfactorio para él. Pues el fabricante se levantó de un salto y se apresuró a saludar al subdirector, K, sin embargo, hubiese querido que se hubiera levantado diez veces más mudo, ya que temía que el subdirector pudiera desaparecer. Era un temor inútil, los señores se saludaron y se acercaron juntos a la mesa de K. El fabricante se quejó de que había encontrado poco interés por fiarse del gerente hacia el negocio y señaló a K, que, bajo la mirada del subdirector, se inclinó de nuevo sobre los papeles. Cuando ambos se apoyaron en la mesa y el fabricante intentó ganarse al subdirector, a K le pareció como si dos hombres, cuya estatura él se imaginó exagerada, estuvieran discutiendo sobre él. Lentamente, elevando los ojos con precaución, intentó enterarse de lo que ocurría arriba, tomó al azar un papel de la mesa, lo puso en la palma de la mano y lo levantó poco a poco, mientras se levantaba, hacia los señores. Al hacerlo no pensó en nada concreto, sólo tenía la impresión de que así era como tendría que comportarse si hubiera terminado su gran escrito judicial que finalmente le aliviaría de toda carga. El subdirector, que prestaba gran atención al fabricante, miró fugazmente el papel, pero no lo leyó, pues lo que era importante para el gerente no lo era para él, se limitó a cogerlo de la mano de K y dijo:

―Gracias, ya lo sé —y lo volvió a colocar tranquilamente en la mesa. K lo miró de soslayo con amargura. El subdirector, sin embargo, no lo notó o, en el caso de haberlo notado, le produjo un efecto positivo, pues
laughed aloud several times, put the manufacturer at an obvious loss once with a shrewd reply, but quickly smoothed things over by raising an objection to his own position, and finally invited him to join him in his office, where they could bring the matter to a close.

“It’s a very important project,” he said to the manufacturer, “I see that quite clearly. And our chief financial officer”—even this remark was actually addressed only to the manufacturer—“will certainly be pleased if we take it off his hands. It’s a matter that requires calm consideration. But he appears overburdened today, and a number of people have already been waiting hours for him in the outer office.”

K. retained just enough self-control to turn away from the vice president and direct his friendly but rigid smile solely to the manufacturer; otherwise he made no attempt to intervene, leaned forward slightly with both hands propped on his desk like a clerk at his station, and looked on as the two men continued talking, picked up the papers from the desk, and disappeared into the head office.

While still in the doorway the manufacturer turned, said he wouldn’t take his leave as yet, but would of course inform the financial officer of the outcome of the discussion, and that he still had one other small matter to mention to him.

At last K. was alone. He had no intention of admitting any other clients, and he was only vaguely conscious of how pleasant it was that the people outside believed he was still dealing with the manufacturer, so that no one, not even his assistant, could enter. He went to the window,—sat down on the broad sill, held on tightly to the handle with one hand, and looked out onto the square. The snow was still falling; the day had not yet brightened.

He sat like that for a long time, without knowing what was actually troubling him, just glancing over his shoulder with a start from time to time at the door to the waiting room, where he mistakenly thought he heard a noise. But when no one arrived, he relaxed, went to the washbasin, washed his

rió con frecuencia, confundio al fabricante con una réplica aguda, le sacó de la confusión haciéndose a sí mismo un reproche y, finalmente, le invitó a ir a su despacho para terminar allí el asunto.

—Es un negocio muy importante—le dijo al fabricante—, ya lo veo. Y al señor gerente—y al hacer esta indicación siguió hablando sólo con el fabricante—le gustará con toda certeza que le privemos de él. El asunto reclama una reflexión cuidadosa. El gerente parece hoy, sin embargo, sobrecargado de trabajo, aún espera gente desde hace horas en el antedespacho.

K tuvo la suficiente serenidad para apartar la mirada del subdirector y dirigirle una sonrisa amable pero rígida al fabricante, aparte de eso no emprendió nada, se apoyó con las dos manos en el escritorio, como un dependiente de comercio detrás del mostrador, y contempló cómo ambos señores recogían, mientras conversaban, todos los papeles de la mesa y desaparecían en el despacho del subdirector. Antes de salir, el fabricante se volvió y le dijo que no se despedía, que informaría naturalmente al gerente sobre el éxito de la entrevista y que aún tenía que comunicarle algo.

Al fin estaba solo. No pensó en recibir al resto de los clientes. Era agradable pensar que la gente del antedespacho creería que aún estaba hablando con el fabricante, así no entraría nadie, ni siquiera el ordenanza. Fue hacia la ventana, se sentó en el antepecho, asió el picaporte con la mano y contempló la plaza. Aún caía la nieve, no había aclarado.

Asi permaneció mucho tiempo sin saber lo que realmente le preocupaba, sólo de vez en cuando miraba asustado por encima del hombro hacia la puerta del antedespacho, donde creía haber oído erróneamente un ruido. Pero como nadie venía, se fue tranquilizando. A continuación, entró en
face with cold water, and returned to his place at the window with a clearer head. The decision to take charge of his own defense appeared more momentous now than he had originally assumed. So long as he had shifted the burden of his defense to his lawyer the trial had not affected him all that much; he had observed it from afar and could scarcely be touched by it directly; he could check up on his case whenever he wished, but he could also pull his head back whenever he wanted to. Now, on the other hand, if he intended to undertake his own defense, he would have to expose himself fully to the court for the moment; the result would eventually be his full and definitive release, but in order to achieve this, he must temporarily place himself in far greater danger than before. If he had any doubts on that score, today’s meeting with the vice president and the manufacturer offered ample proof. How could he have just sat there, totally paralyzed by the mere decision to defend himself? What would things be like later? The days that lay ahead! Would he find the path that led through it all to a favorable end? Didn’t a painstaking defense—any other kind would be senseless—simultaneously imply the necessity of cutting himself off as far as possible from everything else? Would he successfully survive that? And how was he supposed to do that here at the bank? It wasn’t just a matter of the petition, for which a leave might perhaps suffice, although requesting one just now would be taking a great chance; it was a matter of an entire trial, the length of which was unforeseeable. What an obstacle had suddenly been thrown in the path of K.’s career!

And now he was expected to work for the bank?—He glanced over at the desk.—Now he was supposed to admit clients and deal with them? While his trial rolled on, while the officials of the court were up there in the attic going over the trial documents, he was supposed to conduct bank
business? Didn’t that seem like a form of torture, sanctioned by the court, a part of the trial itself, accompanying it? And would anyone in the bank take his special situation into account when judging his work? No one, not ever. His trial was not entirely unknown, although it wasn’t quite clear who knew about it and how much. He hoped, however, that the rumor had not yet reached the vice president; otherwise there would have already been some clear sign of how, without the least regard for collegiality or common decency, he would use it against K. And the president? There was no doubt that he was favorably inclined toward K., and if he were to learn about the trial, he would probably try to make things easier for K. as far as he could, but with little success to be sure, since now that the counterweight K. had offered up to this point was starting to weaken, he was falling increasingly under the influence of the vice president, who was also taking advantage of the president’s precarious state of health to strengthen his own position. Then what hope was there for K.? Perhaps he weakened his own resistance by such reflections, and yet it was also necessary to avoid self-deception and to see everything as clearly as possible at that moment.

For no particular reason, simply to avoid returning to his desk for the time being, he opened the window. It was hard to open; he had to use both hands to turn the handle. Then fog mingled with smoke blew in through the window from top to bottom and filled the room with the faint smell of burning. A few flakes of snow drifted in as well. “A nasty autumn,” the manufacturer said behind him, having entered the room unnoticed after leaving the vice president. K. nodded and looked nervously at the manufacturer’s briefcase, from which he would now no doubt pull the papers to report the results of his discussion with the vice president. The manufacturer, however, followed K.’s gaze, tapped his briefcase, and said without opening it: “You want to hear how it turned out. Not too badly. I’ve practically got a signed contract in my pocket. A charming man, your rios judiciales se sentaban ante los escritos de su proceso? ¿No parecía todo una tortura, reconocida por la justicia, y que acompañaba al proceso? ¿Y se tendría en cuenta en el banco a la hora de juzgar su trabajo la situación delicada en la que se encontraba? Nunca jamás. Su proceso tampoco era tan desconocido, aunque no estuviera muy claro quién sabía de él y cuánto. Aparentemente el rumor no había llegado hasta el subdirector, si no ya se habría visto claramente cómo éste lo utilizaba contra K, sin espíritu de solidaridad y sin la más mínima humanidad. ¿Y el director? Cierto, mostraba simpatía hacia K, y si hubiese sabido algo del proceso habría querido ayudarle aligerándole el trabajo, pero no hubiera intervenido, pues ahora que se había perdido el equilibrio formado por K quedaba sometido a la influencia del subdirector, quien se aprovechaba del estado de debilidad del director para fortalecer su propio poder. ¿Qué podía esperar entonces K? (32) Era posible que con tanta reflexión estuviera debilitando su capacidad de resistencia, pero también resultaba necesario no hacerse ilusiones y verlo todo con la mayor claridad posible.

Sin un motivo especial, sólo para no tener que volver al escritorio, abrió la ventana. Se abría con dificultad, tenía que girar el picaporte con ambas manos. Al abrirse penetró una bocanada de niebla mezclada con humo que se extendió por toda la habitación, acompañada de un ligero olor a quemado. También penetraron algunos copos de nieve.

—Un otoño horrible —dijo el fabricante detrás de K, que había entrado desde el despacho del subdirector sin que K lo hubiese advertido. K asintió y miró, inquieto, la cartera del fabricante, de la que parecía querer sacar los papeles para comunicarle los resultados de su entrevista con el subdirector. Pero el fabricante siguió la mirada de K, golpeó su cartera y dijo sin abrirla:

—Quieres oír qué tal ha ido. No ha ido mal. Casi llevó el negocio cerrado en la cartera. Un hombre encantador,
vice president, but not without his dangerous side.” He laughed, shook K.’s hand, and tried to get him to laugh as well. But now it struck K. as suspicious that the manufacturer didn’t want to show him the papers, and he found nothing in the manufacturer’s remarks to laugh about. “My dear sir,” said the manufacturer, “you’re probably suffering from the weather. You look so dejected today.” “Yes,” said K. and pressed his hand to his forehead, “a headache, family problems.”

---

Señor gerente—dijo el fabricante—, le sienta mal este tiempo. Parece deprimido.

—Sí—dijo K y se llevó una mano a la sien—, dolores de cabeza, preocupaciones familiares.

---

Ya lo conozco—dijo el fabricante, que era un hombre siempre con prisas y no podía escuchar tranquilamente a nadie—, cada uno tiene que llevar su cruz.

---

K había dado un paso involuntario hacia la puerta, como si quisiera acompañar al fabricante, pero éste dijo:

—Aún tengo algo que decirle al señor gerente. Temo importunarle precisamente hoy con esto, pero ya he estado dos veces aquí y siempre lo he olvidado. Si sigo aplazándolo, al final ya no tendrá ningún sentido. Y sería una pena, porque es muy probable que mi información sea valiosa. Antes de que K hubiese tenido tiempo para responder, el fabricante se le acercó, le golpeó ligeramente en el pecho y dijo voz baja:

—Usted está procesado, ¿verdad?

K retrocedió y exclamó:

—¿Se lo ha dicho el subdirector?

—No, no—dijo el fabricante—, ¿de dónde podría saberlo el subdirector? —¿Y usted?—dijo K recuperando algo el sosiego.

—Yo me entero aquí y allá de alguna cosa relativa a los tribunales—dijo el fabricante—, precisamente de eso quería hablárle.

—¡Tanta gente está en contacto con los tribunales!—dijo K con la cabeza inclinada y llevó al fabricante hasta la mesa. Se sentaron como antes y el fabricante continuó:

—Por desgracia no es mucho lo que le puedo decir. Pero en estas cosas no se debe despreciar nada por mínimo que sea. Por lo demás, siento cierta inclinación a ayudarle, aunque mi ayuda sea modesta. Hasta ahora hemos sido buenos compañeros de negocios, ¿verdad? K quiso disculparse por su comportamiento en la entrevista de ese día, pero el fabricante no toleró ninguna interrupción. Puso
he shoved his briefcase high under his arm to show he was in a hurry and went on: “I know about your trial from a certain Titorelli. He's a painter; Titorelli is just the name he goes by as an artist, I don’t know his real one. He’s been coming to my office off and on for years, bringing small paintings for which I always give him a sort of alms—he’s almost a beggar. They’re pretty pictures by the way, landscapes of heaths and the like. These sales we’re both long since used to them—go smoothly enough. But at one point he started repeating his visits too often, I raised objections, we started talking; I was interested in how he managed to support himself on his art alone and learned to my astonishment that his major source of income was portrait painting. He said he worked for the court. For which court, I asked. And then he told me about the court. You can no doubt well imagine how astonished I was at his stories. Since then, whenever he visits, I hear some item of news about the court, and so I’ve gradually gained a certain insight into the matter. Of course Titorelli gossips a lot, and I often have to turn him off, not simply because he surely lies as well, but above all because a businessman like myself, almost collapsing beneath the burdens of his own affairs, can’t spend too much time worrying about those of others. But that’s beside the point. Perhaps it occurred to me now—Titorelli could be of some help to you; he knows several judges, and even if he doesn’t have much influence himself, he could still advise you on how to gain access to various influential people. And even if this sort of advice is not in and of itself crucial, in my opinion it might take on great importance in your possession. After all, you’re practically a lawyer. I always say: Chief Financial Officer K. is practically a lawyer. Oh, I have no worries about your trial. But would you like to visit Titorelli? With my recommendation he’ll certainly try to do everything he can. I really think you should go. It doesn’t have to be today of course, some time or other, at your convenience. Of course—let me add this—you mustn’t feel obliged to actually visit Titorelli just because I’m the...
one who advised you to do so. No, if you think you can get along without him, it would be better to leave him out of it entirely. Perhaps you already have some precise plan Titorelli might disturb. Then no, you most assuredly shouldn’t go. A person is naturally reluctant to allow himself to be advised by a fellow like that. As you wish, then. Here’s the letter of introduction and here’s the address.”.

Disappointed, K. took the letter and stuck it in his pocket. Even in the most favorable of cases, any advantage he might gain from the recommendation was small compared to the harm that lay in the fact that the manufacturer knew about his trial, and that the painter was spreading the news about him. He could hardly force himself to offer a few words of thanks to the manufacturer, who was already on his way to the door. “I’ll go there,” he said, as he saw the manufacturer off at the door, “or, since I’m so busy right now, I’ll write to say he should come to my office sometime.” “I knew you’d figure out how best to handle it,” said the manufacturer. “Of course I thought you’d prefer to avoid inviting people like this Titorelli to the bank to discuss your trial. It’s not always a good idea to send letters to such people either. But you’ve no doubt thought everything over carefully and know what to do.”

K. nodded and accompanied the manufacturer on through the waiting room. In spite of his calm exterior, he was shocked at himself. He’d only said he would write Titorelli to show the manufacturer that he appreciated his recommendation and that he would seriously consider the possibility of getting together with Titorelli, but if he had thought that Titorelli’s assistance might be of use, he would not have hesitated to actually write to him. The resulting danger, however, had not occurred to him until the manufacturer made his remark.

Could he really rely so little on his own judgment already? If he could allow himself to send an explicit letter of invitation to a man of questionable character to come to the bank, in order, separated only by a door from the vice president, to seek his advice on his trial, was
it not possible, and even probable, that he was overlooking other dangers, or heading straight for them? There wouldn't always be someone standing at his side to warn him. And now of all times, when he should be gathering all his strength to act, previously unknown doubts about his own judgment had to arise. Were the difficulties he was having carrying out his office work going to begin in his trial as well? Certainly now he no longer understood how he could ever have considered writing to Titorelli and inviting him to the bank.

He was still shaking his head about it when the assistant stepped up beside him and pointed out three gentlemen sitting there in the outer room on a bench. They had been waiting to see K. for some time. Now that the assistant was speaking to K. they stood up, each seeking a favorable opportunity to approach K. before the others. Since the bank had been inconsiderate enough to waste their time in the waiting room, they were not about to show any further consideration themselves.

“Sir,” one of them was saying. But K. had asked the assistant to bring him his winter coat and, as the assistant helped him on with it, said to all three: “Pardon me, gentlemen, but unfortunately I have no time to receive you now. I do beg your pardon, but I have an urgent business errand to attend to and have to leave immediately. You see how long I’ve been tied up. Would you be so kind as to come again tomorrow, or some other time? Or could we possibly handle the matter by phone? Or could you tell me briefly now what it is you wanted and I’ll give you a full reply in writing. Of course the best thing would be to come again soon.”

K.’s suggestions so astonished the gentlemen, who had evidently waited entirely in vain, that they stared at each other in total speechlessness.

“Then, is it settled then?” asked K., turning to the assistant, who now brought him his hat as well. Through the open door of K.’s office one could see that the snow was falling much more heavily outside. Therefore K.
turned up his coat collar and buttoned it up to his neck.

Just at that moment the vice president stepped out of the adjoining room, smiled as he saw K. in his winter coat conferring with the men, and asked: “Are you on your way out, Herr K.?” “Yes,” said K., drawing himself up, “I have a business errand to attend to.” But the vice president had already turned to the other men. “And these gentlemen?” he asked. “I believe they’ve been waiting a long time.” “We’ve already worked that out,” said K. But now the men could be held back no longer; they surrounded K. and declared that they wouldn’t have waited all these hours if they hadn’t had important business that needed to be discussed at once, in detail and privately, person to person. The vice president listened to them for a while, regarded K., who held his hat in his hand and was wiping a few spots of dust off it, and then said: “Gentlemen there’s a simple solution. If you’ll be kind enough to come along with me, I will gladly confer with you in place of the financial officer. Of course your business must be discussed at once. We’re businessmen like yours, and we know how valuable a businessman’s time is. Won’t you come in?” And he opened the door that led into the waiting room of his office.

How good the vice president was at appropriating everything K. was forced to relinquish! But wasn’t K. relinquishing more than was really necessary? While he was running off to an unknown painter with vague and, he must admit, quite slender hopes, his reputation here was suffering irreparable damage. It would probably have been much better to remove his winter coat and try to win back at least the two gentlemen who were still waiting in the next room. And K. might have tried to do so, had he not seen the vice president in his office, searching through the bookcase as if it were his own. As K. approached the door in agitation, the vice president exclaimed: “Oh, you haven’t left yet.” He turned his face toward him, its many deeply scored lines seeming to signal strength rather

En este instante, el subdirector salió de su despacho, miró sonriendo cómo K., con el abrigo puesto, trataba con los señores, y preguntó: —¿Se va ya, señor gerente? —Sí —dijo K enderezándose—. Tengo que terminar un negocio. Pero el subdirector ya se había vuelto hacia los señores. —¿Y los señores? —preguntó—. Ya esperan desde hace tiempo.

—Ya nos hemos puesto de acuerdo —dijo K. Pero los señores ya no se callaron, rodearon a K y explicaron que no habrían esperado tantas horas si sus asuntos no fueran importantes y no fuera necesario tratar los confidenciales y detalladamente. El subdirector les prestó atención, contempló a K, que sostenía el sombrero en la mano y le quitaba el polvo, y dijo:

—Señores, hay una solución muy fácil. Si no tienen nada en contra, asumiré encantado las gestiones del señor gerente. Sus asuntos, naturalmente, deben ser tratados en seguida. Somos hombres de negocios y sabemos valorar en su justa medida el tiempo de los hombres de negocios. ¿Quieren entrar a este despacho? —y abrió la puerta que conducía a su antedespacho.

¡Cómo se las arreglaba el subdirector para apropiarse de todo a lo que K se veía obligado a renunciar! ¿Acaso no renunciaba K a más de lo que era necesario? Mientras se apresuraba a visitar con pocas e inciertas esperanzas a un pintor desconocido, su prestigio allí sufría un daño irremediable. Habría sido mucho mejor quitarse el abrigo y ganarse a los dos señores que aún esperaban, K lo habría intentado si en ese instante no hubiese visto al subdirector en su despacho, buscando en los anaqueles de libros, como si todo fuera suyo. Cuando K, irritado por la intrusión, se aproximó a la puerta, el subdirector exclamó:

—Ah, aún no se ha ido —y volvió el rostro, cuyas arrugas no parecían ser huellas de la edad sino un signo de fuerza, y
than age, and immediately renewed his search. “I was looking for the copy of a contract,” he said, “that the firm’s representative says you’re supposed to have. Won’t you help me look?” K. took a step, but the vice president said: “Thanks, I’ve just found it,” and turned back into his office with a thick stack of documents that obviously contained much more than just the copy of the contract.

“I’m no match for him at the moment,” K. said to himself, “but once I’ve dispensed with my personal difficulties, he’s going to get it and get it good.” Somewhat comforted by this thought, K. instructed the assistant, who had been holding the hall door open for him for some time, to inform the president when he got the chance that he was out on a business errand, then left the bank, almost happy to be able to devote himself totally to his case for a while.

He drove at once to the painter, who lived in a suburb that lay in a completely opposite direction from the one with the law court offices. It was an even poorer neighborhood; the buildings were darker, the narrow streets filled with filth floating slowly about on the melting snow. In the building where the painter lived, only one wing of the great double door stood open; at the bottom of the other wing, however, near the wall, there was a gaping hole from which, just as K. approached, a disgusting, steaming yellow fluid poured forth, before which a rat fled into the nearby sewer. At the bottom of the steps a small child was lying face down on the ground, crying, but it could hardly be heard above the noise coming from a sheet-metal shop beyond the entranceway. The door of the workshop stood open; three workers were standing around some object in a half-circle, beating on it with hammers. A great sheet of tin hanging on the wall cast a pale shimmer that flowed between two workers, illuminating their faces and work aprons. K. merely glanced at all this; he wanted to finish up here as fast as possible, just see what he could learn from the painter with a few words and go straight back to the bank. If he had even the slightest comenzó de nuevo a buscar.
—Busco la copia de un contrato —dijo—, que, según el representante de la empresa, tendría que estar en su despacho. ¿No quiere ayudarme a buscar? K dio un paso, pero el subdirector dijo:
—Gracias, ya lo he encontrado —y regresó a su despacho con un paquete de escritos, que no sólo contenía la copia del contrato, sino dudó más.

«Ahora no le puedo hacer sombra—se dijo K—, pero cuando logre arreglar mis dificultades personales, él será el primero en enterarse y además con amargura».

Tranquilizado con estos pensamientos, encargó al empleado, que mantenía abierta para él la puerta del pasillo, que le dijera al director, si se presentaba la ocasión, que había salido a realizar una gestión. Luego abandonó el banco casi feliz de poder dedicarse con exclusividad a su asunto. Fue directamente a ver al pintor, que vivía en los arrabales, precisamente en la dirección opuesta a donde se encontraba el juzgado en el que había estado. Era un barrio aún más pobre, las casas eran más oscuras, las calles estaban llenas de suciedad, que se acumulaba alrededor de la nieve. En la casa en que vivía el pintor sólo estaba abierta una hoja de la puerta, en la otra había abierto un agujero, a través del cual, cuando K se aproximó, fluía una repugnante sustancia amarilla y humeante, de la que huyó una rata metiéndose en un canal cercano. A los pies de la escalera había un niño boca abajo que lloraba, pero sus sollozos apenas se oían por el ruido ensordecedor reinante, procedente de un taller de hojalatería, situado en la parte opuesta. La puerta del taller estaba abierta, tres empleados rodeaban una pieza y la golpeaban con martillos. Una gran plancha de hojalata colgaba de la pared y arrojaba una luz pálida que penetraba entre dos de los empleados e iluminaba los rostros y los mandiles. K sólo dedicó una mirada fugaz a ese cuadro, quería salir de allí lo más pronto posible, hacer un par de preguntas al pintor y regresar al banco en seguida. Si alcanzaba el más peque-
success here, it would still have a good effect on that day’s work at the bank. On the third floor he was forced to slow his pace; he was completely out of breath; the steps were unusually high and the flights unusually long, and the painter supposedly lived right at the top in an attic room. The air was oppressive as well; there was no stairwell, the narrow stairs were closed in on both sides by walls with only a few small windows here and there, high up near the ceiling. Just as K. paused for a moment, a few little girls ran out of an apartment and rushed on up the stairs laughing. K. followed them slowly, caught up with one of the girls, who had stumbled and remained behind the others, and asked as they continued to climb the stairs together:

“Does a painter named Titorelli live here?” The girl, thirteen at most, and somewhat hunchbacked, poked him with her elbow and peered up at him sideways. Neither her youth nor her deformity had prevented her early corruption. She didn’t even smile, but instead stared boldly and invitingly at K. Ignoring her behavior, K. asked:

“Do you know the painter Titorelli?” She nodded and asked in turn: “What do you want with him?” K. thought it would be to his advantage to pick up a little quick knowledge about Titorelli: “I want him to paint my portrait,” he said. “Paint your portrait?” she asked, opening her mouth wide and pushing K. lightly with her hand, as if he had said something extraordinarily surprising or gauche; then she lifted her little skirt, which was extremely short to begin with, with both hands and ran as fast as she could after the other girls, whose cries were already disappearing indistinctly above. At the very next landing, however, K. met up with all the girls again. They had evidently been informed of K.’s intentions by the hunchback and were waiting for him. They stood on both sides of the steps, pressed themselves against the walls so that K. could pass comfortably between them, and smoothed their smocks with their hands. Their faces as well as the guard of honor they formed conveyed a mixture of childhood and depravity. Above, at the head

ño éxito, ejercería un buen efecto en su trabajo en el banco. Al llegar al tercer piso tuvo que ir más lento, le faltaba la respiración; los peldaños, así como las escaleras, eran excesivamente altos y el pintor debía de vivir en el ático. El aire también era muy opresivo, no había hueco en la escalera, sino que ésta, muy estrecha, estaba cerrada a ambos lados por muros, en los que sólo de vez en cuando había una pequeña ventana. Precisamente en el momento en el que K se detuvo para descansar, salieron varias niñas de una vivienda y, riéndose, adelantaron a K. Las siguió lentamente, alcanzó a una de las niñas que había tropezado y se había quedado rezagada y le preguntó, mientras las demás seguían subiendo:

—¿Vive aquí un pintor llamado Titorelli?

La niña, de apenas trece años y algo jorobada, le golpeó con el codo y le miró de soslayo. Ni su juventud ni su defecto corporal habían impedido que se corrompiera. Ni siquiera le sonreía, sino que lanzaba a K miradas provocativas. K hizo como si no hubiera notado su actitud y preguntó:

—¿Conoces al pintor Titorelli?

Ella asintió y preguntó a su vez:

—¿Qué quiere usted de él?

A K le pareció ventajoso obtener algo de información sobre Titorelli. K hizo como si no hubiera notado su actitud y preguntó:

—¿Quiero que me haga un retrato
—dijo él.

—¿Un retrato? —preguntó ella, abrió desmesuradamente la boca, golpeó ligeramente a K con la mano, como si hubiera dicho algo sorprendente o desacertado, se levantó sin más su faldita y corrió todo lo rápido que pudo detrás de las otras niñas, cuyo griterio se fue perdiendo conforme subían. K volvió a encontrarse con las niñas en el siguiente rellano. Aparentemente habían sido informadas por la jorobada y le esperaban. Estaban colocadas a ambos lados de la escalera y se apretaron contra la pared para que K pudiera pasar cómodamente entre ellas. Se limpiaban las manos en sus delantales. Sus rostros, así como su formación en fila, indicaban una mezcla de infantilismo y perdición. Arriba, al final
of the group of girls, who now closed around K. laughingly, was the hunchback, who took over the lead. It was thanks to her that K. found his way so easily. He had intended to go straight on up the stairs, but she showed him he had to take a stairway off to the side to reach Titorelli. The stairway that led to him was particularly narrow, extremely long, without a turn, visible along its entire length, and ended directly at Titorelli’s door. This door, which compared to the rest of the stairway was relatively well illuminated by a small skylight set at an angle above it, was constructed of unfinished boards, upon which the name Titorelli was painted in red with broad brushstrokes. K. was barely halfway up the stairs with his retinue when the door above them opened slightly, apparently in response to the sound of all the feet, and a man appeared in the crack of the door, seemingly dressed only in his nightshirt.

“Oh!” he cried as he saw the crowd approaching, and disappeared. The hunchback clapped her hands with joy and the rest of the girls pushed behind K. to hurry him along. They weren’t even all the way up yet, however, when the painter flung the door open wide and with a deep bow invited K. to enter. The girls, on the other hand, he fended off, he wouldn’t let a single one in, no matter how they begged, no matter how hard they tried to push their way in, if not with his permission, then against his will. Only the hunchback managed to slip under his outstretched arm, but the painter raced after her, seized her by the skirts, whirled her once around him, and then set her back down in front of the door with the other girls, who had not dared cross the threshold when the painter abandoned his post. K. didn’t know how to judge all this; it looked as if the whole thing was happening on friendly terms. The girls by the door craned their necks one after the other, called out various humorously intended remarks to the painter that K. couldn’t catch, and the painter laughed as well while the hunchback almost flew in his hands. Then he shut the door, de la hilera de niñas, que se juntaron por detrás de K y rieron, estaba la jorobada, que había tomado el liderato. K tenia que agradecerle haber encontrado con rapidez el camino correcto. Queria seguir subiendo, pero ella le mostró un desvio que conducía a la vivienda de Titorelli. La escalera que tuvo que tomar era aún más estrecha, muy larga, sin giros y finalizaba directamente ante la puerta cerrada de Titorelli. Esa puerta, provista de una pequeña claraboya y, por esta causa, mejor iluminada que la escalera, estaba hecha de tablas ensambladas sin blanquear, en las que estaba pintado con un pincel grueso con pintura roja el nombre de Titorelli. Cuando K, acompañado de su séquito, llegó a la mitad de la escalera, la puerta se abrió, probablemente debido al ruido de los numerosos pasos, y apareció un hombre en pijama.

—¡Oh! —gritó, al ver cómo se acercaba tal cantidad de gente y desapareció. La jorobada aplaudió de alegría y el resto de las niñas empujaron a K para que subiese con mayor rapidez.

Aún no habían llegado, cuando el pintor abrió la puerta del todo invitó a entrar a K con una profunda inclinación. A las niñas, sin embargo, las rechazó. No las quiso dejar pasar por más que se lo suplicaron. Sólo la jorobada logró deslizarse hasta el interior pasando por dejo de su brazo, pero el pintor la per siguió, la cogió por la falda, la sacudió a un lado y a otro y la puso en la puerta con las otras niñas, que, mientras el pintor había estado ausente, no se habían atrevido a cruzar el umbral. K no sabia qué pensar, parecía como si todo fuese una broma. Las niñas estiraron los cuellos y dirigieron al pintor algunas burlas, que K no entendió y de las que también se rió el pintor. Mientras, la jorobada estuvo a punto de escaparse de sus manos. Luego el pintor cerró la puerta, se
bowed to K. again, held out his hand, and introduced himself: “I’m Titorelli, the artist.” K. pointed to the door, behind which the girls were whispering, and said: “You seem very popular here in the building.”

“Oh those brats!” said the painter, and tried in vain to button his nightshirt around his neck. He was barefoot as well, and otherwise wore nothing but a pair of roomy yellow linen trousers, tied with a belt whose long end dangled loosely. “Those brats are a real burden to me,” he went on, giving up on his nightshirt, the last button of which had now come off, and fetching a chair, on which he made K. sit.

“I painted one of them once—she isn’t even here today—and they’ve been pestering me ever since. If I’m here, they only come if I let them, but if I go away, there’s always at least one of them here. They’ve had a key made to my door and lend it to each other. You can’t imagine how annoying that is. For instance I come home with a lady I’m supposed to paint, open the door with my key, and find let’s say the hunchback sitting at the little table there, painting her lips red with the brush, while her little sisters, the ones she’s supposed to be watching, wander around making a mess in every corner of the room. Or, as happened only yesterday, I come home late at night—in light of which I hope you’ll pardon my state and the disorder of the room—I come home late at night and start to get in bed when something pinches my leg; I look under the bed and pull out another one. Why they push themselves on me so I don’t know; you’ll have noticed yourself that I don’t try to lure them in. Of course they disturb my work too. If this atelier weren’t provided for me free, I would have moved out long ago.”

Just then a small voice called from behind the door, softly and timidly: “Titorelli, can we come in yet?”

“No,” answered the painter.

“No, not even just me?” it asked again.

“No even you,” said the painter, walking over to the door and locking it.

In the meantime K. had been

Inclíñó una vez más ante K., le estrechó la mano y dijo:

—Pintor Titorelli.

K. señaló la puerta, detrás de la cual se oía a las niñas susurrar, y dijo: —Parece que le quieren mucho en la casa.

—¡Ah, esas pordioseras! —dijo el pintor, que intentó en vano abrocharse el último botón de la camiseta del pijama. Estaba descalzo y llevaba puestos unos pantalones de lino amplios y amarillentos, que estaban ajustados a la cintura con un cordel, cuyos largos cabos se balanceaban de un lado a otro.

—Esas pordioseras son una verdadera carga—continuó, dejó de intentar abrocharse el botón, pues había terminado por arrocarlo, acercó una silla para K y casi le obligó a sentarse.

—Hace tiempo pinté a una de ellas, aunque no estaba entre las que usted ha visto, y desde esa vez me persiguen todas. Cuando estoy solo entran si se lo permito, pero cuando me voy siempre entra alguna. Se han hecho una llave de la cerradura y se la prestan unas a otras. No se puede imaginar lo pesadas que son. Una vez vine con una dama para pintarla, abrí la puerta con mi llave y encontré a la jorobada pintándose los labios de rojo con el pincel, mientras sus hermanas pequeñas, a las que tenía que vigilar, andaban por toda la habitación ensuciándolo y revolviéndolo todo. O regreso, como me ocurrió ayer, tarde por la noche —le suplico que, en consideración a ello, perdone mi estado y el desorden de la habitación—, quiero irme a la cama y de repente noto un pelilico en la pierna, miro debajo de la cama y saco a una de esas pordioseras. No entiendo por qué la han tomado conmigo, pues intento rechazarlas, ya lo ha visto usted. Naturalmente que estorban mi trabajo. Si no hubieran puesto gratuitamente a mi disposición este estudio ya me habría mudado hace tiempo.

Precisamente en ese momento se oyó a través de la puerta una vocecita suave y temerosa: —Titorelli, ¿podemos pasar ya?

—No —el pintor respondió.

—¿Yo tampoco? —preguntó otra de las niñas.

—Tampoco —dijo el pintor, se acercó a la puerta y la cerró con llave.

K, mientras tanto, se había
looking around the room; he would never have imagined that anyone could refer to this miserable little room as an atelier. You could scarcely take two long strides in any direction. Everything was made of wood, the floor, the walls, the ceiling; you could see narrow cracks between the boards. A bed stood against the wall across from K., piled high with bedding of various colors. On an easel in the middle of the room stood a painting covered by a shirt with its arms dangling to the floor. Behind K. was the window, through which one could see no farther in the fog than the snow-covered roof of the neighboring building.

The key turning in the lock reminded K. that he had intended to stay only a short while. So he pulled the manufacturer’s letter from his pocket, handed it to the painter, and said: “I learned about you from this gentleman, whom you know, and I’ve come at his suggestion.” The painter skimmed through the letter and tossed it onto the bed. Had the manufacturer not clearly spoken of Titorelli as someone he knew, a poor man dependent upon his alms, one might have easily believed Titorelli had no idea who the manufacturer was, or at any rate couldn’t recall him. Moreover, the painter now asked: “Do you wish to buy paintings or to have your portrait painted?” K. looked at the painter in amazement. What was in that letter? K. had taken it for granted that the manufacturer’s letter informed the painter that K. wished only to inquire about his trial. He had rushed over too quickly, without thinking! But now he had to give the painter some sort of answer, so he said with a glance at the easel: “Are you working on a painting now?” “Yes,” said the painter and tossed the shirt that was hanging over the easel onto the bed alongside the letter. “It’s a portrait. A nice job, but it’s not quite finished yet.” Luck was on K.’s side; the opportunity to talk about the court was being handed to him on a platter, for it was clearly the portrait of a judge. Moreover it was strikingly similar to the painting in the lawyer’s study. Of course this was a completely different judge, a fat man with a black bushy beard that hung far down the sides of his cheeks, and dedicated to examining the habitation, jamás podría haberse imaginado que aquel cuartucho pudiera recibir el nombre de estudio. Apenas se podían dar dos pasos a lo largo y a lo ancho. Todo, suelo, paredes y techo, era de madera, entre las tablas había resquicios. Frente a K. estaba situada la cama, cubierta con mantas de distinto color. En medio de la habitación, sobre un caballete, había un cuadro cubierto con una camisa, cuyas mangas llegaban hasta el suelo. Detrás de K. estaba la ventana, pero la niebla no permitía ver más que la nieve acumulada en el tejado de la casa de enfrente.

El ruido de la llave al girar recordó a K. que quería irse lo más pronto posible. Así que sacó del bolsillo la carta del fabricante, se la dio al pintor y dijo: —Me la ha dado un conocido mío, siguiendo su consejo, he venido a visitarle.

El pintor leyó la carta fugazmente y la arrojó sobre la cama. Si el fabricante no hubiera hablado del pintor como de un conocido mío, como un pobre hombre dependiente de sus limosnas, se hubiera podido creer que Titorelli no conocía al fabricante o no se acordaba de él. Añadió, el pintor preguntó: —¿Desea comprar algún cuadro o quiere que le haga un retrato?

K. miró con asombro al pintor. ¿Qué es lo que había escrito el fabricante en la carta? K. había considerado evidente que el fabricante informaría al pintor en la carta de que K. sólo tenía interés en preguntar acerca de su proceso. ¿Se había precipitado al venir de un modo tan rápido e irreflexivo? Pero ahora tenía que responder al pintor. Mientras miraba hacia el caballete, dijo: —¿Está trabajando en un cuadro?

—Sí —dijo el pintor, y arrojó la camisa, que colgaba sobre el caballete, en la cama, sobre la carta—. Es un retrato. Un buen trabajo, pero aún no está terminado.

La ocasión era propicia para que K. hablase sobre el tribunal, pues, según todas las apariencias, se trataba del retrato de un juez. Además, era muy similar al que había en el despacho del abogado. No obstante, era otro juez, un hombre gordo con barba poblada y negra que le cubría por completo las mejillas, pero el del
that had been an oil painting, while this was faintly and indistinctly sketched in pastel. But everything else was similar, for here too the judge was about to rise up threateningly from his throne, gripping its arms. "That must be a judge," K. started to say, but then held back for a moment and approached the picture as if he wanted to study it in detail. He was unable to interpret a large figure centered atop the back of the throne and asked the painter about it. "I still have some work to do on it," answered the painter, taking a pastel crayon from the little table and adding a few strokes to the contours of the figure, without, however, making it any clearer to K. in the process. "It's the figure of justice," the painter finally said. "Now I recognize it," said K., "there's the blindfold over her eyes and here are the scales. But aren't those wings on her heels, and isn't she in motion?" "Yes," said the painter, "I'm commissioned to do it that way, it's actually justice and the goddess of Victory in one." "That's a poor combination," said K. smiling, "Justice must remain at rest, otherwise the scales sway and no just judgment is possible." "I just following the wishes of the person who commissioned it," said the painter. "Yes, of course," said K. who hadn't meant to hurt anyone's feelings by his remark. "You've painted the figure the way it actually appears on the throne." "No," said the painter, "I've seen neither the figure nor the throne, that's all an invention; but I was told what to paint." "What do you mean?" asked K., intentionally acting as if he didn't really understand the painter; "that's surely a judge sitting in a judge's chair." "Yes," said the painter, "but it's not a high judge, and he hasn't ever sat in a throne like that." "And yet he allows himself to be portrayed in such a solemn pose? He's sitting there like the president of the court." "Yes, the gentlemen are vain," said the painter. "But they have higher permission to be painted that way. There are precise instructions as to how each of them may be portrayed. But unfortunately it's impossible to judge the details of his attire and the chair in this picture; pastels aren't really
suitable for these portraits.”

“Yes,” said K., “it’s strange that it’s done in pastel.” “The judge wanted it that way,” said the painter, “it’s intended for a lady.”

Looking at the painting seemed to have made him want to work on it; he rolled up the sleeves of his nightshirt, picked up a few pastels, and K. watched as, beneath the trembling tips of the crayons, a reddish shadow took shape around the judge’s head and extended outward in rays toward the edges of the picture. Gradually this play of shadow surrounded the head like an ornament or a sign of high distinction. But, except for an imperceptible shading, brightness still surrounded the figure of justice, and in this brightness the figure seemed to stand out strikingly; now it scarcely recalled the goddess of justice, or even that of Victory, now it looked just like the goddess of the Hunt. The painter’s work attracted K. more than he wished; at last, however, he reproached himself for having been there so long without having really undertaken anything for his own case.

“What’s the name of this judge?” he asked suddenly.

“I’m not allowed to say,” replied the painter; he was bent low over the painting and pointedly ignoring his guest, whom he had at first received so courteously. K. assumed this was a passing mood and was annoyed because it was causing him to lose time.

“I take it you’re a confidant of the court?” he asked. The painter laid aside his pastels at once, straightened up, rubbed his hands together, and looked at K. with a smile. “Just come straight out with the truth,” he said, “you want to learn something about the court, as it says in your letter of introduction, and you discussed my paintings first to win me over. But I don’t hold that against you, you had no way of knowing that doesn’t work with me. Oh, come on!” he said sharply, as K. tried to object. And then continued: “By the way, your remark was quite accurate, I am a confidant of the court.”

He paused as if to allow K. time to come to terms with this fact. Now the girls could be heard again behind the door. They were probably crowding cuada para este tipo de retratos.

—Sí —dijo K—, es extraño que lo haya tenido que pintar al pastel. —Así lo ha querido el juez —dijo el pintor—, es para una dama.

La contemplación del cuadro parecía haber infundido ganas de trabajar en el pintor. Se subió las mangas de la camisa, cogió unos lápices K observó cómo bajo la punta temblorosa del lápiz iba surgiendo alrededor de la cabeza del juez una sombra rojiza que, adoptando una forma estrellada, llegaba hasta los bordes del cuadro. Paulatinamente, juego de sombras que rodeaba la cabeza se convirtió en una suerte de adorno honorífico. La figura que representaba a la justicia quedó de una tonalidad clara, y esa claridad la hacía resaltar, pero apenas recordaba a la diosa de la justicia, aunque tampoco a la de la victoria, más bien se parecía a la diosa de la caza. K se sintió atraído por el trabajo del pintor más de lo que hubiese querido. Al final, sin embargo, se hizo reproches por haber permanecido allí tanto tiempo y no haber emprendido nada en lo referente a su asunto.

—¿Cómo se llama ese juez? —preguntó de repente.

—No se lo puedo decir —respondió el pintor. Se había inclinado hacia el cuadro y descuidaba claramente a su huésped, al que, sin embargo, había recibido con tanta consideración. K lo atribuyó a un cambio de humor y se enojó porque debido a esa causa estaba perdiendo el tiempo.

—¿Es usted un hombre de confianza del tribunal? —preguntó.

El pintor dejó el lápiz a un lado, se irguió, se frotó las manos y miró a K sonriente.

—Bueno, vayamos al grano —dijo él—. Usted quiere saber algo del tribunal, como consta en su carta de recomendación, y ha comenzado a hablar sobre mis cuadros para halagarme. Pero no lo tomó a mal, usted no puede saber que para mí eso es una impertinencia. ¡Oh, por favor! —dijo en actitud defensiva, cuando K quiso objetar algo, y continuó:

—Por lo demás, usted tiene razón con su indicación, soy un hombre de confianza del tribunal.

Hizo una pausa, como si quisiera dejarle tiempo a K para adaptarse a las circunstancias. Se oyó otra vez a las niñas detrás de la puerta. Era probable que se estuvieran peleando por
around the keyhole; perhaps they could see in through the cracks as well. K. made no attempt to excuse himself, not wishing to sidetrack the painter, but neither did he wish the painter to become too arrogant and move as it were beyond his reach, so he asked: “Is that an officially recognized position?”

“No,” said the painter curtly, as if that was all he had to say about it. But K. had no wish to see him fall silent and said: “Well, such unofficial positions often carry more influence than ones that are recognized.” That’s how it is with mine,” said the painter, and nodded with a frown.

“I discussed your case yesterday with the manufacturer; he asked me whether I would be willing to help you, I replied: ‘The man can come see me sometime,’ and I’m pleased to see you here so soon. You seem to be taking the affair to heart, which doesn’t surprise me in the least, of course. But wouldn’t you like to take your coat off?”

Although K. intended to stay for only a short while, the painter’s suggestion was quite welcome. The air in the room had gradually become oppressive; he had glanced over several times at a small and obviously unlit iron stove in the corner; the closeness in the room was inexplicable. As he took off his winter coat and then unbuttoned his jacket as well, the painter said apologetically: “I have to keep it warm. It’s cozy in here, isn’t it? The room is well situated in that respect.”

K. did not reply to this, but actually it wasn’t the warmth that he felt uncomfortable, it was the muggy atmosphere that rendered breathing difficult; the room probably hadn’t been aired for ages. This unpleasantness was intensified for K. by the fact that the painter had him sit on the bed, while he himself sat before the easel in the only chair in the room. Moreover the painter seemed to misunderstand K.’s reason for remaining perched on the edge of the bed; he even told K. to make himself comfortable and, when K. hesitated, he walked over and pressed him deep into the bedding and pillows. Then he returned to mirar a través del ojo de la cerradura, aunque también era probable que pudieran ver a través de los resquicios. K. decidió no disculparse, pues no quería que el pintor cambiase de tema, pero tampoco quería que el pintor se ufanasen y se creyera inalcanzable, así que preguntó:

—¿Es un puesto reconocido oficialmente?

—No dijo el pintor brevemente, como si con esa pregunta le impidiese continuar hablando. Pero K. no quería que se callase y dijo:

—Bueno, con frecuencia ese tipo de puestos no reconocidos son más influyentes que los otros.

—Ése es mi caso dijo el pintor, y asintió con la frente arrugada. Ayer hablé con el fabricante sobre su problema, me preguntó si no quería ayudarle, yo respondí: «Puedo venir a mi casa si quiere», y ahora estoy encantado de poder recibirlle tan pronto. Parece que el asunto le afecta bastante y no me extraña. ¿No desea quitarse antes el abrigo?

Aunque K. tenía previsto quedar-se muy poco tiempo, aceptó de buen grado la proposición del pintor. El aire de la habitación le resultaba opresivo, con frecuencia había dirigido su mirada asombrada hacia una estufa de hierro, situada en una esquina, y que con toda seguridad estaba apagada. El bochorno en la habitación era inexplicable. Mientras se quitaba el abrigo y se desabrochaba la chaqueta, el pintor le dijo con un tono de disculpa:

—Tengo que tener la habitación templada. Se está muy confortable, ¿verdad? La habitación está muy bien situada.

K. no dijo nada, no era el calor lo que le molestaba, sino el aire, tan enredado que dificultaba la respiración; era oso-sible que hacía mucho tiempo que no ventilaban la habitación. Esta sensación desagradable se intensificó, ya que el pintor le invitó a sentarse en la cama, mientras él se sentaba en la única silla de la habitación, frente al caballete. Además, el pintor interpretó mal por qué K. quería permanecer al borde de la cama, ya que le pidió que se pusiera cómodo y, como K. dudase, se acercó él mismo y le puso en medio de la cama con los almohadones. A continuación, regresó
his chair and finally asked his first factual question, which made K. forget everything else.

"Are you innocent?" he asked.

"Yes," said K. Answering this question was a positive pleasure, particularly since he was making the statement to a private citizen, and thus bore no true responsibility. No one had ever asked him so openly. To savor this pleasure to the full, he added:

“I am totally innocent.”

"Well then," said the painter, bowing his head and apparently considering this. Suddenly he lifted his head again and said:

"If you’re innocent, then the matter is really quite simple.”

K.’s face clouded over; this so-called confidant of the court was talking like an ignorant child.

"My innocence doesn’t simplify the matter," said K. He had to smile in spite of himself and shook his head slowly. "A number of subtle points are involved, in which the court loses its way. But then in the end it pulls out some profound guilt from somewhere where there was originally none at all.”

"Yes, yes, of course," said the painter, as if K. were needlessly interrupting his train of thought.

"But you are innocent?”

"Well, yes,” said K.

"That’s the main thing,” said the painter.

He couldn’t be swayed by counter-arguments, but in spite of his decisiveness, it wasn’t clear whether he was speaking from conviction or indifference. K. wanted to determine that first, and so he said:

“You certainly know the court much better than I do; I don’t know much more about it than what I’ve heard, from all sorts of people of course. But they’re all in agreement that charges are never made frivolously, and that the court, once it brings a charge, is convinced of the guilt of the accused, and that it is difficult to sway them from this conviction.”

"Difficult?” asked the painter, throwing one hand in the air.

"The court can never be swayed from it. If I were to paint all the judges in a row on this canvas and you were to plead your case before them, you would have more success than before the actual court.”

"Yes,” K. said to himself, forgetting that he had only intended to sound out the painter.

a su silla y le hizo la primera pregunta, cuyo efecto fue que K. olvidase todo lo demás:

—¿Es usted inocente? —preguntó.

—Sí —dijo K—. La respuesta a esta pregunta le causó alegría, especialmente porque la respondió ante un particular, es decir sin asumir responsabilidad alguna. Nadie hasta ese momento le había preguntado de un modo tan directo. Para disfrutar de esa alegría, añadió:

—Soy completamente inocente.

—Bien —dijo el pintor, bajó la cabeza y pareció reflexionar. De repente subió la cabeza y dijo:

—Si usted es inocente, entonces el caso es muy fácil.

La mirada de K. se nubló, ese supuesto hombre de confianza del tribunal hablaba como un niño ignorante.

—Mi inocencia no simplifica el caso —dijo K, que, a pesar de todo, tuvo que reír, sacudiendo lentamente la cabeza—. Todo depende de muchos detalles, en los que el tribunal se pierde. Al final, sin embargo, descubre un comportamiento culpable donde originalmente no había nada.

—Sí, cierto, cierto —dijo el pintor, como si K estorbase innecesariamente el curso de sus pensamientos—. Pero usted es inocente.

—Bueno, sí —dijo K.

—Eso es lo principal —dijo el pintor.

No había manera de influir en él con argumentos en contra; a pesar de su resolución, K. no sabía si hablaba así por convicción o por indiferencia. K. quiso comprobarlo, así que dijo:

—Usted conoce este mundo judicial mucho mejor que yo, yo no sé más que lo que he oído aquí y allá, aunque lo oído procedía de personas muy distintas. Todos coinciden en que no se acusa a nadie a la ligera y que el tribunal, cuando acusa a alguien, está convencido de la culpa del acusado y que es muy difícil hacer que abandone ese convencimiento.

—¿Difícil? —preguntó el pintor, y elevó una mano—. Nunca se le puede disuadir. Si pintase a todos los jueces aquí en la pared, uno al lado del otro, y usted se defendiese ante ellos, tendría más éxito que ante un tribunal real.

—Sí —dijo K para sí mismo y olvidó que sólo había querido sondear un poco al pintor.
Behind the door a girl started asking again: “Titorelli, isn’t he going to leave pretty soon?” “Quiet,” the painter yelled at the door, “can’t you see that I’m having a conference with this gentleman?” But that didn’t satisfy the girl, who instead asked: “Are you going to paint him?” And when the painter didn’t reply she added: “Please don’t paint him; he’s so ugly.” A confusion of unintelligible cries of agreement followed. The painter sprang to the door, opened it a crack—the clasped hands of the girls could be seen stretched out imploringly—and said: “If you don’t be quiet, I’m going to throw you all down the stairs. Sit down on the steps and keep still.” Apparently they didn’t obey right away, so that he had to make it a command: “Down on the steps!” Only then was it quiet.

“Pardon me,” said the painter, turning to K. again. K. had scarcely glanced toward the door; he’d left it entirely up to the painter whether and how he was to be protected. Even now he hardly moved as the painter bent down to him and, in order not to be heard outside, whispered in his ear: “Those girls belong to the court as well.” “What?” asked K., jerking his head away and staring at the painter. But the latter sat down in his chair again and said half in jest, half in explanation: “Everything belongs to the court.” “I hadn’t noticed that,” K. said curtly; the painter’s general statement stripped the reference to the girls of any disturbing quality. Even so, K. gazed for a while at the door, behind which the girls were now sitting quietly on the steps. Only one had poked a piece of straw through a crack between the boards and was moving it slowly up and down.

“You don’t seem to have a general overview of the court yet,” said the painter; he had spread his legs wide and was tapping his toes on the floor. “But since you’re innocent, you won’t need one. I’ll get you off on my own.” “How are you going to do that?” asked K. “You said yourself just a
moment ago that the court is entirely impervious to proof.”

“Impervious only to proof brought before the court,” said the painter, and lifted his forefinger, as if K. had missed a subtle distinction. “But it’s another matter when it comes to behind-the-scenes efforts, in the conference rooms, in the corridors, or for example even here in the atelier.”

What the painter now said seemed less improbable to K.; on the contrary it stood in close agreement with what K. had heard from others as well. Yes, it was even filled with hope. If the judges could really be swayed as easily through personal contacts as the lawyer had suggested, then the painter’s contacts with vain judges were particularly important and should by no means be underestimated. The painter would fit perfectly into the circle of helpers K. was gradually assembling about him. His organizational talents had once been highly praised at the bank; here, where he was entirely on his own, he had an excellent opportunity to test them to the full. The painter observed the effect of his explanation on K. and then asked with a certain anxiety: “Have you noticed I sound almost like a lawyer? It’s constantly interacting with gentlemen of the court that influences me. Of course I profit greatly from it, but I tend to lose a good deal of artistic energy.”

“How did you first come in contact with the judges?” asked K.; he wanted to win the painter’s confidence before directly enlisting his aid. “That was quite simple,” said the painter, “I inherited the position. My father himself was a court painter. It’s one post that’s hereditary. New people are of no use for it. The rules for painting the various levels of officials are so numerous, so varied, and above all so secret, that they simply aren’t known beyond certain families. There in that drawer, for example, I have my father’s notes, which I show to no one. But only someone who knows them is equipped to paint the judges. Nevertheless, even if I were to lose them, I still carry so many rules in my head that no one could ever dispute dicho que el tribunal es inaccesible a cualquier tipo de argumentación.

—inaccesible a cualquier argumentación que se plantea ante él—dijo el pintor, y elevó el dedo indicando como si K no hubiese percibido la sutil diferencia—. Pero esa regla pierde su validez cuando se argumenta a espaldas del tribunal oficial, es decir en los despachos de los asesores, en los pasillos o, por ejemplo, aquí, en mi estudio.

Lo que el pintor acababa de decir no le parció a K tan descabellado, todo lo contrario, coincidía con lo que le habían contado otras personas. Incluso parecía otorgar muchas esperanzas. Si los jueces se dejaban influir tan fácilmente por sus relaciones personales, como el abogado había manifestado, entonces las relaciones del pintor con los vanidosos jueces eran muy importantes y de ninguna manera se podían menospreciar. En ese caso el pintor se adaptaba perfectamente al círculo de ayudantes que K paulatinamente iba reuniendo a su alrededor. Una vez habían elogiado en el banco su talento organizador, aquí, en una situación en la que dependía exclusivamente de sí mismo, había una buena oportunidad para ponerlo a prueba. El pintor observó el efecto que su aclaración había ejercido en K y dijo, no sin cierto temor:

—¿No le llama la atención que hablo casi como un jurista? Es por el trato ininterrumpido con los señores del tribunal, que tanto me ha influido. Por supuesto, saco muchos beneficios de ello, pero el impulso artístico se pierde en parte.

—¿Cómo entró en contacto con los jueces? preguntó K. Quería ganarse primero la confianza del pintor, antes de tomarlo a su sevicio

—Muy fácil—dijo el pintor—, he heredado mi posición. Ya mi padre fue pintor judicial. Es un puesto hereditario. No se necesitan nuevas personas que ejerzan el oficio. Para pintar a los distintos grados de funcionarios se han promulgado tantas reglas secretas y, además, tan complejas, que no se pueden dominar fuera de determinadas familias. Por ejemplo, ahí, en el cajón, tengo los apuntes de mi padre, que no enseñó a nadie. Sólo el que los conoce está capacitado para pintar a los jueces. Aun en el caso de que los perdiera, quiero en la memoria tal cúmulo de reglas que nadie podría aspirar a
my right to the post. Every judge wants to be painted like the great judges of old, and only I can do that.”

“That’s an enviable situation,” said K., who was thinking about his own position in the bank, “so your position is unshakable?”

“Yes, unshakable,” said the painter, proudly lifting his shoulders. “And that allows me to take a chance now and then helping a poor man with his trial.”

“And how do you do that?” asked K., as if he were not the one the painter had just called a poor man. But the painter wouldn’t be sidetracked, saying instead:

“In your case, for example, since you’re entirely innocent, I plan to undertake the following.”

This repeated reference to his innocence was beginning to annoy K. At times it seemed to him as if, by such remarks, the painter was insisting upon a favorable outcome to the trial as a precondition for his help, which thus amounted to nothing on its own of course. But in spite of these doubts, K. controlled himself and didn’t interrupt the painter. He didn’t want to do without the painter’s help, he was sure of that, and that help seemed no more questionable than the lawyer’s. In fact K. far preferred the former, because it was offered more simply and openly.

The painter had pulled his chair closer to the bed and continued in a low voice: “I forgot to ask first what sort of release you want. There are three possibilities: actual acquittal, apparent acquittal, and protraction. Actual acquittal is best of course, but I don’t have the slightest influence on that particular result. In my opinion there’s not a single person anywhere who could have an influence on an actual acquittal. In that case the defendant’s innocence alone is probably decisive. Since you’re innocent, it would actually be possible to rely on your innocence alone. But then you wouldn’t need help from me or anyone else.”

This orderly presentation took K. aback at first, but then he said, as quietly as the painter: “I think you’re contradicting yourself.”

“How? the painter asked.
patiently and leaned back with a smile. This smile made K. feel as if he were trying to reveal contradictions not so much in the words of the painter as in the legal process itself. Nevertheless he did not retreat, but said: “You remarked earlier that the court is impervious to proof; later you restricted this to the public aspect of the court, and now you even claim that an innocent man needs no help at all before the court. That’s a contradiction in itself. Moreover you also stated earlier that judges can be personally influenced, although you now deny that actual acquittal, as you call it, can ever be achieved through personal influence. That’s a second contradiction.”

“These contradictions can be easily explained,” said the painter. “We’re talking about two different things here, what the Law says, and what I’ve experienced personally; you mustn’t confuse the two. In the Law, which I’ve never read, mind you, it says of course on the one hand that an innocent person is to be acquitted; on the other hand it does not say that judges can be influenced. My own experience, however, has been precisely the opposite. I know of no actual acquittals but know many instances of influence. Of course it’s possible that in the cases I’m familiar with no one was ever innocent. But doesn’t that seem unlikely? In all those cases not one single innocent person? Even as a child I listened closely to my father when he talked about trials at home, and the judges who came to his atelier discussed the court as well; in our circles no one talked of anything else; from the moment I was allowed to go to court I attended constantly, heard the crucial stages of innumerable trials, followed them insofar as they could be followed, and I must admit-I never saw a single actual acquittal.”

“No not single acquittal then,” said K. as if speaking to himself and to his hopes. “That confirms the opinion I’ve already formed of this court. So it has no real point in that respect either. A single hangman could replace the entire court.”

“You mustn’t generalize,” said the painter, displeased, “I’ve spoken with actitud paciente, y se reclinó sonriente. Esa sonrisa despertó en K la impresión de que no se proponía cubrir contradicciones en las palabras del pintor, sino en el mismo procedimiento judicial. No obstante, continuó:

—Hace poco comentó que el tribunal es inaccesible para todo tipo de argumentación, después ha limitado la validez de ese principio al tribunal oficial y ahora dice, incluso, que el inocente no necesita ayudar a alguien ante el tribunal. Ahí se produce una contradicción. Además, antes ha dicho que se puede influir personalmente en los jueces, pero ahora pone en duda que se pueda llegar a la absolución real, como usted la llama, mediante una influencia personal. Ahí se incurre en una segunda contradicción.

—Esas contradicciones son fáciles de aclarar—dijo el pintor—. Aquí está hablando de dos cosas distintas, de lo que la ley establece y de lo que yo he experimentado personalmente; no debe confundir ambas cosas. En la ley, aunque yo no lo he leído, se establece por una parte que el inocente tiene que ser absuelto, pero por otra parte no se establece que los jueces puedan ser influidos. No obstante, yo he experimentado lo contrario. No he sabido de ninguna absolución real, pero he conocido muchas influencias. Es posible que en los casos que he conocido no se diera la inocencia del acusado. Pero, ¿no es acaso improbable que en tantos casos no haya ni uno solo en el que el acusado haya sido inocente? Ya cuando yo era niño escuchaba a mi padre cuando contaba algo de los procesos, también los jueces hablaban sobre procesos cuando le visitaban en su estudio, en nuestro círculo no se hablaba de otra cosa, siempre que tuve la oportunidad de ir a los juicios, siempre la aproveché, he presenciado innumerables procesos y he seguido pues distintas fases, tanto como era posible y, lo debo reconocer, no he conocido ninguna absolución real.

—Así pues, ninguna absolución—dijo K como si hablase consigo mismo y con sus esperanzas—. Eso confirma la opinión que tengo del tribunal. Tampoco por esa parte tiene sentido. Un único verdugo podría sustituir a todo el tribunal.

—No debe generalizarse—dijo el pintor insatisfecho—, sólo he ha-
only of my own experience.” “That’s quite enough,” said K., “or have you heard of acquittals in earlier times?” “Such acquittals are said to have occurred, of course,” said the painter. “But that’s extremely difficult to determine. The final verdicts of the court are not published, and not even the judges have access to them; thus only legends remain about ancient court cases. These tell of actual acquittals, of course, even in a majority of cases; you can believe them, but they can’t be proved true. Nevertheless they shouldn’t be entirely ignored; they surely contain a certain degree of truth, and they are very beautiful; I myself have painted a few pictures based on such legends.” “Mere legends can’t change my opinion,” said K., “I assume these legends can’t be cited in court?” The painter laughed. “No, they can’t,” he said. “Then it’s useless talking about them,” said K.; he was accepting all the painter’s opinions for the time being, even if he considered them improbable and they contradicted other reports. He didn’t have time right now to examine the truth of everything the painter said, let alone to disprove it; the best he could hope for was to induce the painter to help him somehow, even if it was not in any crucial way. So he said: “Let’s leave actual acquittal aside then; you mentioned two further possibilities.” “Apparent acquittal and protraction. It can only be one of those two,” said the painter. “But don’t you want to take off your jacket before we discuss them? You must be hot.” “Yes,” said K., who up to then had been concentrating solely on the painter’s explanations but whose forehead now broke out in heavy sweat as he was reminded of the heat. “It’s almost unbearable.” The painter nodded, as if he could well understand K.’s discomfort. “Couldn’t we open the window?” K. asked. “No,” said the painter. “It’s just a pane of glass set in the wall; it can’t be opened.” K. now realized that he had been hoping the whole time that either the painter or he would suddenly walk to the window and open it. —Eso basta —dijo K.—. ¿Acaso ha oído de absoluciones en otros tiempos? —Ha debido de haber ese tipo de absoluciones —respondió el pintor—. Pero es difícil constatarlo. Las sentencias definitivas del tribunal no se hacen públicas, ni siquiera son accesibles para los jueces, por eso sólo se han conservado leyendas sobre casos judiciales antiguos. Estas leyendas, en su mayoría, contienen absoluciones reales, se puede creer en ellas, pero no se pueden demostrar. No obstante, no se deben descuidar, contienen una cierta verdad, y son muy bellas, yo mismo he pintado varios cuadros que tienen como tema esas leyendas. —Simples leyendas no pueden hacerme cambiar de opinión —dijo K.—. ¿Acaso se pueden invocar esas leyendas en juicio? El pintor rió. —No, no se puede —dijo. —Entonces es inútil hablar de ellas —dijo K. Quería aceptar provisionalemente todas las opiniones del pintor, aun en el caso de considerarlas improbables o que contradijeran otros informes. Ahora no disponía del tiempo preciso para analizar todo lo que el pintor había dicho y constatarlo o refutarlo de acuerdo con la verdad. Se daría por satisfecho si lograse que el pintor le ayudase incluso de una manera no decisiva. Así que dijo: —Dejemos entonces la absolución real. Usted mencionó otras dos posibilidades. —La absolución aparente y la prórroga indefinida. Sólo hay estas dos posibilidades —dijo el pintor—. Pero, ¿no quiere quitarse la chaqueta antes de que continuemos? Parece que tiene calor. —Sí —dijo K., que hasta ese momento sólo había prestado atención a las explicaciones del pintor, pero que ahora, al recordársele el calor, sintió cómo el sudor bañaba su frente—. El calor es casi insoportable. El pintor asintió como si entendiese perfectamente el malestar de K. —¿No se puede abrir la ventana? —preguntó K. —No —dijo el pintor—. No es más que un vidrio fijo, no se puede abrir. Ahora se daba cuenta K de que todo el tiempo había alimentado la esperanza de que el pintor, o él mismo, se levantaría y abriría la
throw it open. He was prepared to
inhale even the fog with an open
mouth. The sense of being entirely
cut off from outside air made him
dizzy. He struck the featherbed beside
him softly and said in a weak voice:
“That’s uncomfortable and unhealthy.”
“Oh, no,” said the painter in
defense of his window. “Since it
can’t be opened, it holds in the
heat better than a double-paned
window, even though it’s only a
single sheet of glass. If I want
to air things out, which is
hardly necessary, since air
comes in through all the cracks
between the boards, I can open
one of my doors, or even both
of them.” Somewhat comforted
by this explanation, K. looked
around for the second door. The
painter noticed this and said:
“It’s behind you; I had to block it
with the bed.” Only then did K.
see the little door in the wall.
“This room is really too small for
an atelier,” said the painter, as if
wishing to forestall a criticism on
K.’s part. “I’ve had to arrange
things as best I could. Of course
the bed is very poorly situated in
front of the door. That’s the door
the judge I’m currently painting
always uses, for example, and I’ve
given him a key to it so he can wait
for me here in the atelier, even
when I’m not at home. But he
generally arrives early in the
morning while I’m still asleep. Of
course I’m always awakened from
a sound sleep when the door by the
bed opens. You’d lose any respect
you have for judges if you could
hear the curses I shower on him as
he climbs across my bed in the
morning. Of course I could take the
key away from him, but that would
only make matters worse. All the
doors here can be torn off their
hinges with a minimum of effort.”
Throughout these remarks, K. had
been debating whether or not to
take off his jacket; he finally
realized that he wouldn’t be able to
stand it much longer if he didn’t,
so he removed his jacket, but laid
it over his knee so that he could put
it back on immediately in case the
conversation came to an end. He
had barely removed his jacket
when one of the girls cried out:
“He’s taken off his jacket
now,” and they could all be
heard rushing to the cracks to
see the show for themselves.
“The girls think I’m going to paint you and that’s why you’ve taken off your jacket,” said the painter. “I see,” said K., only slightly amused, for he didn’t feel much better than before, even though he was now sitting in his shirtsleeves. Almost grumpily, he asked: “What were the two other possibilities called?” He had already forgotten the terms. “Apparent acquittal and protraction,” said the painter. “The choice is up to you. Both can be achieved with my help, not without an effort of course, the difference in that respect being that apparent acquittal requires a concentrated but temporary effort, while protraction requires a far more modest but continuous one. First, then, apparent acquittal. If that’s what you want, I’ll write out a certification of your innocence on a sheet of paper. The text of such certification was handed down to me by my father and is totally unchallengeable. Then I’ll make the rounds of the judges I know with the certification. Let’s say I start by submitting the certification to the judge I’m painting now, this evening, when he comes for his sitting. I submit the certification to him, explain to him that you’re innocent, and act as a personal garante for your innocence. It’s not a mere formality, it’s a truly binding surety.” In the painter’s eyes lay something akin to reproach that K. would place the burden of such a surety upon him. “That would be very kind of you,” said K. “And the judge would believe you and still not actually acquit me?” “Just as I said,” answered the painter. “Nor is it absolutely certain that every judge would believe me; some judge or other, for example, might demand that I bring you to him personally. Then you would have to come along. In that case the battle is already half won, of course, particularly since I’d instruct you carefully in advance how to conduct yourself before the judge in question. Things are more difficult in the case of those judges who turn me away from the very start-and that will happen too. We’ll just have to give up on those, not without trying several times of course, but we can afford that, since individual judges can’t decide the issue. Now when

—Las niñas —dijo el pintor— creen que le voy a pintar y que por eso se desnuda.
—¡Ah, ya! —dijo K poco animado, pues no se sentía mucho mejor que antes aunque estuviera sentado en mangas de camisa. Casi de mal humor preguntó: —¿Cómo denominó las otras dos posibilidades?
Ya había olvidado las expresiones que el pintor había empleado.
—La absolución aparente y la prórroga indefinida —dijo el pintor—. Usted elige. Ambas se pueden lograr con mi ayuda, naturalmente no sin esfuerzo, la diferencia en este sentido radica en que la absolución aparente requiere un esfuerzo intermitente y concentrado, mientras que la prórroga, uno más débil, pero continuado. Bien, comencemos por la absolución aparente. Si eligiese ésta, escribiré en un papel una confirmación de su inocencia. El texto para una confirmación así lo he heredado de mi padre y resulta irrefutable. Con esa confirmación hago una ronda con los jueces que conozco. Por ejemplo, comienzo hoy por la noche con el juez al que estoy pintando, cuando venga a la sesión. Le presento la confirmación, le aclaro que usted es inocente y le hago garante de su inocencia. Pero no se trata de una garantía superficial o ficticia, sino real y vinculante.

En la mirada del pintor había un aire de reproche por el hecho de que K le cargase con esa responsabilidad.
—Sería muy amable de su parte —dijo K—. ¿Y el juez, en el caso de que le creyera, tampoco me absolvería realmente?
—Como ya le dije —respondió el pintor—. Pero tampoco es seguro que todos me crean, algún juez reclamará, por ejemplo, que le conduzca hasta él. Entonces no le quedará otro remedio que venir. En un su puesto así, se puede decir que la causa está casi ganada, especialmente porque antes le informaré de cómo tiene que comportarse ante el juez. Peor resulta con aquellos jueces que no me atienden desde el principio, esto también puede ocurrir. Nos veremos obligados a renunciar a ellos, aunque no falten algunos intentos, pero podemos permitirnos ese lujo, que unos cuantos jueces aislados no son
I've gathered enough judges’ signatures on the certification, I take it to the judge who’s currently conducting your trial. Perhaps I have his signature already, then things go a little more quickly than usual. In general there aren’t many more obstacles then, that’s the period of highest confidence for the defendant. It’s remarkable but true that people are more confident at this stage than after the acquittal. No further special effort is required. The judge has on the certification the surety of a number of judges; he can acquit you with no second thoughts, and, after going through various formalities, will no doubt do so, to please me and his other acquaintances. You, however, leave the court a free man.”

“So then I’m free,” K. said hesitantly.  

“Yes,” said the painter, “but only apparently free, or more accurately, temporarily free. Judges on the lowest level, and those are the only ones I know, don’t have the power to grant a final acquittal, that power resides only in the highest court, which is totally inaccessible to you and me and everyone else. We don’t know what things look like up there, and incidentally, we don’t want to know. Our judges, then, lack the higher power to free a person from the charge, but they do have the power to release them from it. When you are acquitted in this sense, it means the charge against you is dropped for the moment but continues to hover over you, and can be reinstated the moment an order comes from above. Because I have such a close relationship with the court, I can also explain how the distinction between actual and apparent acquittal reveals itself in purely formal terms in court regulations. In an actual acquittal, the files relating to the case are completely discarded, they disappear totally from the proceedings, not only the charge, but the trial and even the acquittal are destroyed, everything is destroyed. An apparent acquittal is handled differently. There is no further change in the files except for adding to them the certification of innocence, the acquittal, and the grounds for the acquittal. Otherwise they remain in circulation; following the law court’s normal routine they are decisivos. Si consigo un número suficiente de firmas de jueces en esta confirmación de inocencia, entonces voy a ver al juez que lleva tu caso. Es posible que tenga ya su firma, en ese supuesto, todo va un poco más rápido. En general ya no hay muchos más impedimentos, ha llegado el momento para que el acusado tenga una gran confianza. Es extraño, pero cierto, la gente se encuentra en esa fase más confiada que después de la absolución. Ya no necesitaremos esforzarnos más. El juez posee en la confirmación de inocencia la garantía de un número de jueces y puede absolver sin preocuparse. Así lo hará, sin duda, para hacerme un favor a mí y a otros conocidos, después de realizar algunas formalidades. Usted sale del ámbito tribunal y es libre.

---Entonces soy libre ---dijo K indeciso.

—Sí —dijo el pintor—, pero sólo libre en apariencia o, mejor dicho, libre provisionalmente. La judicatura inferior, a la que pertenecen mis conocidos, no posee el derecho a otorgar una absolución definitiva, este derecho sólo lo posee el tribunal supremo, inalcanzable para usted, para mí y para todos nosotros. No sabemos lo que allí pasa y, dicho sea de paso, tampoco lo queremos saber. Nuestros jueces carecen del gran derecho a liberar de la acusación, pero entre sus competencias está la de poder desprendérsela de ella. Eso quiere decir que si obtiene este tipo de absolución, queda liberado momentáneamente de la acusación, pero pende aún sobre usted y puede suceder, si llega la orden desde arriba, que entre en vigor de inmediato. Como tengo tan buenos contactos con el tribunal, puedo decirle también cómo se refleja exteriormente en los reglamentos de la Administración de Justicia la diferencia entre una absolución real y otra aparente. En caso de una absolución real, se deben reunir todas las actas procesales, desaparecen por completo del procedimiento, todo se destruye, no sólo la acusación, sino también todos los escritos procesales, incluida la absolución. En la absolución aparente ocurre de un modo algo diferente. No se produce ninguna modificación más de las actas, a ellas se añaden la confirmación de inocencia, la absolución y el fundamento de la absolución. Por lo demás, las actas continúan en el proceso, se trasladan, como exige el continuo trámite adminis-
passed on to the higher courts, come back to the lower ones, swinging back and forth with larger or smaller oscillations, longer or shorter interruptions. These paths are unpredictable. Externally it may sometimes appear that everything has been long since forgotten, the file has been lost, and the acquittal is absolute. No initiate would ever believe that. No file is ever lost, and the court never forgets. Someday—quite unexpectedly—some judge or other takes a closer look at the file, realizes that the case is still active, and orders an immediate arrest. I'm assuming here that a long time has passed between the apparent acquittal and the new arrest; that's possible, and I know of such cases; but it's equally possible that the acquitted individual leaves the court, returns home, and finds agents already there, waiting to arrest him again. Then of course his life as a free man is over."

"And the trial begins all over again?" K. asked, almost incredulously. "Of course," said the painter, "the trial begins all over again, but it is again possible, just as before, to secure an apparent acquittal. You must gather all your strength again and not give up." Perhaps the painter added this final remark because he had noticed that K. had slumped slightly. "But isn't effecting a second acquittal more difficult than the first?" K. said, as if he now wished to anticipate any further revelations from the painter. "That can't be said for certain," replied the painter. "You mean, I take it, that the judges' judgment might be unfavorably influenced with regard to the defendant because of the second arrest. That's not the case. The judges have foreseen this arrest from the moment of the original acquittal. So in fact it has scarcely any effect. But there are no doubt countless other reasons why the judge's mood as well as his legal opinion on the case may differ, and the efforts for a second acquittal must therefore be adapted to the changed circumstances and be as strong in general as they were for the first acquittal."

"But this second acquittal isn't final either," said K., turning his head away coldly. "Of course not,"

tratado, a los tribunales supremos, vuelve a los inferiores, y oscila entre unos y otros con mayor o menor fluidaz Esos caminos son impredecibles. Considerado desde el exterior, se podría llegar a la conclusión de que todo se ha olvidado hace tiempo, que las actas se han perdido y que la absolución es completa. Un especialista no lo creerá jamás. No se pierden las actas, el tribunal no olvida. Un día —nadie lo espera—, un juez cualquiera toma el acta, le presta poco de atención, comprueba que la acusación aún está en vigor y ordena la detención inmediata. He dado a entender que entre la absolución apparente y la nueva detención transcurre un largo período de tiempo, es posible y conoczo algunos casos, pero también es posible? que el absuelto llegue a su casa de los tribunales y ya allí le esperen unos emisarios para detenerle de nuevo. Entonces, por supuesto, se ha terminado la vida en libertad.

—¿Y el proceso comienza otra vez? —preguntó K incrédulo.

—Así es —dijo el pintor——, el proceso comienza de nuevo, y también existe la posibilidad, como al principio, de obtener una absolución apparente. Hay que concentrar otra vez todas las fuerzas y no rendirse. Lo último lo dijo el pintor probablemente guiado por la impresión de que el ánimo de K se había hundido.

—Pero, ¿no resulta más difícil obtener la segunda absolución que la primera? —preguntó K, como si quisiera anticiparse a alguna de las revelaciones del pintor.

—No se puede decir nada seguro al respecto —dijo el pintor——. ¿Quieres decir si el juez se puede ver influido desfavorablemente en su sentencia por la primera detención? No, ése no es el caso. Los jueces ya han previsto la detención en el momento de dictar la absolución. Esa circunstancia apenas tiene efecto. Pero otros muchos motivos pueden influir ahora en el humor del juez y en su enjuiciamiento jurídico del caso, y los esfuerzos se tendrán que adaptar a las nuevas circunstancias, siendo necesario, por supuesto, actuar con la misma fuerza y decisión que antes de la primera absolución.

—Por supuesto que no —dijo el pintor——, a la segunda absolución sigue la tercera detención;
said the painter, “the second acquittal is followed by a third arrest, the third acquittal by a fourth arrest, and so on. That’s inherent in the very concept of apparent acquittal.” K. was silent.

“Apparent acquittal obviously doesn’t strike you as an advantage,” said the painter, “perhaps protraction would suit you better. Shall I explain to you the nature of protraction?” K. nodded. The painter had leaned back expansively in his chair, his nightshirt gaped open, he had shoved a hand inside it and was scratching his chest and sides.

“Protraction,” said the painter, gazing straight ahead for a moment, as if searching for a fully accurate explanation, “protraction is when the trial is constantly kept at the lowest stage. To accomplish this the defendant and his helper, in particular his helper, must remain in constant personal contact with the court. I repeat, this doesn’t require the same effort it takes to secure an apparent acquittal, but it does require a much higher level of vigilance. You can’t let the trial out of your sight; you have to visit the relevant judge at regular intervals, and any extra chance you get as well, and try to keep him as well disposed as possible in all ways; if you don’t know the judge personally, you have to try to influence him through judges you do know, although you still don’t dare dispense with the direct conferences. If nothing is omitted in this respect, you can be sufficiently assured that the trial will never progress beyond its initial stage. The trial doesn’t end of course, but the defendant is almost as safe from a conviction as he would be as a free man. Compared with apparent acquittal, protraction offers the advantage that the defendant’s future is less uncertain; he’s spared the shock of sudden arrests, and he doesn’t have to worry, at what may be precisely the worst time in terms of other circumstances, about taking on the stress and strain connected with securing an apparent acquittal. Of course protraction also has certain disadvantages for the accused that must not be underestimated. I don’t mean the fact that the defendant is
never free; he’s not free in a true sense in the case of an apparent acquittal either. It’s a different sort of disadvantage. The trial can’t come to a standstill without some reason that’s at least plausible. So something must happen outwardly in the trial. Therefore various measures must be taken from time to time, the defendant has to be interrogated, inquiries conducted, and so forth. The trial must be kept constantly spinning within the tight circle to which it’s artificially restricted. Of course that involves certain inconveniences for the defendant, which on the other hand you mustn’t imagine as all that bad. After all, it’s a merely formal matter; for example the interrogations are quite brief; if you don’t have the time or inclination to attend you can excuse yourself; with certain judges you can even set up a long-term schedule together in advance; in essence it’s merely a matter of reporting to your judge from time to time, since you’re a defendant.”

Even as these last words were being spoken, K. placed his jacket over his arm and rose. “He’s standing up already,” came an immediate cry from beyond the door. “Are you leaving so soon?” asked the painter, who had risen as well. “It must be the air here that’s driving you away. I feel terrible about that. There was more I wanted to tell you. I had to sum things up briefly. But I hope it was all clear.”

“Oh, yes,” said K., whose head ached from the effort he had made to force himself to listen. In spite of this assurance, the painter summed things up again, as if offering K. a word of comfort for the journey home: “Both methods have this in common: they prevent the accused from being convicted.”

“But they also prevent an actual acquittal,” said K. softly, as if ashamed of the realization. “You’ve grasped the heart of the matter,” the painter said quickly. K. placed his hand on his winter coat, but he couldn’t even make up his mind to put on his jacket. He would have preferred to bundle them both up and rush out into the fresh air with them. The girls couldn’t get him to put them on.
either, even though they called out to one another prematurely that he was doing so. The painter wished to get some sense of K.'s thoughts, so he said:

"You probably still haven't reached a decision with regard to my suggestions. I approve of that. In fact I would have advised against a quick decision. There's only a hair's difference between the advantages and disadvantages. Everything has to be weighed quite carefully. Of course you don't want to lose too much time either."

"I'll come again soon," said K., who, making an abrupt decision, put on his jacket, threw his coat over his shoulders, and hastened to the door, behind which the girls now began to shriek. K. felt as if he could see the shrieking girls through the door. "But you have to keep your word," said the painter, who hadn't followed him, "otherwise I'll come to the bank myself to inquire about it."

"Unlock the door, will you," said K., pulling at the handle, which the girls, as he could tell from the counter-pressure, were holding tight from the outside. "Do you want the girls bothering you?" asked the painter. "Why don't you use this way out instead?" and he pointed to the door behind the bed. That was fine with K., and he sprang back to the bed. But instead of opening the door, the painter crawled under the bed and asked from below:

"Just a minute. Wouldn't you like to see a painting I could sell you?"

K. didn't wish to be impolite; the painter really had taken his side and promised continued help, and due to K.'s own forgetfulness there had been no discussion of how K. might reimburse him for his help, so K. couldn't deny him now; he let him show his picture, even though he was trembling with impatience to leave the atelier.

From beneath the bed the painter dragged a pile of unframed paintings so deeply covered in dust that when the painter tried to blow it away from the one on top, the dust whirled up before K.'s eyes, and for some time he could scarcely breathe. "A landscape of the heath," said the painter, and handed K. the painting. It showed two frail trees, standing at a great distance from

se gritaran entre ellas que se estaba vistiendo. El pintor intentó conocer el estado de ánimo de K, así que dijo:

—No se ha decidido respecto a mis propósitos. Lo aprevo, o mismo le hubiera desaconsejado que se decidiera en seguida. Las ventajas y las desventajas son nimias. Hay que valorarlo todo con exactitud.

—Le volveré a visitar pronto —dijo K, que con decisión repentina puso la chaqueta, se echó el abrigo sobre los hombros y se apresuró hacia la puerta. Las niñas, al advertirlo, comenzaron a gritar.

—Pero debe mantener su palabra —dijo el pintor, que le había seguido—, si no, me presentaré en su banco y preguntaré por usted.

—Abra la puerta —dijo K, al notar cómo las niñas hacían fuerza en picaporte.

—¿Acaso quiere que las niñas le molesten? Salga mejor por la otra puerta —y señaló la puerta situada detrás de la cama.

K estuvo de acuerdo y retrocedió hasta la cama. Pero el pintor, en vez de abrir la puerta, se metió debajo de la cama y preguntó desde allí:

—¿No quiere ver un cuadro que le podría vender?

K no quería ser descortés, el pintor se había portado bien y le había prometido seguir ayudándole, además K se había olvidado de hablar sobre la recompensa por la ayuda, por este motivo no pudo zafarse y dejó que le mostrara el cuadro, aunque temblase de impaciencia por salir del estudio.

El pintor sacó de debajo de la cama un montón de cuadros sin enmarcar tan llenos de polvo que, cuando el pintor sopló sobre el primero, K estuvo un tiempo sin poder respirar ni ver bien.

—Un paisaje de landa—dijo el pintor, y alcanzó el cuadro a K. Representaba unos árboles débiles, muy alejados entre sí, rodeados de
one another in the dark grass. In the background was a multicolored sunset. “Nice, “ said K., “I’ll buy it.” K. had spoken curtly without thinking, so he was glad when, instead of taking it badly, the painter picked up another painting from the floor. “Here’s a companion piece to that picture,” said the painter. It may have been intended as a companion piece, but not the slightest difference could be seen between it and the first one: here were the trees, here was the grass, and there the sunset. But that made little difference to K. “They’re nice landscapes,” he said, “I’ll take both of them and hang them in my office.” “You seem to like the subject,” said the painter, and pulled out a third painting, “luckily enough, I have a similar one right here.” It was not merely similar, however, it was exactly the same landscape. The painter was taking full advantage of the chance to sell his old pictures. “I’ll take that one too,” said K. “What do I owe you for the three of them?” “We’ll talk about that next time,” said the painter, “you’re in a hurry now and we’ll be keeping in touch, after all. By the way, I’m glad you like the paintings; I’ll throw in all the pictures I have under here. They’re all heath landscapes, I’ve painted a lot of heath landscapes. Some people are put off by paintings like these because they’re too somber, but others, and you’re among them, have a particular love for the somber.” But K. was in no mood to discuss the mendicant artist’s professional life just then. “Pack up all the paintings,” he cried, interrupting the painter, “my assistant will come by tomorrow and pick them up.” “That’s not necessary,” said the painter. “I think I can find a porter to go with you now.” And at last he leaned across the bed and opened the door. “Don’t be shy about stepping on the bed,” said the painter. “everyone who comes in this way does.” K. wouldn’t have worried about it even without being told; he’d already put his foot in the middle of the featherbed; then he looked through the open door and drew his foot back again.

---

curt adj. noticeably or rudely brief. Curtly, short, shortly; in a curt, abrupt (brusco) and discourteous manner. Escuetamente (shortly), tajantemente, secamente, lacónicamente.
"What's that?" he asked the painter. "What do you find so surprising?" he asked, himself surprised.

"Those are the law court offices. Didn't you know there were law court offices here? There are law court offices in practically every attic, why shouldn't they be here too? In fact my atelier is part of the law court offices too, but the court has placed it at my disposal."

K. wasn't so shocked at having found law court offices here; he was more shocked at himself, at his ignorance when it came to the court. It seemed to him a basic rule of behavior that the defendant should always be prepared, never be caught by surprise, never be looking blankly to the right when a judge was standing on his left-and it was precisely this basic rule that he was constantly breaking. A long corridor stretched before him, from which air drifted that made the air in the atelier seem refreshing by comparison. Benches stood on both sides of the hall, just as in the waiting room of K.'s court offices. There seemed to be precise guidelines for the furnishings of these offices. There weren't many parties there at the moment. A man sat there, half reclining; he had buried his face in his arm and seemed to be sleeping; another stood in semidarkness at the end of the hallway. K. now stepped across the bed; the painter followed him with the pictures. They soon met a court usher—K. had already learned to recognize the court ushers by the gold button they wore among the ordinary buttons on their civilian suits—and the painter instructed him to follow K. with the pictures. K. swayed rather than walked, with his handkerchief pressed to his mouth. They had almost reached the exit when the girls, from whom K. was not to be spared after all, stormed toward them. They had evidently seen the other door of the atelier being opened and had made a detour to force their way in from this side. "I can't accompany you any farther," said the painter, laughing beneath the press of girls. "Goodbye! And don't take too long thinking about it!" K. didn't even look back. On the street he took the first cab that came his way. He was

—¿Qué es eso? —preguntó al pintor.
—¿De qué se asombra? —preguntó éste, asombrado a su vez.—. Son dependencias del tribunal. ¿No sabía que aquí había dependencias judiciales? Este tipo de dependencias las hay en prácticamente todas las buhardillas, ¿por qué habrían de faltar aquí? También mi estudio pertenece a las dependencias del tribunal, éste es el que lo ha puesto a mi disposición.

K no se horrorizó tanto por haber encontrado allí unas dependencias judiciales, sino por su ignorancia en asuntos relacionados con tribunal. Según su opinión, una de las reglas fundamentales que debía regir la conducta de todo acusado era la de estar siempre preparado, no dejarse sorprender, no mirar desprevenido hacia la derecha, cuando el juez se encontraba a su izquierda, y precisamente infringía esta regla continuamente. Ante él se extendía un largo pasillo, por el que corría un aire fresco en comparación con el del estudio. A ambos lados del pasillo había bancos, como en la sala de espera de las oficinas judiciales competentes para el caso de K. Parecían existir reglas concretas para la construcción de las dependencias. En ese momento no había mucho tráfico de personas. Un hombre permanecía casi tendido: había apoyado la cabeza en el banco y se había cubierto el rostro con las manos. Parecía dormir. Otro estaba al final del pasillo, en una zona oscura. K se subió a la cama, el pintor le siguió con los cuadros. Al poco tiempo entraron a un empleado de los tribunales. K reconoció a todos estos empleados por el botón dorado que llevaban en sus gajes normales, junto a los otros botones usuales. El pintor le encargó que acompañase a K con los cuadros. K vacilaba al caminar y avanzaba con el pañuelo en la boca. Ya se encontraban cerca de la salida, cuando las niñas irrumpieron frente a ellos, así que K ni siquiera se pudo ahorrar esa situación. Habrían visto cómo abrían la otra puerta y habían corrido para sorprenderlos.

—Ya no puedo acompañarle más —exclamó el pintor sonriendo y resistiendo el embate de las niñas—. ¡Adiós! ¡Y no tarde mucho en decidirse!

K ni siquiera le miró. Al salir a la calle tomó el primer taxi que pasó.
anxious to be rid of the usher,
whose gold button kept catching
his eye, even though no one else
probably noticed it. In his
eagerness to serve, the usher even
tried to take a seat on the
coachbox, but K. chased him down.
It was long past noon when K.
arrived at the bank. He would have
liked to leave the paintings in the
cab, but he was afraid he might
have to account for them to the
painter at some point. So he
ordered them taken into his office
and locked them in the bottom
drawer of his desk, to store them
safely away from the vice
president’s eyes for at least the
next few days.

Deseaba deshacerse del emplea-
do, ese botón dorado se le cla-
vaba continuamente en el ojo,
aunque a cualquier otro ni si-
quiera le llamara la atención.
El empleado, servicial, quiso
sentarse con K, pero éste lo
echó abajo. K llegó al banco
por la tarde. Habría querido
dejarse los cuadros en el co-
che, pero temió necesitarlos en
algún momento para justificar-
se ante el pintor. Así que pidió
que los subieran a su despacho
Y los guardó en el último ca-
jón de su mesa. Allí estarían a
salvo de la curiosidad del
subdirector, al menos durante
los primeros días.
BLOCK, THE MERCHANT
DISMISSAL OF THE LAWYER

At long last K. had decided to withdraw his case from the lawyer. Doubts as to whether it was the right thing to do could not be totally root out, but the firm conviction of its necessity outweighed them. This resolution drained K. of a great deal of energy the day he planned to visit the lawyer; he worked at an unusually slow pace, stayed late at the office, and it was past ten before he finally stood at the lawyer’s door. Before actually ringing the bell, he asked himself if it might be better to dismiss the lawyer by telephone or letter; a personal discussion was bound to prove painful. But in the final analysis, K. did not want to forgo that opportunity; any other manner of dismissal might be accepted silently or with a few formal phrases and, unless Leni could perhaps learn something, K. would never find out how the lawyer took the dismissal and what, in his by no means insignificant opinion, the consequences of this action might be for K. But if the lawyer were sitting across from K. and the dismissal caught him by surprise, K. could easily learn everything he wanted to know from the lawyer’s expression and demeanor, even if he couldn’t coax much out of him. It was even possible he might be persuaded of the wisdom of leaving his defense in his lawyer’s hands after all, and retract the dismissal.

The first ring at the lawyer’s door was, as usual, in vain. “Leni could be a little quicker,” thought K. But it would be good fortune enough just not to have a third party mix in, as they often did, whether it was the man in the dressing gown or someone else who started interfering. As K. pressed the button a second time, he looked back at the other door, but this time it too remained closed. Finally two eyes appeared at the peephole in the lawyer’s door, but they weren’t Leni’s. Someone unlocked the door, braced himself against it for the moment, however, called back into the apartment “It’s him,” and only then opened the door wide. K. had pressed up against the

EL COMERCIANTE BLOCK K
RENUNCIJA AL ABOGADO

Por fin se había decidido K a renunciar a la representación del abogado. Las dudas acerca de lo acertado de dicha medida no se podían eliminar, pero el convencimiento de la necesidad de ese paso terminó por prevalecer. La decisión, en el día que K tenía que visitar al abogado, le había costado tiempo y esfuerzo, trabajó con excesiva lentitud y tuvo que permanecer muchas horas en su despacho. Pasaban de las diez de la noche cuando K se presentó ante la puerta del abogado. Antes de llamar pensó si no sería mejor romper con el abogado por teléfono o por escrito, pues la entrevista tendría que ser por fuerza desagradable. Pero K decidió mantenerla, de otro modo el abogado aceptaría la decisión de K con algunas palabras formales o con silencio, y K., salvo lo que Leni le pudiera decir, desconocería su reacción ante la medida y las consecuencias que, según la opinión nada despreciable del abogado, ese paso tendría para K. No obstante, si K estaba sentado frente al abogado, ________ aunque este no quisiera decir mucho, al menos podría deducir bastante de sus gestos y de su actitud. Tampoco se podía excluir que le convenciese para que el abogado continuase con la defensa y que él renuncias a su decisión.

Como siempre, la primera llamada a la puerta quedó sin respuesta. «Leni podría ser más rápida» -- pensó K. Pero resultaba una ventaja que no se mismuyeran los vecinos, como habitualmente, ya fuese el hombre en bata o cualquier otro. Mientras K tocaba el timbre por segunda vez, miró hacia la puerta vecina, pero permaneció cerrada. Finalmente aparecieron dos ojos en la mirilla de la puerta, pero no eran los de Leni. Alguien abrió la puerta, pero siguió apoyándose en ella, y gritó hacia el interior:

-->¡Es él! --> y abrió del todo. K había empujado también la
door, for behind him he could hear the key being turned hastily in the lock of the door to the other apartment. Thus, when the door suddenly gave way before him, he practically stormed into the entranceway and caught sight of Leni, to whom the cry of warning from the man at the door had been directed, running off down the hall between the rooms in her slip. He stared after her for a moment and then turned to look at the man who had opened the door. He was a scrawny little man with a full beard, holding a candle in his hand.

"Do you work here?" K. asked.

"No," the man replied, "I'm not part of the household, the lawyer just represents me; I'm here on a legal matter."

"Without a jacket?" K. asked, and indicated with a wave of his hand the man's inappropriate state of dress.

"Oh, do forgive me," said the man, and cast the light of the candle upon himself, as if he were seeing his own state for the first time.

"Is Leni your mistress?" K. asked curtly. His legs were slightly spread, his hands, in which he held his hat, were clasped behind him. The mere possession of a heavy overcoat made him feel quite superior to the short skinny man.

"Oh goodness," said the other, and raised one hand before his face in shocked repudiation, "no, no, what are you thinking of?"

"You look trustworthy," said K. with a smile, "but yet-let's go." He gestured with his hat for him to lead the way.

"What's your name?" asked K. as they went along.

"Block, Block the merchant," the little man said, turning around to K. as he introduced himself, but K. didn't allow him to stop. "Is that your real name?" asked K. of course," was the answer, "why would you doubt it?"

"I thought you might have some reason to conceal it," said K. He felt totally at ease, the way one normally feels speaking with inferiors in a foreign country, avoiding everything personal, just talking indifferently about puerta, pues ya había escuchado la llave de la cerradura en la puerta de al lado. Cuando la puerta se abrió, se precipitó hacia dentro y le dio tiempo a ver cómo Leni, a la que habían dirigido antes el grito de advertencia, corría por el pasillo vestida con una simple camisa. Se quedó mirándola un rato y luego se volvió hacia el que había abierto la puerta. Era un hombre pequeño y delgado, con barba, y sostenía una vela en la mano.

—¿Está empleado aquí? —preguntó K.

—No —respondió el hombre—. el abogado me defiende, estoy aquí por un asunto judicial.

—¿Sin chaqueta? —preguntó K, y señaló con un movimiento de la mano el estado de vestir.

—¡Oh, disculpe! —dijo el hombre, y se iluminó a sí mismo con la vela, como si advirtiese por primera vez su estado.

—¿Leni es su amante? —preguntó K brevemente. Había abierto algo las piernas, las manos, que sostenían el sombrero, permanecían en la espalda. Sólo por poseer un buen abrigo de invierno se sintió superior a aquella figura esmirriada.

—¡Oh, Dios! —dijo, y alzó la mano ante el rostro en una actitud defensiva——, no, no, ¿cómo puede pensar—eso?

—Parece que dice la verdad —dijo K sonriendo——, no obstante, venga —le hizo una seña con el sombrero y dejó que fuera por delante.

—¿Cómo se llama? —preguntó K mientras caminaban.

—Block, soy el comerciante Block —dijo, y al hacer su presentación se volvió, pero K no dejó que se detuviera.

—¿Es su apellido de verdad? —preguntó K.

—Claro —fue la respuesta——, ¿por qué?

—Pensé que tenía razones para silenciar su apellido —dijo K. Se sentía libre, tan libre como el que habla en el extranjero con gente de baja condición, guarda para sí todo lo que le afecta y sólo habla indiferen-
their interests, thereby elevating
them in importance, but also in a
position to drop them at will. K.
stopped before the door of the
lawyer’s study, opened it, and
called out to the merchant, who
had continued docilely onward:"
Not so fast! Bring the light here."
K. thought Leni might
have hidden herself there;
he had the merchant check
all the corners, but the
room was empty. Before
the painting of the judge,
K. held the merchant
back by his suspenders.
“Do you know him?” he asked,
and pointed upward. The
merchant lifted the candle,
squinted up, and said:
“It’s a judge.”
“A high judge?” asked K.,
and stepped to the side of
the merchant to observe the
impression the picture
made on him. The merchant
gazed up in admiration.
“It’s a high judge,” he said.
“You don’t know much,”
said K. “He’s the lowest
of the lower examining
magistrates.”
“Now I remember,” said the
merchant and lowered the
candle, “I’ve already heard
that.” “But of course,” cried K.,
“yes I forgot, of course you
would have already heard that.”
“But why, why?” asked the
merchant as he moved toward the
doors, impelled by K.’s hands.
In the hall outside K. said:
“You know where Leni’s
hidden herself, don’t you?”
“Hidden herself?” said the
merchant, “no, but she may
be in the kitchen cooking
soup for the lawyer.”
“They didn’t say so in the
first place?” asked K.,
“I was taking you there,
but you called me back,”
replied the merchant, as
if confused by the
contradictory orders.
“You probably think you’re
pretty clever,” said K., “lead
on then!” K. had never been in
the kitchen; it was
surprisingly spacious and well
equipped. The stove alone was
three times the size of a
normal stove, but no other
details were visible, for the
kitchen was illuminated at the
moment only by a small lamp hanging by the door. **Leni** was standing at the stove in her usual white apron, breaking eggs into a saucepan over an alcohol flame. “Good evening, Josef,” she said with a sidelong glance. “Good evening,” said K, and pointed to a chair off to the side that the merchant was to sit on, which he did. K., however, went up close behind **Leni**, bent over her shoulder and asked: “**Who is this man?**”

**Leni** grasped K. with one hand while the other stirred the soup, pulled him forward, and said: “He’s a pitiful fellow, a poor merchant named Block. Just look at him.”

They both looked back. The merchant was sitting in the chair K. had indicated; he had blown out the candle, its light now unnecessary, and was pinching the wick to stop the smoke. “You were in your slip,” said K., turning her head back to the stove with his hand. She was silent. “Is he your lover?” asked K. She started to lift the soup pan, but K. seized both her hands and said: “**Answer me!**”

She said: “Come into the study, I’ll explain everything.” “No,” said K., “I want you to explain here.” She clung to him, wanting to give him a kiss, but K. fended her off and said: “I don’t want you kissing me now.”

“Josef,” said **Leni**, staring at K. imploringly yet frankly, “you’re surely not jealous of Herr Block.” “Ruth,” she said then, turning to the merchant, “help me out, you can see I’m under suspicion, put that candle down.”

One might have thought he hadn’t been paying attention, but he knew just what she meant. “I really don’t know what you have to be jealous about,” he said, not very quick-wittedly. “I really don’t know either,” said K., and regarded the merchant with a smile. **Leni** laughed aloud, took advantage of K.’s distraction to slip her arm in his, and whispered: “Let him alone now, you see
what sort of a man he is. I took a little interest in him because he's a major client of the lawyer, for no other reason. And you? Do you want to speak to the lawyer yet today? He's very sick today, but if you wish, I'll let him know you're here. But you'll stay overnight with me, that's definite. You haven't been here for such a long time that even the lawyer asked about you. Don't neglect your trial! And you? Do you want to speak to the lawyer yet today? He's very sick today, but if you wish, I'll let him know you're here. But you'll stay overnight with me, that's definite. You haven't been here for such a long time that even the lawyer asked about you. Don't neglect your trial! And I've learned a few things I want to tell you about. But first take off your coat!"

She helped him off with it, removed his hat, ran into the hall with them to hang them up, then came back and checked on the soup. "Shall I first tell him you're here, or bring him his soup first?"

"First tell him I'm here," said K. He was annoyed; he'd originally intended to discuss his situation with Leni, particularly the question of dismissal, but given the presence of the merchant he no longer wished to. But now he felt his case was after all too important for this small-time merchant to have any decisive influence on it, so he called Leni, who was already in the hall, back again.

"Go ahead and take him his soup first," he said, "he should gather his strength for our conference; he's going to need it."

"You're one of the lawyer's clients too," the merchant said softly from his corner, as if to confirm. But it wasn't well received. "What difference does it make to you?" said K., and Leni said: "Will you be quiet." "I'll take him the soup first then," said Leni to K., and poured the soup into a bowl.

"The only worry is he might fall asleep then; he usually drops off to sleep right after he eats."

"What I have to say will keep him awake," said K.; he wanted to keep intimating that he had something of major importance to discuss with the lawyer; he wanted Leni to ask what it was and only then seek her advice. But she merely carried out his spoken instructions promptly. As she passed by with the bowl she deliberately nudged him softly and whispered: "As soon as he's eaten his soup, I'll tell him you're here; that hombre que es. Lo he tomado un poco bajo mi protección porque es un buen cliente del abogado, por ningún otro motivo. ¿Y tú? ¿Quieres hablar con el abogado? Hoy está muy enfermo, pero si quieres te anuncio ahora mismo. Por la noche te quedas conmigo, ¿verdad? Hace tiempo que no vienes, el abogado ha preguntado por ti. ¡No descuides el proceso! También yo tengo que comunicarte algo que he sabido hace poco. Pero ahora quítate el abrigo.

Ella le ayudó a quitárselo, también le cogió el sombrero, luego regresó y comprobó cómo iba la sopa.

—¿Quieres que te anuncie ahora o prefieres que te lleve primero la sopa?

—Anúnciame primero —dijo K.

Estaba enojado. En un principio tenía planeado hablar con Leni sobre la posibilidad de renunciar al abogado, pero la presencia del comerciante le había quitado las ganas. Ahora, sin embargo, consideraba el asunto demasiado importante como para que ese comerciante bajito pudiera interferir en él de una manera decisiva, así que llamó a Leni, que ya estaba en el pasillo, y le dijo que regresara.

—Llévale primero la sopa —dijo—, tiene que fortalecerse para nuestra entrevista, lo va a necesitar.

—¿Usted también es un cliente del abogado? —dijo el comerciante en voz baja desde su esquina sólo para confirmar.

—¿Qué le importa a usted eso? —dijo K. Pero Leni intervino:

—Quieres callarte. Bueno, entonces le llevo primero la sopa— dijo Leni a K y sirvió la sopa en un plato—. Pero temo que se duerma; en cuanto come, se duerme.

—Lo que voy a decirle le mantendrá despierto —dijo K. Quería dar a entender que pretendía decirle algo muy importante, que era para luego pedirle consejo. Pero ella se limitó a cumplir las órdenes. Cuando pasó a su lado con el plato, le dijo un golpe cariñoso y musitó:

—En cuanto se haya tomado la sopa, te anuncio,
way I’ll get you back as quickly as possible.” “Go on,” said K., “just go on.” “Try being a little friendlier,” she said, turning around once again in the doorway, bowl in hand.

K. watched her go; now that he had definitely decided to dismiss the lawyer, it was probably just as well that he hadn’t managed to discuss the matter further with Leni beforehand; she hardly had a sufficient grasp of the whole, and would certainly have advised against it; she might even have actually prevented K. from announcing the dismissal at this point; he would have remained upset and unsure, and yet in the end, after a period of time, he would still have carried out his decision, for the decision itself was all too compelling. The sooner it was carried out, however, the more damage it would prevent. Perhaps the merchant might have something to say about it.

K. turned around; the moment the merchant noticed, he began to rise. “Don’t get up,” said K., and drew a chair up beside him. “You’re an old client of the lawyer?” asked K. “Yes,” said the merchant, “a very old client.” “How many years has he been representing you then?” asked K. “I don’t know in what sense you mean that,” said the merchant, “in business affairs—I’m a grain dealer—ever since I took over the firm, for about twenty years now, and in my own trial, to which you’re no doubt alluding, he’s represented me right from the start as well, for more than five years now.” “Yes, much longer than five years,” he went on to add, and pulled out an old wallet, “I’ve written it all down here; if you wish I can give you the exact dates. It’s hard to keep track of it all. No doubt my trial has been going on much longer than that; it began shortly after the death of my wife and that was more than five and a half years ago.” K. drew nearer to him. “So the lawyer handles ordinary legal affairs as well?” he asked. This alliance of the court with
j urisprudence seemed to K. unusually comforting. 

“Of course,” said the merchant, and then whispered to K.: “They say he’s even better in legal affairs than he is in the others.”

But then he seemed to regret his words; he placed a hand on K.’s shoulder and said: “Please don’t betray me.”

K. patted him comfortingly on the thigh and said: “Surely he wouldn’t do anything to such a faithful client,” said K.

“Oh, yes he would,” said the merchant, “when he’s upset he draws no distinctions, and what’s more I’m not really faithful to him.”

“What do you mean?” K. asked.

“I believe you may,” said K. “Well,” said the merchant, “I’ll confide it in part, but you have to tell me a secret too, so that we both have something to hold over the other with regard to the lawyer.”

“You’re certainly cautious,” said K., “but I’ll tell you a secret that will put you entirely at ease. So, in what way are you unfaithful to the lawyer?”

“Well,” said the merchant hesitantly, in a tone as if he were confessing something dishonorable, “I have other lawyers besides him.”

“That’s really nothing very bad,” said K., a little disappointed.

“Yes, it is, here,” said the merchant, still breathing heavily after his confession, “but gaining confidence from his remark. “It’s not allowed. And the last thing you’re allowed to do is take on shysters in addition to one designated as a lawyer. And that’s just what I’ve done; in addition to him I have five shysters.”

“Five!” K. exclaimed, astonished above all by the number; “five lawyers besides him?” The merchant nodded: “I’m negotiating with a sixth right now.”

“But why do you need so many lawyers,” asked K. “I need them all,” said the merchant.

“Won’t you tell me why?” asked K.
“Gladly,” said the merchant. “First of all I don’t want to lose my trial, that goes without saying. So I mustn’t overlook anything that might be of use; even if there’s only a slight hope in a given instance that it might be of use, I still don’t dare discard it. So I’ve spent everything I have on my trial. For example, I’ve withdrawn all my capital from the business; my firm’s offices used to almost fill an entire floor; now one small room in the back suffices, where I work with an apprentice. Of course this decline resulted not only from a withdrawal of funds, but even more from the withdrawal of my energy. If you’re trying to work on your trial, you have little time for anything else.”

“So you deal directly with the court yourself?” asked K. “I’d like to know more about that.”

“There’s not much to tell,” said the merchant, “I tried it at first, but soon gave it up. It’s too exhausting, with too few results. At any rate I found I just couldn’t work there and deal with them myself. Just sitting and waiting is a major strain. You know yourself how stuffy it is in the offices.”

“How do you know I was there?” asked K. “I was in the waiting room when you passed through.”

“What a coincidence!” cried K., carried away and completely forgetting how ridiculous the merchant had once seemed. “So you saw me! You were in the waiting room when I passed through. Yes, I was in the waiting room when I passed through. Yes, I did pass through there once.”

“It’s not that great a coincidence,” said the merchant, “I’m there practically every day.”

“I’ll probably have to go there fairly often now,” said K., “but I doubt I’ll be received as respectfully as I was back then. Everyone stood up. They probably thought I was a judge.”

“No,” said the merchant, “we were greeting the court usher. We knew you were a defendant. News like that travels fast.”

“So you already knew that,” —Encantado —dijo el comerciante—. Ante todo no quiero perder el proceso, eso es evidente. Así, no puedo omitir nada que me sea útil. Aun cuando en un caso concreto las esperanzas de utilidad sean muy pequeñas, no las puedo rechazar. Por consiguiente, he invertido todo lo que poseo en el proceso. Por ejemplo, he sacado todo el dinero de mi negocio; antes las oficinas de mi negocio ocupaban toda una planta, ahora basta una pequeña estancia en la parte trasera de la casa, en la que trabajo con un aprendiz. Este repliegue no se ha debido exclusivamente a la carencia de dinero, sino también a la drástica reducción de la jornada laboral. Quien quiere hacer algo por su proceso, puede ocuparse muy poco de todo lo demás.

—Entonces, ¿usted mismo trabaja en los juzgados? —preguntó K.—. Precisamente sobre eso quizás saber algo más.

—Precisamente sobre eso le puedo informar muy poco —dijo el comerciante—. Al principio lo intente, pero lo tuve que dejar. Es demasiado agotador y no es una actividad que procure muchos éxitos. Trabajar y negociar allí al mismo tiempo me resultó imposible. Simplemente estar sentado y esperar supone un esfuerzo agotador. Ya conoce usted ese aire opresivo de las oficinas.

—¿Cómo sabe que he estado allí? —preguntó K.

—Yo estaba precisamente en la sala de espera cuando usted pasó.

—¡Qué casualidad! —exclamó K., tan absorbido por la conversación que había olvidado lo ridículo que le había parecido al principio el comerciante—. ¡Entonces me vio! Estaba en la sala de espera cuando pasé. Sí, yo pasé por allí una vez.

—No es tanta casualidad —dijo el comerciante—, estoy casi todos los días.

—Tendré que ir más —dijo K.—, pero no seré recibido con tanto decoro como aquella vez. Todos se levantaron. Pensaron que yo era un juez.

—No —dijo el comerciante—, en realidad saluábamos al ujier. Nosotros ya sabíamos que usted era un acusado. Esas noticias se difunden con rapidez.

—Así que ya lo sabía —dijo K—.
said K., “then my behavior may have struck you as arrogant. Didn’t anyone mention it?” “No,” said the merchant, “on the contrary. But that’s all nonsense.” “What sort of nonsense?” asked K. “Why do you ask?” the merchant said irritably, “You don’t seem to know the people there and might take it wrong. You have to realize that a great number of things are discussed in these proceedings that the mind just can’t deal with, people are simply too tired and distracted, and by way of compensation they resort to superstition. I’m talking about the others, but I’m no better. One such superstition, for example, is that many people believe they can predict the outcome of the trial from the face of the defendant, and in particular from the lines of his lips. Now these people claimed that according to your lips, you were certain to be convicted soon. I repeat, it’s a ridiculous superstition, and completely disproved in a majority of cases, but when you live in such company, it’s difficult to avoid these beliefs. Just think how strong the effect of such a superstition can be. You spoke to someone there, didn’t you? But he could hardly answer you. Of course there are all sorts of reasons for getting confused there, but one was the sight of your lips. He told us later he thought he’d seen the sign of his own conviction on your lips as well.” “My lips?” asked K., taking out a pocket mirror and regarding his face. “I can’t see anything unusual about my lips. Can you?” “Neither can I,” said the merchant, “absolutely nothing at all.” “These people are so superstitious!” K. exclaimed. “Didn’t I tell you so?” asked the merchant. “Do they spend so much time together then, exchanging opinions?” said K. “I’ve avoided them totally up to now.” “They generally don’t spend much time together,” said the merchant, “they couldn’t, there are too many of them. And they don’t have many interests in
common. When a group occasionally begin to believe they share some common interest, it soon proves a delusion. Group action is entirely ineffective against the court. Each case is investigated on its own merits; the court is, after all, extremely meticulous. So group action is entirely ineffective, it’s only individuals who sometimes manage something in secret; only when it’s been achieved do others learn of it; no one knows how it happened. So there’s no sense of community; people meet now and then in the waiting room, but there’s not much conversation there. These superstitions have been around for ages, and multiply totally on their own."

“I saw the gentle men there in the waiting room,” said K., “their waiting seemed to me so pointless.”

“Waiting isn’t pointless,” said the merchant, “the only thing that’s pointless is independent action. As I mentioned, I have five lawyers besides this one. One would think—and I thought so myself at first—that I could now turn the case over to them completely. But that’s totally mistaken. I’m even less able to turn it over to them than if I had only one. You probably don’t understand why?”

“No,” said K., placing his hand soothingly on that of the merchant to slow down his all too rapid speech, “I just wonder if you could speak a little more slowly; all of these things are very important to me, and I can’t really follow you.”

“I’m glad you reminded me,” said the merchant, “you’re a newcomer, after all, a mere youth. Your trial is six months old, right? Yes, I’ve heard about it. Such a young trial! I, on the other hand, have thought these things through innumerable times; to me they’re the most self-evident matters in the world.”

“You’re no doubt happy your trial’s so far along?” K. inquired; he didn’t want to ask straight out how the merchant’s case was coming. But he didn’t receive a straightforward answer either. “Yes, I’ve been pushing my trial
along for five years," said the merchant, bowing his head, "that's no small accomplishment." Then he fell silent for a moment. K. listened to hear if Leni was returning yet. On the one hand he didn't want her to come, for he still had many questions to ask and didn't want Leni to discover him in intimate conversation with the merchant; on the other hand, he was annoyed that in spite of his presence, she was remaining so long with the lawyer, much longer than necessary to hand him his soup.

"I still remember clearly," the merchant continued, and K. was immediately all ears, "when my trial was about as old as yours is now. Back then I had only this one lawyer, but I wasn't particularly satisfied with him. "I'm finding out everything here," thought K., and nodded vigorously as if to encourage the merchant to tell him everything worth knowing. "My trial," the merchant went on, "was getting nowhere; inquiries were taking place all right, and I attended every one of them, gathered material, and turned all my business records over to the court, which I discovered later wasn't even necessary; I kept running to my lawyer, and he was submitting various petitions as well." "Various petitions?" asked K. "Yes, of course," said the merchant. "That's very important to me," said K., "in my case he's still preparing the first petition. He hasn't done anything yet. I see now that he's neglecting me shamefully." "There may be various valid reasons why the petition isn't finished yet," said the merchant. "And my petitions, by the way, later proved to be entirely worthless. I even read one of them myself through the good graces of a court clerk. It was scholarly all right, but in fact contained nothing of substance. A lot of Latin for the most part, which I don't understand, then several pages of general appeals to the court, then flattery of certain
individual officials, who weren’t in fact named but could have been deduced by anyone familiar with the court, then self-praise on the lawyer’s part, combined with an almost canine servility before the court, and finally analyses of legal cases from ancient times that were supposedly similar to mine. Of course these analyses, so far as I could tell, were very carefully done. I don’t mean to judge the lawyer’s work in saying all this, and the petition I read was only one of many; nevertheless, and this is what I want to get to, I couldn’t see that my trial was making any progress.”

“What sort of progress did you expect to see?” asked K.

“That’s a very sensible question,” said the merchant with a smile, “you seldom see any sort of progress at all in such proceedings. But I didn’t know that then. I’m a merchant, and was much more of one then than I am today; I wanted to see tangible results; I expected the whole matter to be moving toward a conclusion, or at least to advance at a steady pace. Instead there were nothing but hearings, most of which went over the same old material; I already had the answers prepared like a litany; several times a week, court messengers would come to my firm or to my lodgings, or wherever they could find me; that was disturbing of course (things are much better these days, at least in that respect; a telephone call causes far less disruption), and rumors about my trial were starting to spread, among my colleagues in particular, but among my relatives as well, so that damage was being done on all sides, without the least indication that even the first session of the trial would take place anytime soon. So I went to my lawyer and complained. He offered long explanations of course, but steadfastly refused to take the action I desired; no one could influence the setting of a firm date for the trial, to make such a demand in a petition— as I was asking— was simply unheard of and would ruin both him and
me. I thought to myself: what this lawyer either can't or won't do, some other lawyer can and will. So I looked around for other lawyers. Let me say right away: not one of them asked for or succeeded in getting a firm date set for the main hearing; it turns out that, with one reservation, which I'll come to, it's truly impossible to do so; on this point the lawyer had not deceived me; for the rest however I had no regrets about having turned to other lawyers. You've probably already heard something about shysters from Dr. Huld; no doubt he portrayed them as contemptible, and in fact they are. Of course whenever he talks about them, and compares himself and his colleagues with them, a small error always creeps in, which I wish simply to point out to you in passing. He always refers to his own circle of lawyers, by way of contrast, as the 'great' lawyers. That's inaccurate; anyone can call himself 'great' if he wants to, of course, but in this case court usage is decisive. According to that there are, in addition to the shysters, both petty lawyers and great lawyers. This lawyer and his colleagues are only petty lawyers, however; the great lawyers, whom I've merely heard of but never seen, stand incomparably higher in rank above the petty lawyers than those do over the despised shysters.

"The great lawyers?" asked K. "Who are they then? How can they be contacted?"

"So you've never heard of them," said the merchant. "Apenas hay un acusado que después de haber conocido su existencia no sueñe largo tiempo con ellos. Pero no se deje seducir por la idea. Yo no sé quiénes son los grandes abogados y no tengo ningún acceso a ellos. No conozco ningún caso en el que se pueda decir con seguridad que han intervenido. Defienden a algunos, pero no se puede lograr su defensa por propia voluntad, sólo defienden a los que quieren defender. Sin embargo, los asun-
cases they take on, however, have no doubt already advanced beyond the lower court. On the whole it's best not to think about them, otherwise consultations with other lawyers, their advice and assistance, all seem so disgusting and useless that, as I myself know from experience, what you would like most to do would be to pitch the whole affair, go home to bed, and hear nothing more of it. But of course that would be equally stupid; nor would you be left at peace in bed for long."

"So you didn't think about the great lawyers back then?" asked K."

"Not for long," said the merchant, and smiled again, "you can never quite forget them, unfortunately, nights are particularly conducive to such thoughts. But back then I wanted immediate results, so I went to the lawyers."

"Look at the two of you sitting together," cried Leni, who had returned with the bowl and paused at the door. In fact they were sitting quite close to one another; the slightest turn and they would bump their heads; the merchant, who apart from his short stature also stooped, had forced K. to bend low if he wanted to hear everything."

"Just give us another minute," K. said, putting Leni off, and the hand he still left placed on the merchant's twitched impatiently."

"He wanted me to tell him about my trial," the merchant said to Leni."

"Go ahead and tell him," she said. She spoke tenderly to the merchant, but condescendingly as well, which didn't please K; after all, as he now realized, the man had some merit, at least he had experience in these matters and could communicate it. Leni probably judged him unfairly. He watched with annoyance as Leni took the candle from the merchant, who had been gripping it firmly the whole time, wiped his hand with her apron, and then knelt down beside him to scratch away tos que aceptan ya tienen que haber pasado de las instancias inferiores. Por lo demás, es mejor no pensar en ellos, pues de otro modo todas las entrevistas con los otros abogados, todos sus consejos y ayudas, aparecerán como algo completamente inútil, yo o lo he experimentado, a uno le entran ganas de arrojarlo todo para irse a casa, meterse en la cama y no querer saber nada más asunto. Pero eso sería, una vez más, una gran necedad, tampoco en cama se podría gozar por mucho tiempo de tranquilidad.

—¿Usted no pensó entonces en los grandes abogados? —preguntó K. —No por mucho tiempo —dijo el comerciante, y sonrió otra vez—, por supuesto no se les puede olvidar por completo, la noche es especialmente favorable para que surjan esos pensamientos. Pero en aquellos tiempos sólo pretendía éxitos inmediatos, así que fui a ver a los abogados intrusos."

—Qué bien estás sentados los dos juntos —exclamó Leni, que había regresado con el plato de sopa. Realmente estaban sentados muy cerca el uno del otro, al hacer el mínimo movimiento podrían golpearse mutuamente con la cabeza. El comerciante, que además de su pequeña estatura no mantenía encorvado obligó a que K se inclinara para poder oír lo que decía. —Un momento todavía —gritó K, rechazando a Leni y agitando impacientemente la mano que aún tenía sobre la del comerciante. —Quería que le contase mi proceso —dijo el comerciante a Leni. —Sigue, sigue contando —dijo ella. Hablaba al comerciante con cariño, pero también algo despectivamente. A K no le gustó. Como acababa de reconocer, ese hombre poseía un valor, al menos tenía experiencias que sabía comunicar. Era posible que Leni le había juzgado injustamente. Miró a Leni enojado cuando ella le quitó la vela al comerciante, que había sostenido en alto todo ese tiempo, le limpió la mano con el delantal y se arrodilló a su lado para ras-
s ome wax that had dripped onto his trousers.
“You were going to tell me about the shysters,” K. said, pushing Leni’s hand away without comment.
“What do you think you’re doing?” asked Leni, giving K. a small tap and resuming her task.
“Yes, the shysters,” said the merchant, and passed his hand across his brow, as if he were thinking.
K. tried to prompt him by saying: “You wanted immediate results and so you went to the shysters.
“That’s right,” said the merchant, but didn’t continue.
Perhaps he doesn’t want to talk about it in front of Leni,” thought K., suppressing his impatience to hear the rest at once and pressing him no further.

“Did you tell him I was here?” he asked Leni: “Of course,” she said, “he’s waiting for you. Now leave Block alone; you can always talk with Block later; he’s staying here after all.” K. hesitated a moment longer.
“You’re staying here?” he asked the merchant; he wanted him to answer for himself, not to have Leni talking about the merchant as if he weren’t there; he was filled with hidden resentment against Leni today.

“Sí,” said Leni, “not everyone is allowed to see the lawyer whenever they wish, like you, Josef. You don’t seem at all surprised that the lawyer is receiving you at eleven o’clock at night, in spite of his illness. You take what your friends do for you too much for granted. Well, your friends do it gladly, or at least I do. I don’t want or need any other thanks than that you’re fond of me.”

“Fond of you?” K. thought for a moment, and only then did par algo de cera que le había caído en el pantalón.

“—Quería hablarme de los abogados intrusos —dijo K y, sin más comentarios, dio una palmada en la mano de Leni.

—¿Qué quieres? —preguntó Leni, le devolvió la palmada y continuó su trabajo.

—Sí, de los abogados intrusos —dijo el comerciante y se pasó la mano sobre la frente, como si reflexionara.

K quiso ayudarle y dijo:

—Usted quería tener éxitos inmediatos y por eso buscó abogados intrusos. —Ah, sí, cierto —dijo el comerciante, pero no continuó hablando.

«Es posible que no quiera hablar delante de Leni» —pensó K. Dominó su impaciencia por oír el resto y no le presionó más.

“—Did you tell him I was here?” he asked Leni: “Of course,” she said, “he’s waiting for you. Now leave Block alone; you can always talk with Block later; he’s staying here after all.” K. hesitated a moment longer.

“You’re staying here?” he asked the merchant; he wanted him to answer for himself, not to have Leni talking about the merchant as if he weren’t there; he was filled with hidden resentment against Leni today. Again only Leni answered:

“He often sleeps here,” “Sleeps here?” cried K.; he’d thought the merchant would simply wait for him while he dealt quickly with the lawyer, and that they would then leave together and discuss everything thoroughly, without interruption.

“Yes,” said Leni, “not everyone is allowed to see the lawyer whenever they wish, like you, Josef. You don’t seem at all surprised that the lawyer is receiving you at eleven o’clock at night, in spite of his illness. You take what your friends do for you too much for granted. Well, your friends do it gladly, or at least I do. I don’t want or need any other thanks than that you’re fond of me.”

“Fond of you?” K. thought for a moment, and only then did
it occur to him: “Well, I am fond of her.” Nevertheless he said, ignoring all the rest: “He receives me because I’m his client. If I needed outside help for that too, I’d be bowing and scraping at every step.” “He’s being very bad today, isn’t he?” Leni asked the merchant. “Now I’m the one who isn’t here,” thought K., and almost grew angry with the merchant as well, as the latter, adopting Leni’s rude manner, said: “The lawyer has other reasons for receiving him too. His case is much more interesting than mine. And his trial is in its beginning stages, and therefore probably not particularly muddled yet, so the lawyer still enjoys dealing with it. Things will be different later on.” “Yes, yes,” said Leni, and glanced at the merchant with a smile, “how he rattles on! You don’t dare believe him at all,” here she turned to K., “he’s as gossipy as he is sweet. Maybe that’s why the lawyer doesn’t like him. At any rate, he only sees him if he’s in a good mood. I’ve been trying hard to change that, but it’s impossible. Just think, sometimes I tell him Block’s here and it’s three days before he receives him. If Block isn’t on the spot when called, however, all is lost, and he has to be announced anew. That’s why I let Block sleep here; he’s been known to ring for him in the night. So now Block is ready nights as well. Sometimes, of course, if Block does prove to be here, the lawyer then retracts the order to admit him.” K. threw a questioning glance at the merchant. The merchant nodded and said as frankly as he had in speaking with K. earlier, perhaps forgetting himself in his embarrassment: “Yes, you grow very dependent on your lawyer later on.” “He’s just making a show of complaining,” said Leni. “He enjoys sleeping here, as he’s often confessed to me.” She walked over to a little door and pushed it open. “Do you want to see his bedroom?” she asked. K. walked over and gazed from
the threshold into the low, windowless room, completely filled by a narrow bed. The only way to get into the bed was to climb over the bedposts. At the head of the bed was a niche in the wall in which a candle, inkwell and quill, as well as a sheaf of papers, probably trial documents, were meticulously arranged.

"You sleep in the maid’s room?" asked K. and turned back toward the merchant.

"Leni lets me have it," answered the merchant, "it’s very convenient.

K. took a long look at him; perhaps his first impression of the merchant had been correct after all; he was experienced in these matters, since his trial had been under way for a long time, but he had paid dearly for that experience. Suddenly K. could no longer stand the sight of the merchant.

"Put him to bed," he cried to Leni, who seemed to have no idea what he meant. He himself wanted to see the lawyer, and by dismissing him, to free himself not only from the lawyer, but from Leni and the merchant as well. But before he reached the door, the merchant addressed him softly:

"Herr K." K. turned around with an angry look.

"You’ve forgotten your promise," said the merchant, and leaned forward imploringly from his chair toward K., "you were going to tell me a secret."

"That’s true," said K., glancing at Leni as well, who regarded him attentively, "well, listen: it’s hardly a secret by now of course. I’m going to see the lawyer now to dismiss him."

"He’s dismissing him," cried the merchant, jumping up from his chair and racing about the kitchen with his arms in the air. Again and again he cried out: "He’s dismissing his lawyer.

Leni immediately started for K., but the merchant got in her way and she struck him with her fists. Still clenching her fists, she ran after K., who, however, had a sizable lead. He had already entered the lawyer’s room when Leni caught up with him. He’d almost shut the door
behind him, but Leni, who held the door open with her foot, grabbed him by the arm and tried to pull him back. He squeezed her wrist so hard, however, that she groaned and let him go. She didn’t dare enter the room at once, and K. locked the door with the key.

“I’ve been waiting a long time for you,” said the lawyer from his bed, placing on the nightstand a document he’d been reading by candlelight and donning a pair of glasses, through which he peered sharply at K. Instead of apologizing, K. said: “I’ll be leaving soon.”

Because K.’s remark was not an apology, the lawyer ignored it and said: “I’ll not see you again at such a late hour.” “That’s in accord with my desires,” said K. The lawyer looked at him inquisitively. “Sit down,” he said. “As you wish,” said K., pulling a chair up to the nightstand and sitting down. “It looked to me like you locked the door,” said the lawyer.

“Yes,” said K., “because of Leni.”

“I’ve been waiting a long time for you,” said the lawyer from his bed, placing on the nightstand a document he’d been reading by candlelight and donning a pair of glasses, through which he peered sharply at K. Instead of apologizing, K. said: “I’ll be leaving soon.”

Because K.’s remark was not an apology, the lawyer ignored it and said: “I’ll not see you again at such a late hour.” “That’s in accord with my desires,” said K. The lawyer looked at him inquisitively. “Sit down,” he said. “As you wish,” said K., pulling a chair up to the nightstand and sitting down. “It looked to me like you locked the door,” said the lawyer.

“Yes,” said K., “because of Leni.” He intended to spare no one. But the lawyer asked: “Was she being too forward again?” “Too forward?” K. asked. “Yes,” said the lawyer with a chuckle, fell prey to a fit of coughing, then started chuckling again once it had passed. “You’ve no doubt noticed how forward she is?” he asked, patting K. on the hand he’d braced distractedly on the nightstand and now quickly withdrew. “You don’t attach much importance to it,” said the lawyer as K. remained silent, “so much the better. Otherwise I might have had to offer you my apologies. It’s a peculiarity of hers I’ve long since forgiven her for, and I wouldn’t bring it up at all if you hadn’t locked the door just now. This peculiarity, and of course you’re probably the last person I need to explain this to, but you look so perplexed that I will, this peculiarity consists in the fact that Leni finds most defendants attractive. She’s drawn to all of them, loves all of them, and of course appears

---Le espero desde hace tiempo—dijo el abogado desde la cama, dejó un escrito, que había estado leyendo a la luz de una vela, sobre la mesilla de noche y se puso las gafas, con las que miró a K con ojos penetrantes. En vez de disculparse, K. dijo:

—Me iré en seguida.

El abogado ignoró las palabras de K, porque no suponían ninguna disculpa, y dijo: —La próxima vez no le recibiré a una hora tan avanzada. —No importa—dijo K.

El abogado le lanzó una mirada interrogativa.

—Siéntese—dijo.

—Como guste—dijo K, y trajo una silla hasta la mesilla de noche. —Me parece que ha cerrado la puerta con llave—dijo el abogado.

—Sí—dijo K—, ha sido por Leni.

No tenía la menor intención de resistir a nadie. Pero el abogado preguntó: —¿Ha vuelto a ser atrevida?

—¿Atrevida? —preguntó K. —Sí—dijo el abogado, y al reír sufrió un ataque de tos, pero continuó riendo en cuanto se le pasó.

—Usted habrá notado ya su osadía—dijo, y dio unos ligeros golpecitos en la mano de K, que, confuso, la había apoyado en la mesilla de noche, retirándola ahora de inmediato.

—No le da importancia—dijo el abogado cuando K se quedó callado—, mucho mejor. Si no hubiera tenido que disculparme ante usted. Es una peculiaridad de Leni, que ya le he perdonado hace mucho tiempo y de la que no hablaría si usted no hubiera cerrado la puerta con llave. A usted sería a quien menos se le debería explicar esa peculiaridad, pero como me mira tan consternado, lo haré. Esa peculiaridad consiste en que Leni encuentra guapos a la mayoría de los acusados. Se encapricha de todos, los ama, al menos aparentemente todos
to be loved by them in turn; she occasionally amuses me with stories about it, when I let her. I'm not nearly as surprised as you seem to be. If you have an eye for that sort of thing, defendants are indeed often attractive. It is of course remarkable, in a sense almost a natural phenomenon. It's clear no obvious change in appearance is noticeable once a person has been accused. The situation differs from a normal court case; most defendants continue to lead a normal life and, if they find a good lawyer who looks out for them, they aren't particularly hampered by the trial. Nevertheless, an experienced eye can pick out a defendant in the largest crowd every time. On what basis? you may ask. My reply won't satisfy you. The defendants are simply the most attractive. It can't be guilt that makes them attractive, for at least as a lawyer I must maintain this—they can't all be guilty, nor can it be the coming punishment that renders them attractive in advance, for not all of them will be punished; it must be a result, then, of the proceedings being brought against them, which somehow adheres to them. Of course some are even more attractive than others. But they're all attractive, even that miserable worm, Block."

By the time the lawyer had finished, K. had completely regained his composure; he even nodded emphatically at his final words, which reconfirmed his original conviction that the lawyer, now as always, was attempting to divert his attention from the main question by conveying general information having nothing to do with the matter at hand, which was what he had actually accomplished in K.'s case. The lawyer no doubt noticed that K. was putting up more resistance than usual on this occasion, for he now fell silent in order to allow K. a chance to speak, and when K. said nothing, he asked: “Have you come with some special purpose in mind today?” “Yes,” said K., shading the

le corresponden; para entretenerme, cuando le doy permiso, me cuenta algo. Para mí no es ninguna sorpresa, como para usted parece serlo. Cuando se tiene la perspectiva visual adecuada, se encuentra que, efectivamente, la mayoría de los acusados son guapos. Se trata, en cierta manera, de un fenómeno científico bastante extraño. A causa de la apertura del proceso no se produce, naturalmente, una alteración clara y apreciable del aspecto exterior de una persona. Pero tampoco es como en otros asuntos judiciales, aquí la mayoría mantiene su forma de vida habitual, y si tienen un buen abogado que cuide de ellos, el proceso apenas les afectará. Sin embargo, los que poseen una dilatada experiencia son capaces de reconocer a los acusados entre una multitud. ¿Por qué?, preguntará. Mi respuesta no le satisfará. Los acusados son los más guapos. No puede ser la culpa la que los embellece, pues —y aquí tengo que hablar como abogado— no todos son culpables; tampoco puede ser la pena futura la que les hace guapos, pues no todos serán castigados; por consiguiente, se tendría que deber al proceso, que, de algún modo, les marca. Aunque también hay que reconocer que entre todos ellos hay algunos que se distinguen por una belleza especial. Pero todos son guapos, incluso Block, ese gusano miserable.

Cuando el abogado terminó de hablar, K. estaba tranquilo, incluso había asentido con la cabeza a sus últimas palabras, confirmando así su antigua opinión de que el abogado siempre intentaba confundirle con informaciones generales ajenas al caso y, así, evitaba dar respuesta a la cuestión de si había realizado algo en su favor. El abogado notó que K. estaba dispuesto a ofrecerle más resistencia que de costumbre, pues se calló para dar a K. la posibilidad de hablar. No obstante preguntó al ver que K mantenía su silencio:

—Pero usted ha venido a verme con una intención especial, ¿verdad?

—Sí —dijo K. y tapó un poco la
candle with his hand slightly, so he
could see the lawyer better, “I
wanted to tell you that as of today I
no longer wish for you to represent me.”

“Do I understand you correctly?”
the lawyer asked, rising halfway
up in bed and propping himself
with one hand on the pillows.

“I assume so,” said K., who
was sitting there tensely, on
the alert. “Well now, we can
discuss this plan,” said the
lawyer after a pause. “It’s
no longer a plan,” said K.

“That may be,” said the lawyer,
“but still we mustn’t be too hasty.
He used the word “we” as if he
had no intention of freeing K,
even if he were no longer
his legal representative.

“There’s nothing hasty about it,” said K., standing up slowly
and stepping behind his chair,
“it’s been carefully considered,
perhaps at even too great a
length. The decision is final.”

“Then permit me just a few
more remarks,” said the lawyer,
pulling off the quilt
and sitting up on the edge of
the bed. His bare, white-haired
legs trembled in the cold. He
asked K. to pass him a blanket
from the divan. K. fetched
the blanket and said:

“There’s no reason to
risk catching cold.”

“The cause is important
eough,” said the lawyer as he
pulled the quilt around his
upper body and then wrapped
the blanket around his legs.

“Your uncle is my friend, and
I’ve grown fond of you as well
over the course of time. I admit
that openly. I needn’t be
ashamed of it.” These
emotional sentiments on the old
man’s part were not welcomed
by K., for they forced him to a
detailed explanation he
would have preferred to avoid,
and they disconcerted him as
well, although they could
never, of course, cause him
to retract his decision.

“I appreciate your kind
feelings,” he said, “and I
realize you did as much as you
could in my case, and in a
manner you thought was in my
interest. Recently, however,
I’ve become convinced that
isn’t enough. Naturally I would never attempt to persuade you, a much older and more experienced man, to adopt my point of view; if I’ve sometimes tried to do so instinctively, please forgive me, but as you say, the cause is important enough, and I’m convinced it’s necessary to intervene much more actively in the trial than has been done to this point.”

“I understand,” said the lawyer, “you’re impatient.”

“I’m not impatient,” said K., slightly irritated and choosing his words less carefully now.

“You may have noticed during my first visit, when I came here with my uncle, that I wasn’t particularly concerned about the trial; when I wasn’t forcibly reminded of it, so to speak, I forgot it entirely. But my uncle insisted I ask you to represent me, and I did it to oblige him. One would have thought the trial would weigh less heavily upon me then; the point of engaging a lawyer is to shift the burden of the trial in part from one’s self. But the opposite occurred. I never had as many worries about the trial as I did from the moment you began to represent me. When I was on my own I did nothing about my case, but I hardly noticed it; now, on the other hand, I had someone representing me, everything was set so that something was supposed to happen, I kept waiting expectantly for you to take action, but nothing was done. Of course you passed on various bits of information about the court I might not have garnered from anyone else. But I don’t find that sufficient when the trial is positively closing in on me in secret.”

K. had pushed the chair away and was standing there with his hands in his pockets.

“From a certain point onward in one’s practice,” the lawyer said softly and calmly, “nothing really new ever happens. How many clients at a similar stage in their trial have stood before me as you do now and spoken similar words.”

“Then all those similar ha afianzado en mí la convicción de que no es suficiente. Por supuesto que jamás intentaré convencerle, a usted, a un hombre mucho más experimentado y mayor que yo. Si lo he intentando alguna vez, le ruego que me perdone. El asunto, como usted dice, es lo suficientemente importante y estoy convencido de que es necesario actuar con más energías en el proceso de las que se han empleado hasta ahora. —Le comprendo —dijo el abogado—. Usted es impaciente. —No soy impaciente —dijo K algo irritado, y ya no cuidó tanto sus palabras—. Usted pudo notar, cuando vine por primera vez acompañado de mi tío, que el proceso no me importaba mucho. Si no me lo recordaban con insistencia, lo olvidaba por completo. Pero mi tío se empeñó en que le encargase mi defensa, así lo hice, pero sólo para ser amable con él. Y a partir de ese momento creí que soportar el proceso sería aún más fácil para mi, pues al encargar al abogado la defensa, la carga del proceso recaería sobre él. Pero ocurrió todo lo contrario. Nunca antes de que usted asumiera mi defensa tuve tantas preocupaciones a causa del proceso. Cuando estaba solo no emprendía nada a favor de mi causa, pero apenas lo sentía; luego, sin embargo, dispuse de un defensor, todo estaba dispuesto para que algo ocurriera, yo esperaba cada vez más tenso sus diligencias, pero no se produjeron. Eso sí, de usted recibí informaciones acerca del tribunal que no hubiera podido recibir de otros. Pero eso no me puede bastar cuando el proceso, aunque sea en secreto, me afecta cada vez más.

K habí apartado la silla y permanecía de pie con las manos en los bolsillos de la chaqueta. —Desde un punto de vista práctico —dijo el abogado en voz baja y con tranquilidad—, ya no se produce nada esencialmente nuevo. Usted está ahora ante mí del mismo modo en que estuvieron muchos otros acusados en la misma fase del proceso, y también dijeron lo mismo. —Entonces todos esos acusados
clients,” said K. “were as much in the right as I am. That doesn’t refute what I say.” “I wasn’t trying to refute you,” said the lawyer, “but I was about to add that I expected better judgment from you than from the others, particularly since I’ve given you a greater insight into the workings of the court and my own actions than I normally do for clients. And now I’m forced to realize that in spite of everything, you have too little confidence in me. You don’t make things easy for me.”

How the lawyer was humbling himself before K.! With no consideration at all for the honor of his profession, which was doubtless most sensitive on this point. And why was he doing it? He appeared to be a busy lawyer and a rich man as well, so the loss of the fee itself or of one client couldn’t mean that much to him. And given his illness, he should be thinking about reducing his workload anyway. Nevertheless, he was holding on tight to K. Why? Was it out of personal consideration for his uncle, or did he truly find K.’s trial so extraordinary that he hoped to distinguish himself on K.’s behalf, or-the possibility could never be entirely dismissed-on behalf of his friends at court? His demeanor revealed nothing, no matter how sharply K. scrutinized him. You might almost think he was awaiting the effect of his words with a deliberately blank expression. But he evidently interpreted K.’s silence all too positively, for he now continued: “You will have noticed I have a large office but employ no staff. Things used to be different; there was a time when several young lawyers worked for me, but today I work alone. That’s due in part to a change in my practice, in that I restrict myself increasingly to legal matters like yours, in part to a deepening insight I’ve gained through such cases. I found I didn’t dare delegate this work to anyone else if I wished to avoid sinning against my client and the task I’d undertaken. But the decision to handle everything myself had certain

---dijo K--- tenían la misma razón que yo tengo. Eso no refuta mis ideas.

---Yo no pretendía refutar su opinión ---dijo el abogado---, sólo quería añadir que había esperado de usted una mayor capacidad de juicio, sobre todo porque le he permitido hacerse una mejor idea de la judicatura y de mi actividad que a otros. Y, sin embargo, ahora puedo comprobar que, a pesar de mis esfuerzos, no me tiene mucha confianza. No me lo pone muy fácil.

¿Cómo se humillaba el abogado ante K! Sin consideración alguna al honor de su gremio, que en este punto es de lo más sensible. Y, ¿por qué lo hacía? Según las apariencias era un abogado muy ocupado y, además, un hombre rico, en su caso no se trataba ni de ganancias ni de la pérdida de un cliente. Por añadidura, estaba enfermo y tenía que pensar en reducir su trabajo. No obstante, se aferraba a K. ¿Por qué? ¿Acaso era por el tio, o consideraba el proceso de K tan extraordinario que podría distinguirse ya fuese ante K o ---la posibilidad no se podía excluir--- ante sus amigos del tribunal? De su actitud no se podía deducir nada, por muy desconsiderada que fuese su mirada escrutadora. Se podría decir que esperaba con un gesto intencionalmente neutral el efecto de sus palabras. En todo caso pareció interpretar el silencio de K de un modo demasiado favorable, ya que continuó:

---Habría notado que tengo un bufete grande pero que no empleo a pasantes. Antes era distinto, hubo un tiempo en que trabajaban para mí jóvenes juristas, hoy trabajo solo. En parte se debe a que me he ido restringiendo a asuntos como el suyo, en parte debido al profundo conocimiento que he ido acumulando acerca de esta judicatura. Pensé que un trabajo así no se puede delegar en nadie, que al hacerlo traicionaría al cliente y la tarea que había asumido. La decisión de realizar todo el trabajo por mí mismo
natural consequences: I had to turn down most requests to represent clients and could only relent in cases I found of particular interest—well, there are plenty of wretched creatures, even right in this neighborhood, ready to fling themselves on the smallest crumb I cast aside. And I fell ill from overwork as well. Nevertheless, I don’t regret my decision; perhaps I should have refused more cases than I did, but devoting myself entirely to the trials I did take on proved absolutely necessary and was rewarded by success. I once read an essay in which I found the difference between representing a normal case and representing one of this sort expressed quite beautifully. It said: one lawyer leads his client by a slender thread to the judgment, but the other lifts his client onto his shoulders and carries him to the judgment and beyond, without ever setting him down. That’s how it is. But I wasn’t quite accurate when I said I never regretted this difficult task. When, as in your case, it’s so completely misunderstood, well then, I almost do regret it."

This speech, instead of convincing K., merely increased his impatience. From the lawyer’s tone, he gathered some sense of what awaited him if he gave in, the vain promises that would begin anew, the references to progress on the petition, to the improved mood of the court officials, but also to the immense difficulties involved—in short, everything K. already knew ad nauseam would be trotted out once again to lure him with vague hopes and torment him with vague threats. He had to put a clear stop to that, and so he said: “What steps will you take in my case if you continue to represent me?” The lawyer bowed to even this insulting question and answered: “I’ll continue along the lines I’ve already taken.” “I knew it,” said K., “well, there’s no need to waste another word.” “I’ll make one more attempt,” tuvo consecuencias naturales: tuve que renunciar a casi todos los casos y sólo aceptar los que tenían un interés especial para mí. A fin de cuentas hay suficientes criaturas, y muy cerca de aquí, que se arrojan sobre cada mendrugo que yo rechazo. Aun así me puse enfermo por el exceso de trabajo. No obstante, no me arrepiento de mi decisión. Es posible que hubiera debido rechazar más casos de los que rechacé, pero que lo he dado todo en los procesos que he asumido es algo que ha resultado necesario y ha sido premiado con éxitos. Una vez encontré muy bien expresada en un escrito la diferencia entre la representación de mi cliente en asuntos judiciales normales y la representación en este tipo de asuntos. Decía: «Uno de los abogados lleva a su cliente de una hebra de hilo hasta la sentencia, el otro sube a su cliente sobre sus hombros y lo lleva así, sin bajarlo, hasta la sentencia e, incluso, más allá de ella». Así es. Pero no era del todo cierto cuando dije que jamás he lamentado asumir este trabajo tan pesado. Cuando usted, en su caso, se equivoque de manera tan garrafal, sólo entonces es cuando lo lamento. K no sólo se dejó convencer, sino que se fue poniendo cada vez más impaciente. Creyó percibir en el tono del abogado lo que esperaría si cedía: comenzarían de nuevo los consuelos; se repetirían las menciones acerca de la redacción avanzada del escrito judicial, acerca del estado de ánimo de los funcionarios, pero también sobre las dificultades que se oponían al trabajo. En suma, todo eso, ya conocido, se tendría que repetir hasta la saciedad para embauazar a K con esperanzas inciertas y atormentarle con amenazas larvadas. Tenía que impedirlo definitivamente, así que dijo (33):

—¿Qué emprendería si mantuviese mi representación? El abogado aceptó esa pregunta humillante y contestó: —Continuar con las diligencias ya iniciadas.

—Ya lo sabía —dijo K—. Cualquier palabra más resulta superflua.

—Haré todavía un intento
said the lawyer, as if what was upsetting K. was affecting to him instead. “I suspect that what’s led both to your false judgment of my legal assistance and to your general behavior is that, in spite of being an accused man, you’ve been treated too well, or to put it more accurately, you’ve been treated with negligence, with apparent negligence. There’s a reason for this as well: it’s often better to be in chains than to be free. But I’d like to show you how other defendants are treated: perhaps you’ll be able to draw a lesson from it. I’m going to call Block in now; unlock the door and sit down here beside the nightstand.”

“Gladly,” said K. and did as the lawyer asked; he was always ready to learn. But as a general precaution, he asked as well: “You do understand, however, that I’m dispensing with your services?” “Yes,” said the lawyer, “but you can still retract that decision today.” He lay back down in bed, pulled the quilt up to his chin, and turned toward the wall. Then he rang.

Leni appeared almost simultaneously with the sound of the bell; she tried to ascertain what had happened with a few quick glances; the fact that K. was sitting quietly by the lawyer’s bed seemed to reassure her. She nodded with a smile to K., who stared fixedly at her. “Get Block,” said the lawyer. But instead of going to get him, she simply stepped outside the door, called out: “Block! To the lawyer!” and then, no doubt because the lawyer was still turned toward the wall and paying no attention, slipped behind K.’s chair. She kept distracting him from that point on, leaning over the back of his chair, or running her fingers, quite gently and surreptitiously of course, through his hair, and stroking his cheeks. Finally K. tried to stop her by grabbing her hand, which, after a brief resistance, she surrendered to him.

—dijo el abogado, como si lo que irritaba a K le afectara en realidad a él—. Ten go la sospecha de que usted ha sido llevado a su falso enjuiciamiento de mi trabajo y a su comportamiento miento por el hecho de que, a pesar de ser un acusado, se le ha tratado demasiado bien o, mejor expresado, con aparente indolencia. También esto último tiene su motivo. A menudo es mejor estar encadenado que libre. Pero quiero mostrarte cómo se trata a otros acusados, tal vez sea capaz de aprender una lección. Voy a llamar a Block, abra la puerta y siéntese aquí, junto a la mesilla de noche.

—Encantado —dijo K, e hizo lo que el abogado le había pedido. Siempre estaba dispuesto a aprender algo. Pero para asegurarse, preguntó: —Pero, ¿se ha enterado de que le he retirado definitivamente mi confianza? —Sí —dijo el abogado—, pero hoy mismo puedo rectificar.

Se acostó, se tapó con la manta hasta la barbilla y se volvió hacia la pared. Entonces llamó.

Al poco rato apareció Leni, intentó apreciar con miradas fugaces qué había ocurrido. Que K permaneciera tranquilo al lado de la mesilla de noche del abogado, era un signo positivo. Hizo una ligera seña con la cabeza a K, que la contempló rigido, y sonrió.

—Trae a Block—dijo el abogado.

En vez de salir de la habitación para traerlo, se acercó a la puerta y gritó: —¡Block! ¡El abogado te llama! —luego se puso detrás de K, ya que el abogado continuaba mirando hacia la pared y no se preocupaba de nada. A partir de ese momento estuvo molestando a K, pues se inclinó sobre el respaldo de su silla y acarició, con sumo cuidado y suavidad, su pelo y mejillas. Finalmente, K intentó impedirselo al coger una de sus manos, que ella, después de resistirse algo, dejó en su poder.
Block arrived immediately in response to the summons but stopped at the door and seemed to be debating whether or not he should enter. He raised his eyebrows and inclined his head, as if listening to hear if the order to see the lawyer might be repeated. K. might have encouraged him to enter, but he had decided to make a clean break, not only with his lawyer, but with everything that went on in his apartment, and so he remained motionless. Leni too was silent. Block saw that at least he wasn’t being driven away and entered on tiptoe, his face tense, his hands clenched behind him. He had left the door open for a possible retreat. He didn’t even glance at K. but instead gazed only at the puffy quilt beneath which the lawyer, who had moved right against the wall, could not even be seen. Then, however, his voice was heard: “Block here?” he asked. This query delivered a virtual blow to Block, who had already advanced a good way forward, striking him in the chest and then in the back so that he stumbled, came to a stop with a deep bow, and said: “At your service.” “What do you want?” asked the lawyer: “you’ve come at an inopportune time.” “Wasn’t I summoned?” asked Block, more to himself than to the lawyer, lifting his hands protectively and ready to retreat. “You were summoned,” said the lawyer, “but you’ve still come at an inopportune time.” And after a pause he continued: “You always come at inopportune times.” Once the lawyer began speaking, Block no longer looked at the bed, but instead stared off somewhere into a corner and merely listened, as if the sight of the speaker was too blinding to bear. Listening was difficult too, however, for the lawyer was speaking to the wall, softly and rapidly. “Do you wish me to leave?” asked Block. “You’re here now,”
said the lawyer. “Stay!”
One would have thought the lawyer had threatened to flog Block, not grant his wish, for now Block began to tremble in earnest. “Yesterday,” said the lawyer, “I visited the third judge, my friend, and gradually brought the conversation around to you. Do you want to know what he said?”
“Oh, please,” said Block. Since the lawyer didn’t reply at once, Block repeated his entreaty, and stooped as if to kneel. But then K. lashed out at him: “What are you doing?” he cried. Leni tried to stop his outburst, he seized her other hand as well. It was no loving embrace in which he held them; she groaned several times and tried to pull her hands away. Block was the one punished for K.’s outburst, however, for the lawyer asked him: “Who’s your lawyer?”
“You are,” said Block. “And other than me?” asked the lawyer. “No one but you,” said Block.
“Then don’t listen to anyone else,” said the lawyer. Block accepted this totally; he measured K. with an angry glance and shook his head vigorously. Translated into words, his gestures would have constituted a tirade of abuse.
And this was the man K. had wished to engage in friendly conversation about his own case!
“I won’t disturb you further,” said K., leaning back in his chair, “kneel down or crawl around on all fours, do just as you like, it makes no difference to me.”
But Block did have a sense of honor after all, at least as far as K. was concerned, for he headed toward him, brandishing his fists and crying out as loudly as he dared in the lawyer’s presence: “You can’t talk to me like that, it’s not allowed. Why are you insulting me? And in front of the lawyer, who tolerates both you and me merely out of compassion? You’re no better a person than I am, for you’re a defendant too and also on trial. But if you remain a gentleman...
in spite of that, then I’m as much a gentleman as you, if not a greater one. And I wish to be addressed as one, especially by you. But if you think you’re privileged because you’re allowed to sit here quietly and listen while I, as you put it, crawl around on all fours, then let me remind you of the old legal maxim: a suspect is better off moving than at rest, for one at rest may be on the scales without knowing it, being weighed with all his sins.”

K. said nothing; he simply stared fixedly in astonishment at this flustered man. How many transformations he had undergone in just this past hour! Was it the trial that cast him about so, and kept him from distinguishing his friends from his enemies? Couldn’t he see that the lawyer was intentionally humiliating him, with no other goal on this occasion but to parade his power before K. and by so doing perhaps intimidate K. as well? But if Block was incapable of recognizing that, or feared the lawyer so much that this knowledge was of no help in nada, ¿cómo era posible que repentinamente se tornase tan astuto u osado como para intentar engañar al abogado y ocultarle que tenía a su servicio a otros abogados? ¿Y cómo osaba atacar a K, que en cualquier momento podía revelar su secreto? Pero se atrevió a más, se acercó a la mesa del abogado y comenzó a quejarse de K:

—Señor abogado —dijo,— ¿ha oído cómo me ha tratado este hombre? Su proceso ha still be reckoned in hours and he’s already trying to give me advice, me, a man who’s been on trial for five years. He even abuses me. Knows nothing and abuses me, a man who has studied closely, to the best of my poor abilities, what decency, duty, and court custom demand.”

“Don’t worry about anyone else,” said the lawyer, “just do what seems right to you.”

“Certainly,” said Block, as if building up his own courage, and, with a quick sidelong glance, he knelt at the side of the bed. “I’m on my knees, sir,” he said. But the lawyer said

ello sigue siendo un señor, yo también, y aún más digno que usted. Y quiero que se dirija a mí como corresponde. Si se cree que es un privilegiado al estar sentado ahí y poder escuchar tranquilamente, mientras yo, como usted dice, me ponga a cuatro patas, le recuerdo la vieja máxima judicial: “Para el sospechoso es mejor moverse que sentarse, pues el que cansa puede hacerlo, sin saberlo, sobre una balanza y ser pesado según sus pecados”.

K no dijo nada, se limitó a mirar asombrado, con ojos inmóviles, a ese hombre perturbado, ¿Qué cambios había experimentado en las últimas horas! Si Block no era capaz de darse cuenta de que el abogado le humillaba intencionalmente y que no pretendía otra cosa que ufanzarse de su poder ante K y así, tal vez, someterlo? Si Block no era capaz de darse cuenta, o si tanto temía al abogado que ese conocimiento no le ayudaba en nada, ¿cómo era posible que repentinamente se tornase tan astuto u osado como para intentar engañar al abogado y ocultarle que tenía a su servicio a otros abogados? ¿Y cómo osaba atacar a K, que en cualquier momento podía revelar su secreto? Pero se atrevió a más, se acercó a la mesa del abogado y comenzó a quejarse de K:

—Señor abogado —dijo,— ¿ha oído cómo me ha tratado este hombre? Se puede contar las horas de su proceso y quiereme darme lecciones, a mí, que ya llevo cinco años de proceso. Incluso me insulta. No sabe nada y me insulta, a mí, que he estudiado, tanto como mis fuerzas lo han permitido, lo que es decencia, deber y lo que son usos judiciales.

—No te preocupes —dijo el abogado — y haz lo que te parezca correcto.

—Ciertamente dijo Block, como si él mismo se animase y, después de una corta mirada de soslayo, se arrodilló junto a la cama,— Leni, liberándose de las manos de K, rompió el silencio que ahora reinaba:

Pero el abogado calló.
nothing. Block caressed the quilt cautiously with one hand. In the silence that now reigned Leni said, as she freed herself from K.'s hands: "You're hurting me. Leave me alone. I'm going to Block." She went over and sat down on the edge of the bed. Block was greatly pleased by her arrival; he begged her at once with urgent but silent gestures to plead his cause with the lawyer. He evidently needed the lawyer's information badly, perhaps only so that it could be used by his other lawyers. Leni apparently knew just how to approach the lawyer; she pointed to the lawyer's hand and pursed her lips as if for a kiss. Block immediately kissed it and at Leni's prompting, did so twice more. But still the lawyer said nothing. Then Leni leaned over the lawyer, displaying her fine figure as she stretched forward and bent down close to his face to stroke his long white hair. That finally wrested a response from him. "I hesitate to tell him," said the lawyer, and you could see how he shook his head slightly, perhaps to enjoy the touch of Leni's hand more fully. Block listened with bowed head, as if he were breaking some rule by doing so. "Why do you hesitate?" asked Leni. K had the feeling he was listening to a carefully rehearsed dialogue that had occurred many times before, and would occur many times again, one that would remain forever fresh only to Block. "How has he behaved today?" asked the lawyer, instead of answering. Before replying, Leni looked down at Block for a few moments as he raised his hands to her and wrung them imploringly. At last she nodded gravely, turned to the lawyer, and said: "He's been quiet and industrious." An elderly merchant, a man with a long beard, begging a young woman to put in a good word for him. Even if he had his own ulterior motives, nothing could justify his actions in the eyes of his fellow man. It almost dishonored the onlooker. K didn't see how the lawyer
could possibly have believed this performance would win him over. If he had not already driven him away, this scene would have done so. So the lawyer’s methods, to which K., fortunately, had not been long enough exposed, resulted in this: that the client finally forgot the entire world, desiring only to trudge along this mistaken path to the end of his trial. He was no longer a client, he was the lawyer’s dog. If the lawyer had ordered him to crawl under the bed, as into a kennel, and bark, he would have done so gladly. K. listened critically and coolly, as if he had been commissioned to mentally record everything, render an account of it at a higher level, and file a report.

“What did he do all day?” asked the lawyer.

“I locked him in the maid’s room, where he generally stays anyway,” said Leni, “so that he wouldn’t bother me while I was working. I checked on what he was doing from time to time through the peephole. He was always kneeling on the bed with the documents you loaned him open on the windowsill, reading them. That made a positive impression on me; the window opens only onto an air shaft and offers hardly any light. That Block was reading in spite of this made me realize how obedient he is.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said the lawyer.

“But did he understand what he was reading?” Block moved his lips constantly during this conversation, apparently formulating the replies he hoped Leni would give.

“Of course I can’t really say for sure,” said Leni. “At any rate I could see he was reading carefully. He spent the whole day reading the same page, and would move his finger along the lines as he read. Whenever I looked in he was sighing, as if he were finding it hard to read. The texts you gave him are probably hard to understand.”

“Yes,” said the lawyer, “of course they are. And I don’t imagine he does understand any
of them. They're simply meant to give him some idea of the difficulty of the battle I'm waging in his defense. And for whom am I waging this difficult battle? For-ludicrous as it may sound-for Block. He must learn the full import of that as well. Did he study without a break?"

"Almost without a break," said Leni, "there was just one time when he asked me for a drink of water. I passed him a glass through the peephole. Then at eight o'clock I let him out and gave him something to eat."

Block gave K. a sidelong glance, as if something praiseworthy had been said about him and must surely have impressed K. as well. He seemed quite hopeful now; he moved more freely and shifted about on his knees. It was therefore all the more obvious when he froze at the following words from the lawyer:

"You're praising him," said the lawyer, "But that's just why I find it hard to speak. For the judge's remarks were not at all favorable, for Block or his trial."

"Not favorable?" asked Leni. "How could that be? Block looked at her expectantly, as if he thought her capable of turning to his favor the words long since spoken by the judge.

"Not favorable," said the lawyer, "He was annoyed that I even brought up Block's name. 'Don't talk about Block,' he said. 'He's my client,' I said. 'You're letting him take advantage of you,' he said. 'I don't consider his case a lost cause,' I said. 'You're letting him take advantage of you,' he repeated. 'I don't believe it,' I said. 'Block works hard on his trial and always tries to keep up with it. He practically lives with me in order to stay current. One doesn't always find such commitment. It's true he's an unpleasant person, has bad manners and is dirty, but with regard to procedural matters he's irreproachable.' I said irreproachable; I was intentionally exaggerating.
To which he replied: 'Block is simply cunning. He’s gained a good deal of experience and knows how to protract a trial. But his ignorance far outweighs his cunning. What do you think he would say if he were to learn that his trial hasn’t even begun yet, if someone were to tell him that the bell that opens the trial still hasn’t rung.' Quiet, Block," said the lawyer, for Block was starting to rise up on his wobbly knees and was apparently about to ask for an explanation. Now for the first time the lawyer addressed Block directly at length. His tired eyes roamed about, at times aimlessly, at times focusing on Block, who slowly sank to his knees again beneath his gaze. “The judge’s remark is of no importance for you,” said the lawyer. “Don’t go into shock at every word. If you do it again, I won’t disclose anything further to you. I can’t even begin a sentence without having you stare at me as if I were about to deliver your final judgment. You should be ashamed here in front of my client! You’ll undermine his faith in me as well. What is it you want? You’re still alive, you’re still under my protection. It’s senseless anxiety! You’ve read somewhere that in some cases the final judgment comes unexpectedly from some chance person at some random moment. With numerous reservations that’s true of course, but it’s equally true that your anxiety disgusts me and that I see in it a lack of necessary faith. What have I said after all? I’ve repeated a judge’s remark. You know that various views pile up around these proceedings until they become impenetrable. For instance this judge assumes a different starting point for the trial than I do. A difference of opinion, that’s all. There is an old tradition that a bell is rung at a certain stage in the trial. In this judge’s view it marks the beginning of the trial. I can’t tell you everything that speaks against this at the moment, nor would you

Él respondió: «Block es astuto. Ha acumulado mucha experiencia y sabe cómo retrasar el proceso. Pero su ignorancia es mucho más grande que su astucia. Qué diría si supiera que su proceso ni siquiera ha comenzado; que ni siquiera se ha dado la señal para el comienzo del proceso». Tranquilo, Block—dijo el abogado, pues Block había comenzado a levantarse sobre sus inseguras rodillas y parecía querer una explicación. Era la primera vez que el abogado se dirigía directamente a Block. Le miró desde arriba con los ojos cansados, aunque no fiamemente. Block volvió a arrodillarse lentamente.

—Esa opinión del juez no tiene para ti ninguna importancia—dijo el abogado—. No te asustes por cada palabra que oigas. Si se vuelve a repetir, no te diré nada más. No se puede comenzar ninguna frase sin que mires como si se fuera a pronunciar tu sentencia definitiva. ¡Avergüénzate ante mi cliente! También tú quebrantas su confianza en mí. ¿Qué quieres? Aún vives, aún estás bajo mi protección. ¡Es un miedo absurdo! Has leído en alguna parte que la sentencia definitiva, en algunos casos, pronuncia de improviso, emitida por una boca cualquiera en un momento arbitrario. Eso es verdad, con algunas reservas, pero también es verdad que tu miedo me repugna y que en él sólo veo una falta de confianza en mí. ¿Qué he dicho? Me he limitado a repetir la opinión de un juez. Ya sabes que las opiniones más distintas se acumulan en el proceso hasta lo inextricable. Eso juez, por ejemplo, acepta el inicio del proceso en una fecha diferente a la mía. Una diferencia de opiniones, nada más. En una determinada fase del proceso se da una señal con una campanilla según una vieja costumbre. Según la opinión de este juez a partir de ese preciso momento es cuando se inicia el proceso. Ahora no te puedo decir todo lo que se puede objetar a esa opi-
understand it all; suffice it to say a great deal speaks against it."

Embarrassed, Block ran his fingers through the fur of the bedside rug; the anxiety caused by the judge's statement caused him to forget for a moment his own subservience to the lawyer; he now thought only of himself, turning the judge's words over, examining them from all sides.

"Block," said Leni in a tone of warning, lifting him up a bit by the collar. "Leave that fur alone and listen to the lawyer."

Confuso, Block pasaba la mano sobre la manta, el miedo a las declaraciones del juez le hizo olvidar provisionalmente su sumisión frente al abogado. Sólo pensaba en él mismo y no cesaba de dar vueltas a las palabras del juez.

—Block —dijo Leni con un tono admonitorio, y le tiró un poco hacia arriba del cuello de la chaqueta—, deja la manta y escucha al abogado.
IN THE CATHEDRAL

An Italian business associate of major importance to the bank was visiting the city for the first time, and K. had been assigned to show him a few of its artistic treasures. At any other time he would have considered the assignment an honor, but now that he was expending so much effort defending his prestige at the bank, he accepted it reluctantly. Every hour away from the office troubled him; it was true he could no longer use his office time as efficiently as before; he spent many an hour in only the most superficial appearance of actual work, but that made him all the more worried when he was away from the office. He pictured the vice president, who was always lurking about, entering his office from time to time, sitting down at his desk, rifling through his papers, receiving customers who over the years had almost become K.'s friends, luring them away, yes, perhaps even discovering errors, which K. felt threatened by from a thousand directions as he worked, errors he could no longer avoid. So no matter how much it honored him, whenever he was given any assignment that required a business call or even a short trip as chance would have it, the number of such assignments had mounted recently—the suspicion was never far removed that they were trying to get him out of the office for a while to check on his work, or at the very least, that they thought they could spare him easily at the office. He could have turned down most of the assignments with no difficulty, but he didn't dare, for if there was any justification at all for his fear, refusing the assignment would be taken as an admission of his anxiety. For this reason he accepted such assignments with apparent equanimity, even concealing a bad cold when faced with a strenuous two-day business trip, so that there would be no risk of his being held back due to the prevailing rainy autumn weather. Returning from the trip with a raging headache, he discovered he was supposed to host the Italian colleague the following day.
day. The temptation to refuse, at least on this occasion, was strong, particularly since what he was being asked to do bore no direct relationship to his work at the bank; fulfilling this social duty for a business colleague was doubtless important in itself, but not to K., who was well aware that only success in the office could protect him, and that if he couldn’t manage that, even proving unexpectedly charming to the Italian would be of no value at all; he didn’t want to be forced away from work even for a day, for the fear that he might not be allowed to return was too great, a fear that he knew all too well was far-fetched but that nonetheless oppressed him. In this case of course it was almost impossible to invent a plausible excuse; K.’s Italian was not particularly fluent, but it was adequate; the decisive argument, however, was that K. had some knowledge of art history, acquired in earlier days; this had become known at the bank and blown far out of proportion because for a time, and solely for business reasons as it happened, K. had belonged to the Society for the Preservation of Municipal Works of Art. Since rumor had it that the Italian was an art lover, the choice of K. as a guide had been obvious.

It was a very wet and windy morning as K., full of irritation at the day before him, entered his office at seven o’clock in hopes of accomplishing at least some work before the visitor took him away from everything. He was very tired, having spent half the night preparing himself somewhat by poring over an Italian grammar; the window at which he was accustomed to sit all too often in recent days attracted him more than his desk, but he resisted and sat down to work. Unfortunately his assistant entered immediately and announced that the president had asked him to see if K. was in yet; if he was, would he be so kind as to come over to the reception room, since the gentleman from Italy had already arrived.

Era una mañana fría y tormentosa. K., enojado por el día que le esperaba, llegó a su despacho a las siete para, al menos, trabajar algo antes de que la visita se lo impidiese. Estaba muy cansado, puesto que había pasado parte de la noche estudiando algo de gramática italiana. La ventana, junto a la que, últimamente, permanecía sentado con demasiada frecuencia, le tentaba mucho más que la mesa, pero resistió y continuó el trabajo. Por desgracia, al poco tiempo entró el ordenanza y anunció que el director le había enviado para comprobar si el gerente ya se encontraba en su despacho. Le pidió que fuese tan amable de acudir a la sala de recepción, donde ya se encontraba el señor de Italia.
“I’ll be right there,” said K., stuck a small dictionary in his pocket, tucked an album of city sights he had brought for the visitor under his arm, and walked through the vice president’s office into the head office. He was happy that he’d arrived at the office so early and was immediately available, which no one could seriously have expected. The vice president’s office was still empty of course, as in the depths of night; the assistant had probably been asked to call him to the reception room too, but without success. As K. entered the reception room the two men rose from their deep armchairs. The president wore a friendly smile and was obviously delighted at K.’s arrival; he handled the introductions at once, the Italian shook K.’s hand warmly, and laughingly called someone an early riser; K. wasn’t sure exactly whom he meant, for it was an odd expression, and it took K. a moment or so to guess its sense. He answered with a few smooth sentences that the Italian responded to with another laugh, nervously stroking his bushy, gray-blue mustache several times. This mustache was obviously perfumed, one was almost tempted to draw near and sniff it. When they were all seated and had launched into a brief preliminary conversation, K. realized with discomfort that he understood only bits and pieces of what the Italian was saying. When he spoke slowly, he could understand almost everything, but those were rare exceptions; for the most part the words literally poured from his lips, and he shook his head in seeming pleasure as they did so. At such times, however, he kept falling into some dialect or other that didn’t really sound like Italian to K., but that the president not only understood but also spoke, something K. should have predicted, of course, since the Italian came from southern Italy, and the president had spent a few years there himself. At any rate K. realized he would have little chance of understanding the Italian, for his French was hard to follow too, and his mustache hid the movement of his lips, the sight of which might otherwise have
helped him out. K. began to foresee various difficulties; for the moment he’d given up trying to follow the Italian—given the presence of the president, who understood him so easily, it was an unnecessary strain—and limited himself to observing peevishly the way he sat so deeply yet lightly in the armchair, how he tugged repeatedly at his short, sharply tailored jacket, and how once, lifting his arms and fluttering his hands, he tried to describe something K. couldn’t quite follow, even though he leaned forward and stared at his hands. In the end K., who was now simply glancing mechanically back and forth during the conversation, began to fall prey to his earlier fatigue and at one point to his horror caught himself, just in time fortunately, starting to rise absentmindedly, turn around, and leave. Finally the Italian glanced at his watch and jumped up. After he had taken leave of the president, he pressed up so near to K. that K. had to shove his armchair back in order to move at all. The president, who had surely seen in K.’s eyes the difficulty in which he found himself with the Italian, intervened in their conversation so delicately and cleverly that it seemed as if he were only making minor suggestions, while in reality he was succinctly conveying the sense of everything the Italian, who kept on interrupting him, was saying. K. gathered from him that the Italian still had a few business errands to attend to, that his time was unfortunately limited, that it was certainly not his intention to try to rush through every sight, and that he had decided—provided, of course, it met with K.’s approval, the decision was entirely up to him—to visit just the cathedral, but to take a really good look at it. He was looking forward to visiting it in the company of such a learned and amiable companion—by this he meant K., who was interested in nothing but trying to tune out the Italian and quickly grasp the president’s words—and if it was convenient, he would like to meet him at the cathedral about two hours from now, say around ten. He thought he could surely make it there by then. K. responded

estaba diciendo. K comenzó a prever situaciones incómodas, provisionalemente renunció a entender al italiano—en presencia del director, que le entendía tan fácilmente, hubiera sido un esfuerzo innecesario—, así que se limitó a observar malhumorado cómo éste descansaba tranquilo y semihundido en el sillón, cómo estiraba de vez en cuando su chaqueta bien cortada y cómo una vez, elevando el brazo y agitando las manos, intentaba explicar algo que K no podía comprender, a pesar de que no perdía de vista sus manos. Al final, K., que permanecía ausente, siguiendo mecánicamente la conversación, empezó a sentir el cansancio previo y se sorprendió a sí mismo, para su horror, aunque felizmente a tiempo, cuando, guiado por su confusión, pretendía levantarse, darse la vuelta y marcharse. Pero transcurrido un rato el italiano miró el reloj y se levantó. Después de despedirse del director, se acercó a K y, ademáds, tanto, que K tuvo que desplazar el sillón para poderse mover. El director, que por la mirada de K reconoció la situación apurada de éste frente al italiano, se inmiscuyó en la conversación de un modo tan inteligente que pareció como si simplemente añadiera algunos consejos, mientras en realidad lo que estaba haciendo era traducir a K todo lo que el incansable italiano decía con su fluidez proverbial. K se enteró así de que el italiano aún debía terminar algunos negocios, que sólo tenía poco tiempo y que no pretendía visitar todos los monumentos. Más bien había decidido visitar—si K daba su aprobación, en él recaía la decisión—sólo la catedral, pero detenidamente. Él se alegraba mucho de poder realizar esa visita en compañía de un hombre tan erudito y amable—con estas palabras estaba haciendo referencia a K., que prescindía de las palabras del italiano e intentaba oír las del director—, así que le pedía, si le parecía bien, que se encontraran transcurridas dos horas, alrededor de las diez, en la catedral. Creía poder estar allí a esa hora. K respondió algo ade-
appropriately, the Italian shook hands, first with the president, then with K., then with the president again, and walked to the door accompanied by them both, still half turned to them, not quite finished talking even yet. K. remained for a short time with the president, who appeared to be feeling worse than usual today. He thought he owed some sort of apology to K. and said—they were standing in close intimacy—that at first he’d intended to accompany the Italian himself, but then—he offered no specific reason why—he’d decided to send K. instead. If he didn’t understand the Italian he wouldn’t let that bother him, he would soon begin to catch on, and even if there was a lot he didn’t understand, that wouldn’t be so terrible, since it really didn’t matter much to the Italian whether anyone understood him or not. Moreover, K.’s Italian was surprisingly good and he was certain everything would go fine. With that K. was dismissed. He spent his remaining free time copying down various special terms he would need for the tour of the cathedral from the dictionary. It was a terribly tedious task; assistants brought in mail, clerks came with various inquiries, pausing at the door when they saw K. was busy, and refusing to stir until K. had heard them out, the vice president missed no opportunity to disturb K., entering several times, taking the dictionary from his hand and leafing through it, obviously at random; clients even appeared in the semidarkness of the waiting room when the door opened, bowing hesitantly, trying to attract his attention, but unsure whether or not they had been seen—all this revolved around K. as if he were an axis, while he himself listed the words he would need, looked them up in the dictionary, copied them down, practiced pronouncing them, and finally tried to learn them by heart. But his once excellent memory seemed to have abandoned him totally; at times he got so mad at the Italian for causing all this trouble that he buried the dictionary under stacks of paper with the firm intention of making no further preparations;
but then he would realize that he couldn’t just parade past the artworks in the cathedral in total silence with the Italian, and he would pull the dictionary out again in even greater rage.

At nine-thirty, just as he was preparing to leave, he received a phone call; Leni said good morning and asked how he was doing; K. thanked her hurriedly and said he couldn’t possibly talk now because he had to go to the cathedral.

“To the cathedral?” asked Leni.

“Yes, that’s right, to the cathedral.” “Why the cathedral?” asked Leni. K. started to give a brief explanation, but he’d hardly begun when Leni suddenly said: “They’re hounding you.” K. could not stand pity that he neither desired nor expected; he broke off the conversation with a word or two, but as he replaced the receiver he said, partly to himself, partly to the distant young woman he could no longer hear: “Yes, they’re hounding me.”

By now it was getting late; there was almost a danger he might not arrive in time. He went there by cab; at the last moment he remembered the album, which he’d found no opportunity to hand over earlier, and took it along. He held it on his knees and drummed on it restlessly throughout the trip. The rain had let up, but it was damp, cool, and dark; it would be hard to see much in the cathedral, and K.’s cold would surely get worse from his standing so long on the cold flagstones.

The cathedral square was totally deserted; K. recalled how even as a small child he’d been struck by the fact that the houses on this narrow square always had most of their window curtains lowered. Of course given today’s weather that made more sense than usual. The cathedral appeared deserted as well; naturally no one thought of visiting it now. K. walked down
In the distance a large triangle of candle flames gleamed on the high altar; K. couldn’t say for certain if he had seen them before. Perhaps they had just been lighted. Sextons are stealthy by profession, one hardly notices them. K. happened to turn around and saw not far behind him a tall, thick candle affixed to a column, burning as well. Lovely as it was, it was an entirely inadequate illumination for the altarpieces, most of which were hanging in the darkness of the side chapels; it actually increased the darkness. The Italian had been as right as he was impolite not to come; there would have been nothing to see, and they would have had to rest content with examining a few paintings inch by inch with K.’s pocket flashlight. To try this out, and discover what they might

both side aisles and saw only an old woman, wrapped in a warm shawl, kneeling before a painting of the Virgin Mary and gazing up at it. Then in the distance he saw a limping sexton disappear through a door in the wall. K. had arrived punctually; it was striking eleven just as he entered, but the Italian wasn’t there yet. K. went back to the main entrance, stood there a while indecisively, then circled the cathedral in the rain to see if the Italian might be waiting at one of the side entrances. He was nowhere to be seen. Could the president have misunderstood the time? How could anyone understand the man? Be that as it may, K. should wait for him at least half an hour. Since he was tired, he wanted to sit down; he walked back into the cathedral, found a small carpet-like remnant on a step, dragged it with his toe over to a nearby pew, wrapped his overcoat more tightly around him, turned up his collar, and sat down. To pass the time he opened the album and leafed through it a while, but soon had to stop, for it had grown so dark that when he looked up he could scarcely distinguish a single detail in the nearby side aisle.

En la lejanía brillaba un gran triángulo compuesto por velas. K no podía decidir con certeza si lo había visto antes. Tal vez las acababan de encender. Los sacristanes son silenciosos, es un rasgo profesional, así que no se les nota. Cuando K. se volvió casualmente, vio, no muy lejos de donde se encontraba, cómo ardía un círculo grande y grueso, adosado a una columna. Por muy bello que fuera, era insuficiente para iluminar las imágenes que colgaban en las tineblas de las capillas laterales, en realidad contribuía a aumentar esas tinieblas. Era al mismo tiempo razonable y descortés que el italiano no se hubiera presentado. No se podría haber visto nada, se tendrían que haber limitado a buscar algunas imágenes con la linterna de K. Para comprobar qué es lo que les
expect to see, K. approached a small nearby chapel, climbed a few steps to a low marble balustrade and, leaning forward over it, illuminated the altarpiece with his flashlight. The sanctuary lamp dangled annoyingly in the way. The first thing K. saw, and in part surmised, was a tall knight in armor, portrayed at the extreme edge of the painting. He was leaning on his sword, which he had thrust into the bare earth—only a few blades of grass sprang up here and there—before him. He seemed to be gazing attentively at a scene taking place directly in front of him. It was amazing that he simply stood there without moving closer. Perhaps he was meant to stand guard. K., who hadn't seen any paintings for a long time, regarded the knight at length, in spite of the fact that he had to keep squinting, bothered by the green glare of the flashlight. Then, as he passed the light over the remaining portion of the painting, he discovered it was a conventional depiction of the entombment of Christ, and moreover a fairly recent one. He put his flashlight away and returned to his seat.

There was probably no point in waiting any longer for the Italian, but it must be pouring rain outside, and since it wasn't as cold inside as K. had expected, he decided to remain for the time being. The main pulpit was nearby; two bare golden crosses were placed aslant on its small round dome, their tips crossed. The front of the balustrade and its juncture with the supporting column were formed of green foliage clutched by little angels, now lively, now serene. K. stepped before the pulpit and examined it from all sides; the stonework had been carved with extraordinary care, the profound darkness between and behind the leaves seemed captured and held fast; K. placed his hand in one such gap and carefully felt along the stone; he had never known this pulpit existed. Then he happened to

There was probably no point in waiting any longer for the Italian, but it must be pouring rain outside, and since it wasn't as cold inside as K. had expected, he decided to remain for the time being. The main pulpit was nearby; two bare golden crosses were placed aslant on its small round dome, their tips crossed. The front of the balustrade and its juncture with the supporting column were formed of green foliage clutched by little angels, now lively, now serene. K. stepped before the pulpit and examined it from all sides; the stonework had been carved with extraordinary care, the profound darkness between and behind the leaves seemed captured and held fast; K. placed his hand in one such gap and carefully felt along the stone; he had never known this pulpit existed. Then he happened to

esperaba, K se acercó a una capilla lateral, subió un par de escalones hasta llegar a un bajo antepecho de mármol e, inclinado sobre él, iluminó con la linterna el cuadro del altar. La luz continuó oscilando inquietante. Lo primero que K., más que ver, adivinó, fue un gran caballero con armadura, representado en uno de los extremos del cuadro. Se apoyaba en su espada, que mantenía firmemente sobre un suelo desnudo, a no ser por unas briznas de hierba aquí y allá. Parecía observar con atención un incidente que tenía lugar ante él. Era asombroso que se mantuviera en esa posición y no se aproximara. Tal vez su misión consistía en vigilar. K., que hacía tiempo que no contemplaba ningún cuadro, permaneció ante él un buen rato, aunque se veía obligado a guiar continuamente los ojos, pues no soportaba la luz verde de la linterna. Cuando, a continuación, desplazó la luz hacia el resto del cuadro, pudo ver una versión usual del entierro de Cristo; por lo demás, se trataba de un cuadro moderno. Se guardó la linterna y volvió a su sitio.

Era inútil seguir esperando al italiano; fuera, sin embargo, debía de estar cayendo un chaparrón, y como en el interior no hacía tanto frío como había esperado, decidió permanecer dentro. Cerca de él estaba el púlpito, debajo del pequeño y redondo tornavoz había dos cruces doradas que se cruzaban en sus extremos. La parte exterior del pretil y el espacio que la unía a la columna sustentadora estaban adornados con hojas verdes esculpidas, que querubines mantenían en sus manos, unos con actitud vivaz, otros, reposada. K. se acercó al púlpito y lo examinó por todas partes, el grabado de la piedra era extremadamente cuidadoso, la profunda oscuridad que reinaba entre los espacios vacíos del follaje pétreo y la que se extendía detrás de éste parecía atrapada, como si estuviera retenida; K. introdujo su mano en uno de esos espacios vacíos y palpó la piedra, nunca había tenido conocimiento de la existencia de ese púlpito. En ese momento
notice a sexton standing behind the nearest row of pews in a long, loosely hanging, pleated black robe, holding a snuffbox in his left hand and staring at him. “What does the man want?” thought K. “Do I seem suspicious to him? Does he want a tip?” When the sexton realized K. had noticed him, he pointed with his right hand, still holding a pinch of snuff between two fingers, in some vague direction. His behavior was almost incomprehensible; K. waited a while longer, but the sexton kept pointing at something and nodding emphatically. “What does he want?” K. asked under his breath, not daring to call out there; but then he pulled out his wallet and squeezed his way through the next pew to reach the man. The man, however, made an immediate dismissive gesture, shrugged his shoulders, and limped away. With just such a hasty limp had K. attempted, as a child, to imitate a man riding a horse. “A childish old man,” thought K., “with just enough wits about him to handle the job of a sexton. Look how he pauses whenever I do, watching to see if I intend to continue.” Smiling, K. followed the old man along the entire side aisle almost to the high altar; the old man kept pointing, but K. refused to turn around, the pointing had no other purpose than to throw him off the old man’s track. At last he relented, however; he didn’t want to frighten him too greatly, and he didn’t want to scare away this apparition completely, in case the Italian arrived after all.

As he stepped into the nave to find the place where he’d left the album, he noticed, almost immediately adjoining the benches for the choir, a column with a small auxiliary pulpit of pale bare stone. It was so small that from the distance it appeared to be an empty niche intended for a statue. The preacher would not have room to step even one full pace back from the

notó casualmente que un sacristán permanecía detrás de un banco cercano, vestido con una chaqueta negra colgante y arrugada, sosteniendo una cajita de rapé y observándole. “¿Qué quiere ese hombre? — pensó K—. ¿Acaso le parece sospechoso? ¿O querrá una limosna?” Cuando el sacristán vio que K le observaba, señaló con la mano de recha —entre dos dedos aún sostenia una pulgarada de rapé— hacia una dirección incierta. Su comportamiento era inexplicable. K esperó un rato, pero el sacristán no cesó de señalarle algo con la mano e incluso llegó a reforzar sus gestos con un movimiento de cabeza. “¿Qué querrá?” —se preguntó K en voz baja. No se atrevía a gritar allí dentro. Su reacción fue sacar su cartera y acercarse al hombre. Pero éste hizo de inmediato un gesto de rechazo con la mano, alzó los hombros y se alejó cojeando. Con un paso semejante K había intentado imitar cuando era niño el trote de un caballo. «Un anciano senil —pensó K—. Su inteligencia apenas llega para ayudar en la Iglesia. Se para cuando yo me paro y acecha por si sigo andando». K siguió sonriendo al anciano por toda la nave lateral hasta llegar al Altar Mayor, el anciano no paraba de señalarle algo, pero K no se volvía. Esos gestos sólo tenían la intención de apartarle de sus huellas. Finalmente le dejó, no quería asustarlo, tampoco quería ahuyentarlo del todo, por si acaso venía el italiano.

Cuando entró en la nave principal para buscar el sitio en el que había dejado el folleto, descubrió muy cerca de una columna casi adosada a los bancos del coro del altar un sencillo y pequeño púlpito lateral, hecho de piedra desnuda y blanca. Era tan pequeño que desde lejos parecía una hornacina aún vacía, destinada a albergar una estatua. El sacerdote, con toda seguridad, apenas podría retroceder un paso
The stone balustrade. Moreover the stone vaulting of the pulpit began at an unusually low point and rose, bare of any decoration it’s true, but curved inward so sharply that a man of average height could not stand upright there, but instead would have to bend forward over the balustrade the entire time. The whole arrangement seemed designed to torture the preacher; there was no conceivable reason why this pulpit was needed at all, since the other large and finely decorated one was available.

Nor would K. have even noticed this small pulpit, had not a lamp been placed above it, as is the custom shortly before a sermon is to begin. Was there going to be a sermon? In the empty church? K. peered down at the steps that hugged the column and led up to the pulpit; they were so narrow they appeared merely decorative, not meant for human use. But at the foot of the pulpit, K. smiled with astonishment, a priest actually stood, his hand on the railing, ready to ascend, and stared at K. Then he nodded slightly, at which K. crossed himself and bowed, as he should have done earlier. The priest swung forward and ascended to the pulpit with short, quick steps.

Was a sermon really about to begin? Perhaps the sexton was not quite so witless as he seemed and had wished to guide K. toward the preacher, which would certainly be necessary given the empty church. And there was still an old woman somewhere in front of a picture of the Virgin Mary who should come too. And if it was going to be a sermon, why wasn’t it being introduced by the organ? But the organ remained silent, gleaming faintly in the gloom of its great height.

K. considered leaving as quickly as possible; if he didn’t go now there was no chance of doing so during the sermon, he would have to remain for as long as it lasted, losing a great deal of time at the office, and he was desde el pretel. Además, el tor- navoz, sin ningún adorno, esta- ba situado a una altura escasa y se inclinaba tanto que un hombre de mediana estatura no podía permanecer recto en el interior del púlpito, sino que debía agacharse y apoyarse en el pretel. Parecía diseñado específicamente para atormentar al sacerdote, era incomprensible para qué podía necesitar- se ese púlpito, ya que se tenía el otro, más grande y decorado con tanto primor.

A K no le hubiera llamado la atención ese pequeño púlpito, si no hubiera descubierto una lámpara fijada en la parte superior, como las e se suelen colocar poco antes de un sermón. ¿Se pronunciaria ahora un sermón? ¿En la iglesia vacía? K miró hacia la escala que, bordeando la column, conducía al púlpito y que era tan estrecha que no parecía para uso humano, sino simplemente de adorno para la columna. Pero al pie del púlpito, K sonrió de asombro, se encontraba, efectivamente, un sacerdote. Apoyaba la mano en la barandilla, preparado para subir, y miraba a K. Entonces asintió levemente con la cabeza, por que K se persignó e inclinó, lo que debería haber hecho antes. El sacerdote tomó un poco de impulso y subió al púlpito con pasos cortos y rá- pidos. ¿Realmente iba a pro- nunciar un sermón? ¿Acaso el sacristán carecía de tan poco sentido común que le había que- rido conducir hasta— el sacer- dote, lo que, en vista de la igle- sia vacía, era necesario? Ade- más, por algún lado había una anciana ante la imagen de la Virgen María que también ten- dría que haber venido. Y, si se iba a pronunciar un sermón, ¿por qué no había sido precedi- do por el órgano? Pero éste per- manecía en silencio y brillaba débilmente envuelto en las ti- nieblas.

K pensó si no debería alejar- se deprisa, o lo hacía ahora o ya no tendría otra oportunidad, debía permanecer allí durante todo el sermón; en la oficina había perdido tanto tiempo; ya no estaba obligado a esperar
certainly no longer obliged to wait for the Italian; he looked at his watch: it was eleven. But could there really be a sermon? Could K. alone represent the congregation? What if he were merely a stranger who wanted to see the church? Basically that’s all he was. It was senseless to believe there was going to be a sermon, now, at eleven o’clock, on a workday, in the dreariest of weather. The priest—he was clearly a priest, a young man with a smooth, dark face—was obviously climbing up simply to extinguish the lamp that had been lighted in error.

But that wasn’t the case; in fact the priest inspected the lamp and screwed it a bit higher, then turned slowly to the balustrade, grasping the angular border at its front with both hands. He stood for a while thus and gazed about without moving his head. K. had retreated some distance and was resting his elbows against the foremost pew. Vaguely, without knowing precisely where, he saw the sexton huddling peacefully, his back bent, as if his task had been accomplished. What silence now reigned in the cathedral! But K. was going to have to disturb it, for he had no intention of staying; if it was the priest’s duty to deliver a sermon at a given hour without regard to the circumstances, he was free to do so; it could take place just as well without K.’s support, just as K.’s presence would in no way intensify the effect. So K. began to move off slowly; he tiptoed along the pew, entered the broad central aisle, and proceeded down it undisturbed, except that the stone floor rang beneath the softest tread, and the vaulted roof echoed the sounds faintly but steadily, continuing to multiply them in regular progression. K. felt somewhat forlorn walking along alone between the empty rows, perhaps observed by the priest, and the cathedral’s size seemed to border on the limits of human endurance. When he came to his earlier seat, he reached out and grabbed the album lying there without even slowing down. He had almost left the area of the pews and was approaching the open space between them and the outer door.

Pero no fue así. El sacerdote, en realidad, examinó la luz, la ajustó y se dio la vuelta lentamente hacia el pretil, apoyándose en él con las manos. Así permaneció un rato y miró, sin mover la cabeza, a su alrededor. K. había retrocedido un trecho y se apoyaba con el codo en el banco de delante. Con ojos inseguros, sin poder determinar exactamente el lugar, vio cómo el sacristán, algo encorvado, se ponía a descansar pacíficamente como si hubiera terminado su cometido. ¡Qué silencio reinaba ahora en la catedral! Pero K. tenía que romperlo, no pretendía quedarse allí. Si era un deber del sacerdote predicar a una hora determinada sin consideración a las circunstancias, que lo hiciera, también podría cumplir su cometido en ausencia de K., su presencia tampoco contribuiría a aumentar el efecto. K. se puso lentamente en camino y fue tanteando el banco de puntillas. Llegó a la nave central y prosiguió sin que nadie le detuviera, sólo sus pasos ligeros resonaban continuamente bajo las bóvedas con un ritmo regular y progresivo. K. consciente de que el sacerdote podía estar observándole, se sentía abandonado mientras avanzaba solo entre los bancos vacíos. Las dimensiones de la catedral le parecían ahora rayar en los límites de lo soportable para el ser humano. Cuando llegó al sitio que había ocupado anteriormente, cogió el folleto sin detenerse. Apenas había dejadoatrás el banco y se acercaba al espacio vacío que le separaba de la salida, cuando escuchó por primera vez
when he heard the voice of the priest for the first time. A powerful, well-trained voice. How it filled the waiting cathedral! It was not the congregation that the priest addressed, however; it was completely clear, and there was no escaping it; he cried out: “Josef K.!”

K. hesitated and stared at the floor. At the moment he was still free; he could walk on and leave through one of the three small dark wooden doors not far from him. That would mean he hadn’t understood or that he had indeed understood but couldn’t be bothered to respond. But if he turned around he was caught, for then he would have confessed that he understood quite well, that he really was the person named, and that he was prepared to obey. If the priest had called out again, K. would surely have walked out, but since all remained still, however long K. waited, he finally turned his head a bit, for he wanted to see what the priest was doing now. He was standing quietly in the pulpit as before, but he had clearly noticed K.’s head turn. It would have been a childish game of hide-and-seek for K. not to turn around completely now. He did so and the priest beckoned him to approach. Now that everything could be done openly, he walked with long, rapid strides toward the pulpit—out of curiosity as well, and to cut this business short. He paused by the first pews, but that still seemed too great a distance to the priest, who stretched out his hand and pointed sharply downward toward a spot just in front of the pulpit. K. obeyed this gesture as well; from this position he had to lean his head far back in order to see the priest. “You're Josef K.,” said the priest, and lifted one hand from the balustrade in a vague gesture. “Yes,” said K.; he recalled how openly he had always said his name; for some time now it had been a burden, and people he met for the first time already knew his name; how good it felt to introduce oneself first and only then be known. “You stand accused,” said the

K. se detuvo y miró al sue-lo. Aún era libre, podía seguir y escapar por una de las pequeñas y oscuras puertas de madera, que no estaban lejos. Pero eso significaría o que no había entendido o que había en tendido pero no quería hacer ningún caso. Si se daba la vuelta, se tendría que quedar, pues habría confesado tácita-mente que había comprendido muy bien su nombre y que quería obedecer. Si el sacerdote hubiese gritado de nuevo, K. habría proseguido su camino, pero como todo permaneció en silencio, volvió un poco la cabeza, pues quería ver qué hacía el sacerdote en ese momento. Se le veía tranquilo en el púlpito, se podía advertir que había notado el giro de cabeza de K. Hubiera sido un juego infantil si K no se hubiese dado la vuelta por completo. Así lo hizo, y el sacerdote le llamó con una señal de la mano. Como ya todo ocurría abiertamente, avanzó—lo hizo en parte por curiosidad y en parte para tener la oportuni-dad de acortar su estancia allí—con pasos largos y ligeros hasta el púlpito. Se paró ante los bancos, pero al sacerdote le parecía que la distancia era aún demasiado gran-de. Estiró la mano y señaló con el dedo índice un asiento al pie del púlpito. K siguió su indicación y, al sentarse, tuvo que mantener la cabeza inclinada hacia atrás para poder ver al sacerdote.

—Tú eres Josef K —dijo el sa-

---Estás acusado —dijo el sa-
priest in a very low voice. "Yes," said K. "I’ve been notified about it.
"Then you’re the one I’m seeking," said the priest. "I’m the prison chaplain.
"I see," said K.
"I had you brought here," said the priest, "so I could speak with you.
"I didn’t know that," said K. "I came here to show the cathedral to an Italian.
"Forget such irrelevancies," said the priest. "What’s that in your hand? Is it a prayer book?
"No," replied K., "it’s an album of city sights.
"Put it aside," said the priest.
K. threw it down so violently that it flew open and skidded some distance across the floor, its pages crushed.
"Do you realize your trial is going badly?" asked the priest.
"It seems that way to me too," said K. "I’ve tried as hard as I can, but without any success so far. Of course I haven’t completed my petition yet.
"How do you imagine it will end," asked the priest.
"At first I thought it would surely end well," said K., "now sometimes I even have doubts myself. I don’t know how it will end. Do you?"
"No," said the priest. "I fear it will end badly. They think you’re guilty.
"Your trial may never move beyond the lower courts. At least for the moment, your guilt is assumed proved.
"But I’m not guilty," said K.
"It’s a mistake. How can any person in general be guilty? We’re all human after all, each and every one of us.
"That’s right," said the priest, "but that’s how guilty people always talk.
"Are you prejudiced against me too?" asked K. "I’m not prejudiced against you," said the priest. "Thank you," said K. "But everyone else involved with the proceedings is prejudiced against me. And they instill it in those who aren’t involved. My position is becoming increasingly difficult.
"You misunderstand the facts of the matter," said the priest. "The judgment isn’t simply delivered at some point; the proceedings gradually merge into the judgment."
"So that’s how it is," said K. and bowed his head.
“What will you do next in your case?” asked the priest. “I intend to seek additional help,” said K., and raised his head to see how the priest judged this. “There are still certain possibilities I haven’t taken advantage of.” “You seek too much outside help,” the priest said disapprovingly, “particularly from women. Haven’t you noticed that it isn’t true help.” “Sometimes, often even, I’d have to say you’re right,” said K., “but not always. Women have great power. If I could get a few of the women I know to join forces and work for me, I could surely make it through. Particularly with this court, which consists almost entirely of skirt chasers. Show the examining magistrate a woman, even at a distance, and he’ll knock over the courtroom table and the defendant to get to her first.”

The priest lowered his head to the balustrade; only now did the pulpit’s roof seem to weigh down upon him. What sort of a storm could there be outside? It was no longer a dull day, it was already deep night. No pane of stained glass within the great window emitted even a shimmer of light to interrupt the wall’s darkness. And this was the moment the sexton chose to start extinguishing the candles on the main altar one by one.

“Are you angry with me?” K. asked the priest. “Perhaps you don’t know the sort of court you serve.” He received no reply. “Of course that’s just my own personal experience,” said K. Still only silence from above. “I didn’t mean to insult you,” said K. Then the priest screamed down at K.: “Can’t you see two steps in front of you?” It was a cry of rage, but at the same time it was the cry of someone who, seeing a man falling, shouts out in shock, involuntarily, without thinking.

Now both were silent for a long time. Of course the priest could barely distinguish K. in the shadows below.

---

¿Qué es lo siguiente que vas a hacer en tu causa? ---preguntó el sacerdote. ---Quiero buscar ayuda---dijo K, y elevó la cabeza para ver cómo el sacerdote juzgaba su intención---. Aún quedan posibilidades que no he utilizado.

---Buscas demasiado la ayuda de extraños---dijo el sacerdote con un tono de desaprobación---, especialmente de mujeres. Acaso no te das cuenta de que no es la ayuda verdadera?

---Algunas veces, incluso con frecuencia podría darte la razón ---dijo K---, pero no siempre. Las mujeres tienen mucho poder. Si pudiera convencer a algunas mujeres de las que conozco para que trabajen en común para mi, podría abrirme paso. Especialmente en este tribunal, que parece constituido por mujeriegos. Muéstrate una mujer al juez instructor y arrojará la mesa y a los acusados para llegar hasta ella.

El sacerdote inclinó la cabeza hacia el pretil, ahora parecía como si el tornavoz le presionara hacia abajo. ¿Pero qué tiempo podía estar haciendo fuera? Ya no era sólo un día nublado y lluvioso, parecía noche profunda. Ninguna de las vidrieras era capaz de iluminar con un pobre resplandor los oscuros muros. Y precisamente en ese momento el sacristán comenzó a apagar todas las velas del Altar Mayor.

---¿Estás enfadado conmigo? ---preguntó K al sacerdote---. Es posible que no conozcas el tipo de tribunal en el que prestas servicio.

No recibió ninguna respuesta. ---Son sólo mis experiencias ---dijo K---. Arriba, en el púlpito, todo permaneció silencioso. ---No te he querido ofender---dijo K---.

Entonces gritó el sacerdote hacia K: ---¿Acaso eres ciego? ---Gritó con ira, pero también como alguien que ve caer a otro y, debido al susto, grita sin voluntad de hacerlo.

Ambos se callaron un rato. El sacerdote no podía reconocer a K, abajo, en la sombra.
the darkness reigning below, while K. could see the priest clearly by the light of the little lamp. Why didn’t the priest come down? He hadn’t delivered a sermon, but instead merely told K. a few things that would probably harm him more than help if he paid any attention to them. Nevertheless, the priest’s good intentions seemed clear to K.; it was not impossible that they might come to terms if he would come down, it was not impossible that he might receive some form of decisive and acceptable advice from him, something that might show him, for example, not how to influence the trial, but how to break out of it, how to get around it, how to live outside the trial. Surely that possibility existed; K. had thought about it often in the recent past. If the priest knew of such a possibility, he might reveal it if asked, even though he himself was part of the court, and even though when K. attacked the court, he had suppressed his gentle nature and actually shouted at K.

“Won’t you come down now?” asked K. “There’s no sermon to deliver. Come down to me.” “Now I can come,” said the priest, perhaps regretting having yelled at him. As he removed the lamp from its hook, he said: “I had to speak to you first from a distance. Otherwise I’m too easily influenced and forget my position.”

K. awaited him at the bottom of the steps. The priest stretched out his hand to him while still on the upper steps as he descended. “Do you have a little time for me?” asked K. “As much time as you need,” said the priest; and handed the little lamp to K. for him to carry. Even up close, there was still a certain aura of solemnity about him. “You’re very friendly toward me,” said K. They walked side by side up and down the dark side aisle. “You’re an exception among those who belong to the court. I trust you more than I do any of them I’ve met so far. I can

oscuridad, mientras que K podía ver claramente al sacerdote gracias a la pequeña lámpara. ¿Por qué no bajaba? No había pronunciado ningún sermón, sino que se había limitado a darle algunas informaciones, que a él, si las consideraba con detenimiento, antes le podrían dañar que beneficiar. No obstante, a K le parecía indudable la buena intención del sacerdote, no sería imposible que pudieran llegar a un acuerdo si bajaba, tampoco era imposible que recibiera de él un consejo decisivo y aceptable, que le mostrara, por ejemplo, no cómo se podía influir en el proceso, sino cómo se podía salir del proceso, cómo se podía vivir al margen de éste. Esa posibilidad tenía que existir, K había pensado mucho en ella en los últimos tiempos. Si el sacerdote conocía esa posibilidad, a lo mejor se la decía si se lo pedía, aunque perteneciera al tribunal, y a pesar de que K, al atacar al tribunal, hubiese herido sus sentimientos y le hubiera obligado a gritar.

—¿No quieres bajar? —dijo K. —No vas a pronunciar ningún sermón. Baja conmigo. —Ya puedo bajar —dijo el sacerdote, parecía lamentar su grito. Mientras descolgaba la lámpara, dijo: Primero tenía que hablar contigo guardando las distancias, si no me dejó influir fácilmente y olvido mi misión.

K le esperó abajo, al pie de la escalera. El sacerdote le ofreció la mano mientras bajaba los últimos escalones. —¿Me podrías dedicar un poco de tu tiempo?

—Tanto como necesites —dijo el sacerdote, y le dio la lámpara a K para que éste la lleve. Ni siquiera tan cerca perdía su actitud en solemnidad. —Eres muy amable conmigo —dijo K.

Comenzaron a recorrer la nave lateral uno al lado del otro.

—Eres una excepción entre todos los que pertenecen al tribunal. En ti tengo más confianza que en cualquiera de los demás. Contigo puedo ha-
speak openly with you.

"Don’t deceive yourself," said the priest.

"How am I deceiving myself?" asked K.

"You’re deceiving yourself about the court," said the priest,=""

"in the introductory texts to the Law it says of this deception: Before the Law stands a doorkeeper. A man from the country comes to this doorkeeper and requests admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he can’t grant him admittance now. The man thinks it over and then asks if he’ll be allowed to enter later. ‘It’s possible,’ says the doorkeeper, ‘but not now.’ Since the gate to the Law stands open as always, and the doorkeeper steps aside, the man bends down to look through the gate into the interior. When the doorkeeper sees this he laughs and says: ‘If you’re so drawn to it, go ahead and try to enter, even though I’ve forbidden it. But bear this in mind: I’m powerful. And I’m only the lowest doorkeeper. From hall to hall, however, stand doorkeepers each more powerful than the one before. The mere sight of the third is more than even I can bear.’ The man from the country has not anticipated such difficulties; the Law should be accessible to anyone at any time, he thinks, but as he now examines the doorkeeper in his fur coat more closely, his large, sharply pointed nose, his long, thin, black tartar’s beard, he decides he would prefer to wait until he receives permission to enter. The doorkeeper gives him a stool and lets him sit down at the side of the door. He sits there for days and years. He asks time and again to be admitted and wears the doorkeeper with his entreaties. The doorkeeper often conducts brief interrogations, inquiring about his home and many other matters, but he asks such questions indifferently, as great men do, and in the end he always tells him he still can’t admit him. The man, who has equipped himself well for his journey, uses everything he has, no matter how valuable, to bribe the doorkeeper. And the
doorkeeper accepts everything, but as he does so he says: ‘I’m taking this just so you won’t think you’ve neglected something.’

Over the many years, the man observes the doorkeeper almost incessantly. He forgets the other doorkeepers and this first one seems to him the only obstacle to his admittance to the Law. He curses his unhappy fate, loudly during the first years, later, as he grows older, merely grumbling to himself. He turns childish, and since he has come to know even the fleas in the doorkeeper’s collar over his years of study, he asks the fleas too to help him change the doorkeeper’s mind. Finally his eyes grow dim and he no longer knows whether it’s really getting darker around him or if his eyes are merely deceiving him. And yet in the darkness he now sees a radiance that streams forth inextinguishably from the door of the Law. He doesn’t have much longer to live now. Before he dies, everything he has experienced over the years coalesces in his mind into a single question he has never asked the doorkeeper. He motions to him, since he can no longer straighten his stiffening body. The doorkeeper has to bend down to him, for the difference in size between them has altered greatly to the man’s disadvantage.

‘What do you want to know now,’ asks the doorkeeper, ‘you’re insatiable.’ ‘Everyone strives to reach the Law,’ says the man, ‘how does it happen, then, that in all these years no one but me has requested admittance.’

The doorkeeper sees that the man is nearing his end, and in order to reach his failing hearing, he roars at him: ‘No one else could gain admittance here, because this entrance was meant solely for you. I’m going to go and shut it now.’

’S o t h e d o o r k e e p e r d e c i e d t h e m a n,’ K. said at once, strongly attracted by the story. ‘Don’t be too hasty,’ said the priest, ‘don’t accept another person’s opinion unthinkingly. acepta todo, pero al mismo tiempo dice: ‘—Sólo lo acepto para que no creas que has omitido algo.

—Durante los muchos años que tuvo allí, el hombre observó al guardián de forma casi ininterrumpida. Olvidó a los otros guardianes y éste le terminó pareciendo el único impedimento para tener acceso a la Ley. Los primeros años maldijo la desgraciada casualidad, más tarde, ya envejecido, sólo murmuraba para sí. Se vuelve senil, y como ha sometido durante tanto tiempo al guardián a un largo estudio ya es capaz de reconocer a la pulga en el cuello de su abrigo de piel, por lo que solicita a la pulga que le ayude para cambiar la opinión del guardián. Por último, su vista se torna débil y ya no sabe realmente si oscurece a su alrededor o son sólo los ojos los que le engañan. Pero ahora advierte en la oscuridad un brillo que irrumpir indeleble a través de la puerta de la Ley. Ya no vivirá mucho más. Antes de su muerte se concentran en su mente todas las experiencias pasadas, que toman forma en una sola pregunta que hasta ahora no había hecho al guardián. Entonces le guía un ojo, ya que no puede incorporar su cuerpo entumecido. El guardián tiene que inclinarse hacia él profundamente porque la diferencia de tamaños ha variado en perjuicio del hombre de la provincia."

—¿Qué quieres saber ahora? —pregunta el guardián—. Eres insaciable.

—Todos aspiran a la Ley —dice el hombre—. ¿Cómo es posible que durante tantos años sólo yo haya solicitado la entrada?

—El guardián comprueba que el hombre ha llegado a su fin y, para que su débil oído pueda percibirlo, le grita: ‘—Ningún otro podía haber recibido permiso para entrar por estar puerta, pues esta entrada estaba reservada sólo para ti. Yo me voy ahora y cierro la puerta».

—El centinela, entonces, ha engañado al hombre —dijo K en seguida, fuertemente atraído por la historia (38).

—No te apures —dijo el sacerdote—, no asumas la opinión ajena sin examinarla.
I've told you the story word for word according to the text. It says nothing about deception."

"But it's clear," said K., "and your initial interpretation was quite correct. The doorkeeper conveyed the crucial information only when it could no longer be of use to the man."

"He wasn't asked earlier," said the priest, "and remember he was only a doorkeeper and as such fulfilled his duty."

"What makes you think he fulfilled his duty?" asked K.; "he didn't fulfill it. It may have been his duty to turn away anyone else, but he should have admitted this man for whom the entrance was meant."

"You don't have sufficient respect for the text and are changing the story," said the priest. "The story contains two important statements by the doorkeeper concerning admittance to the Law, one at the beginning and one at the end. The one passage says: 'that he can't grant him admittance now'; and the other: 'this entrance was meant solely for you'.

If a contradiction existed between these two statements you would be right, and the doorkeeper would have deceived the man. But there is no contradiction. On the contrary, the first statement even implies the second. One could almost argue that the doorkeeper exceeded his duty by holding out to the man the prospect of a possible future entry. At that time his sole duty appears to have been to turn the man away. And indeed, many commentators on the text are surprised that the doorkeeper intimated it at all, for he appears to love precision and the strict fulfillment of his duty. He never leaves his post once in the course of all those years, and he waits till the very end to close the gate; he's well aware of the importance of his office, for he says 'I'm powerful'; he respects his superiors, for he says 'I'm only the lowest doorkeeper'; when it comes to fulfilling his duty he can neither be moved nor prevailed upon, for it says of the man 'he wearies the doorkeeper with his entreaties'; he is not garrulous, for in all those years

Te he contado la historia tal y como está escrita. En ella no se habla en ningún momento de engaño.

---Pero está claro ---dijo K---, y tu primera interpretación era correcta. El vigilante le ha comunicado el mensaje liberador sólo cuando ya no podía ayudar en nada al hombre.

---Pero él tampoco preguntó antes ---dijo el sacerdote---, considera que sólo era un vigilante y como tal se ha limitado a cumplir su deber.

---¿Por qué piensas que ha cumplido con su deber? ---preguntó K---. No lo ha cumplido. Su deber consistía en rechazar a los extraños, pero tenía que haber dejado pasar al hombre para quien estaba destinada la entrada.

---No tienes el suficiente respeto a la letra escrita y cambias la historia ---dijo el sacerdote---. La historia contiene dos explicaciones importantes del vigilante respecto a la entrada a la Ley, una al principio y otra al final. Una dice: «que no podía permitirle la entrada», y la otra: «esta entrada estaba reservada sólo para ti». Si entre ambas explicaciones existiese una contradicción, tú tendrías razón y el vigilante habría engañado al hombre. Pero no existe ninguna contradicción. Todo lo contrario, la primera explicación, incluso, indica la segunda. Se podría decir que el vigilante se excede en el cumplimiento de su deber al plantear la posibilidad de una futura entrada. En ese momento su único deber parecía consistir en no admitir al hombre. Y, en efecto, muchos intérpretes se maravillan de que el vigilante haya pronunciado semejante indicación, pues parece amar la precisión y cumple escrupulosamente con su deber. No abandona su puesto en tantos años y sólo cierra la puerta en el último momento, siendo consciente de la importancia de su misión, pues dice: «soy poderoso». Además, tiene respeto frente a sus superiores, pues dice: «soy el guardián más insignificante».

Cuando se trata del cumplimiento del deber, no admite ruegos ni se deja ablandar, pues se dice: «cansa al guardián con sus súplicas». Tampoco es hablador, pues durante todos
he only asks questions ‘indifferently’; he can’t be bribed, for he says of a gift ‘I’m taking this just so you won’t think you’ve neglected something’; finally even his external appearance hints at his pedantic nature, the large, sharply pointed nose and the long, thin, black tartar’s beard. Can there be a more conscientious doorkeeper? But certain other elements enter into the basic character of the doorkeeper which are quite favorable to the person seeking to enter, and which, in spite of everything, help us understand how and why the doorkeeper might exceed his duty somewhat by the intimation of that future possibility. For it can’t be denied that he’s somewhat simpleminded, and consequently somewhat conceited as well. Even if his remarks about his own power and that of the other doorkeepers, and about how unbearable their sight is even for him- I say even if all these remarks are correct in themselves, the manner in which he brings them forth shows that his understanding is clouded by simplemindedness and presumption. The commentators tell us: the correct understanding of a matter and misunderstanding the matter are not mutually exclusive. At any rate one must assume that this simplemindedness and presumption, trivial as their manifestations might be, could still weaken his defense of the entrance; they are breaches in the doorkeeper’s character. To this may be added the fact that the doorkeeper seems friendly by nature; he’s by no means always the official. Within the first few minutes he allows himself the jest of inviting the man to enter, in spite of the fact that he has strictly forbidden it; and he doesn’t send him away, but instead, we are told, gives him a stool and lets him sit at the side of the door. The patience with which he endures the man’s entretenches over the years, the brief interrogations, the acceptance of the gifts, the polite sensitivity with which he permits the man beside him to los años sólo plantea, como está escrito, preguntas «indiferentes». No se deja sobornar, pues dice sobre un regalo: «sólo lo acepto para que no creas que has emitido algo». Finalmente, su aspecto exterior indica un carácter pedante, por ejemplo la gran nariz y la larga y fina barba tartara. ¿Puede haber un vigilante más fiel a su deber? Pero en el vigilante se mezclan otros caracteres esenciales que resultan muy favorables para quien solicita la entrada, y que, además, indican la posibilidad, manifestada en su anterior insinuación, de que en el futuro podría ir más allá de lo que le dicta el deber. No obstante, no se puede negar que es algo simple y, en relación con este atributo, presuntuoso. Si todas las menciones que hace referentes a su poder y sobre el poder de los demás vigilantes, cuya visión, como él reconoce, le es insoportable, son ciertas, entonces muestra, en la manera con que las emite, que sus ideas están afectadas por su simpleza y arrogancia. Los intérpretes aducen: «El correcto entendimiento de un asunto y una incomprensión de éste no se excluyen mutuamente». En todo caso, se debe reconocer que esa simpleza y arrogancia, por muy difuminadas que aparezcan, debilitan la vigilancia de la entrada, son lagunas en el carácter del vigilante. A esto se añade que el vigilante, según su talante natural, parece amable, no siempre actúa como si estuviera de servicio. Al principio dice en broma que, a pesar del mantenimiento de la prohibición, le invita a entrar, pero, a continuación, no le incita a entrar, sino que, como está escrito, le da un taburete y le deja sentarse al lado de la puerta. La paciencia con la que, durante tantos años, soporta las peticiones del hombre, los pequeños interrogatorios, la aceptación de los regalos, la nobleza con la que permite que el
curse aloud the unhappy fate which has placed the doorkeeper in his way-all this points toward feelings of compassion. Not every doorkeeper would have acted thus. And finally he bends down low when the man motions to him, to give him the opportunity to ask a final question. Only a slight impatience—after all, the doorkeeper knows the end is at hand—is expressed in the words 'you're insatiable.' Some go so far in such commentaries as to maintain that the words 'you're insatiable' express a sort of friendly admiration, which of course is not entirely free of condescension. At any rate the figure of the doorkeeper that emerges is quite different from your perception of him."

"You know the story much better than I do, and have known it for a longer time," said K.

They fell silent for a while. Then K. said: "So you think the man wasn't deceived?"

"Don't misunderstand me," said the priest, "I'm just pointing out the various opinions that exist on the matter. You mustn't pay too much attention to opinions. The text is immutable, and the opinions are often only an expression of despair over it. In this case there's even an opinion according to which the doorkeeper is the one deceived."

"That's an extreme opinion," said K. "What's it based on?"

"It's based," answered the priest, "on the simplemindedness of the doorkeeper. It's said that he doesn't know the interior of the Law, but only the path he constantly patrols back and forth before it. His ideas about the interior are considered childish, and it's assumed that he himself fears the very thing with which he tries to frighten the man. Indeed he fears it more than the man, for the latter wants nothing more than to enter, even after he's been told about the terrifying doorkeepers within, while the doorkeeper has no wish to enter, or at any rate we hear nothing about it. Others say that he must indeed have already been inside, for after all he has been taken hombre a su lado maldiga en voz alta su desgraciado destino, del que hace culpable al vigilante, todo eso indica el talante compasivo del vigilante. No todos los vigilantes habrían actuado así. Y al final, se inclina profundamente hacia el hombre para darle la oportunidad de plantear una última pregunta. Sólo deja traslucir una débil impaciencia —el vigilante sabe que todo ha acabado—, cuando dice: «Eres insaciable». Algunos intérpretes continúan, incluso, esta línea exégética y afirman que las palabras «eres insaciable» expresan una suerte de admiración, que, por supuesto, tampoco está libre de altivez. Pero así la figura del vigilante adquiere un perfil distinto al que tú le has atribuido.

—Tú conoces la historia con más detalle que yo y desde hace mucho más tiempo —dijo K.

Permanecieron callados un rato. Luego K preguntó: —¿Entonces crees que no engañó al hombre?

—No me interpretes mal —dijo el sacerdote—, sólo te menciono las distintas opiniones sobre la leyenda. No debes fiarte tanto de las opiniones. La escritura es invariable, y las opiniones, con frecuencia, sólo son expresión de la desesperación causada por este hecho. En este caso hay, incluso, una opinión según la cual precisamente el vigilante es el engañado.

—Ésa es una interpretación que va demasiado lejos —dijo K—. ¿Cómo la fundamentan?

—La fundamentación se basa en la simplicidad del centinela. Él dice que no conoce el interior de la Ley, sino sólo el camino que una y otra vez tiene que recorrer ante la entrada. Las ideas que posee del interior se consideran ingenuas y se cree que él mismo teme aquello que también quiere hacer que el hombre tema. Sí, incluso él tiene más miedo que el hombre, pues éste sólo quiere entrar, aun después de haber oído que hay vigilantes más poderosos; el centinela, sin embargo, no quiere entrar, al menos no se dice nada sobre ello. Otros, por el contrario, afirman que él ha tenido que estar en el interior, pues fue
into the service of the Law, and that could only have happened within. To this it may be replied that he might well have been named a doorkeeper by a shout from within, and at any rate could not have progressed far into the interior, since he is unable to bear the sight of even the third doorkeeper. Moreover there is no report of his saying anything over the years about the interior, other than the remark about the doorkeepers. Perhaps he was forbidden to do so, but he never mentions such a prohibition either. From all this it is concluded that he knows nothing about the appearance and significance of the interior, and is himself deceived about it. But he is also in a state of deception about the man from the country, for he is subordinate to him and doesn’t know it. It’s evident in several places that he treats the man as a subordinate, as I’m sure you’ll recall. But it is equally clear, according to this opinion, that he is in fact subordinate to him. First of all, the free man is superior to the bound man. Now the man is in fact free: he can go wherever he wishes, the entrance to the Law alone is denied to him, and this only by one person, the doorkeeper. If he sits on the stool at the side of the door and spends the rest of his life there, he does so of his own free will; the story mentions no element of force. The doorkeeper, on the other hand, is bound to his post by his office; he is not permitted to go elsewhere outside, but to all appearances he is not permitted to go inside either, even if he wishes to. Moreover he is in the service of the Law but serves only at this entrance, and thus serves only this man, for whom the entrance is solely meant. For this reason as well he is subordinate to him. It can be assumed that for many years, as long as it takes for a man to mature, his service has been an empty
formality, for it is said that a man comes, that is, a mature man, so that the doorkeeper had to wait a long time to fulfill his duty, and in fact had to wait as long as the man wished, who after all came of his own free will. But the end of his service is also determined by the end of the man’s life, and he therefore remains subordinate to him until the very end. And it is constantly emphasized that the doorkeeper apparently realizes none of this. But nothing striking is seen in this, for according to this opinion, the doorkeeper exists in an even greater state of deception with regard to his office. For at the very end he speaks of the entrance and says “I’m going to go now and shut it,” but at the beginning it’s said that the gate to the Law always stands open; if it always stands open, however, that is, independent of how long the man lives for whom it is meant, then even the doorkeeper can’t shut it. Opinions vary as to whether the doorkeeper intends the announcement that he is going to shut the gate merely as an answer, or to emphasize his devotion to duty, or because he wants to arouse remorse and sorrow in the man at the last moment. Many agree, however, that he will not be able to shut the gate. They even think that, at least at the end, he’s subordinate to the man in knowledge as well, for the former sees the radiance which streams forth from the entrance to the Law, while the doorkeeper, by profession, is probably standing with his back to the entrance, nor does he show by anything he says that he might have noticed a change.”

“That’s well reasoned,” said K., who had repeated various parts of the priest’s explanation to himself under his breath. “It’s well reasoned, and now I too believe that the doorkeeper is deceived. But that doesn’t change my earlier opinion, for in part they coincide. It makes no difference if the doorkeeper sees clearly or is deceived. I said the man was deceived. If the doorkeeper sees clearly, one might have doubts about that, but if the doorkeeper is devoted to his guests (a zealous enthusiast or supporter. 2 a zealously pious or fanatical person.

devotion n. 1 (usu. foll. by to) enthusiastic attachment or loyalty (to a person or cause): great love, apasiónamiento. 2 a religious worship. b (in pl.) prayers. c devoutness, religious fervour: amor, afecto, veneración, dedicación, entrega, lealtad, fidelidad, afición, devotee. 1 (usu. foll. by of) a zealously pious or fanatical person. devoto n. 1 (usu. foll. by to) apply or give over (resources etc. or oneself) to a particular activity or purpose or person) (devoted their time to reading; devoted himself to his guests). 2 archaic a doom to destruction.
devoted adj. very loving or loyal (a devoted husband); leal, fiel, dedicado, consagrado.
devotion n. 1 (usu. foll. by of) a zealously pious or fanatical person. devotion. 1. f. Amor, veneración y fervor religiosos. 2. Práctica piadosa no obligatoria. 3. fig. Indignación, afición especial. 4. fig. Costumbre devota, y, en general, costumbre buena. 5. Teol. Prontitud con que se está dispuesto a hacer la santa voluntad de Dios.

esperar mucho tiempo hasta que pudo cumplir su objetivo y, además, tuvo que esperar tanto tiempo como quiso el hombre del campo, que vino voluntariamente. Pero también el final de su servicio queda determinado por la muerte del hombre, así que permanece subordinado a él hasta su fallecimiento. Y una y otra vez se acentúa que el centinela no sabe nada de eso. No es nada extraordinario, pues, según esta interpretación, el centinela es víctima de un engaño mucho mayor, el que hace referencia a su servicio. Al final habla de la entrada y dice: «Ahora me voy y la cierro», pero al principio se dice que la puerta que da acceso a la Ley permanece abierta, como siempre, así que siempre está abierta, siempre, con independencia de la vida del hombre para el que está destinada esa entrada, por consiguiente el vigilante no podrá cerrarla. Aquí divergen las opiniones. Unos creen que el centinela, con el anuncio de que va a cerrar la puerta, sólo pretende dar una respuesta o acentuar su obligación; otros piensan que en el último momento quiere entristecer al hombre e impulsarle a que se arrepienta. Muchos comentarios coinciden en que no podrá cerrar la puerta. Opinan, incluso, que al menos al final, también en lo que sabe, permanece subordinado al hombre, pues éste ve cómo surge el resplandor de la Ley, mientras que el centinela permanece de espaldas y no menciona nada que haga suponer que ha advertido alguna transformación.

—Esta última interpretación está bien fundada—dijo K., que había repetido para sí, en voz baja, algunos de los pasajes de la aclaración del sacerdote—. Está bien fundada, y creo también que el centinela está engañado. Pero al aceptar esto no me he apartado de mi primera opinión, ambas se cubren parcialmente. No es algo decisivo si el centinela ve claro o se engaña. Yo dije que han engañado al hombre. Si el centinela ve claro, se
deceived, the deception must necessarily carry over to the man. In that case the doorkeeper is indeed no deceiver, but is so simpleminded that he should be dismissed immediately from service. You have to realize that the state of deception in which the doorkeeper finds himself doesn’t harm him but harms the man a thousand-fold.

“*You run up against a contrary opinion there,*” said the priest. “Namely, there are those who say that the story gives no one the right to pass judgment on the doorkeeper. No matter how he appears to us, he’s still a servant of the Law; he belongs to the Law, and thus is beyond human judgment. In that case one can’t see the doorkeeper as subordinate to the man. To be bound by his office, even if only at the entrance to the Law, is incomparably better than to live freely in the world. The man has only just arrived at the Law, the doorkeeper is already there. He has been appointed to his post by the Law, to doubt his dignity is to doubt the Law itself.”

“I don’t agree with that opinion,” said K., shaking his head, “for if you accept it, you have to consider everything the doorkeeper says as true. But you’ve already proved conclusively that that’s not possible.”

“No,” said the priest, “you don’t have to consider everything true, you just have to consider it necessary.”

“A depressing opinion,” said K. “*Lies are made into a universal system.*”

K. said that with finality, but it was not his final judgment. He was too tired to take in all of the consequences of the story; they led him into unaccustomed areas of thought, toward abstract notions more suited for discussion by the officials of the court than by him. The simple tale had become shapeless; he wanted to shake off the thought of it, and the priest, who now showed great delicacy of feeling, allowed him to do so, accepting his remark in silence, although it surely was at odds with his own opinion.
They walked on for a while in silence; K. stayed close to the priest, not knowing in the darkness where he was. The lamp in his hand had long since gone out. Once, directly before him, the silver statue of a saint glimmered briefly, with only the gleam of its silver, then fell back at once into the darkness. Not wishing to remain entirely dependent on the priest, K. asked him:

"Are we near the main entrance now?"

"No," said the priest, "we're a long way from it. Do you want to leave already?" Although K. hadn't been thinking of that at the moment, he asked at once:

"Of course, I have to go. I'm the chief financial officer of a bank, and they're expecting me; I only came here to show the cathedral to a colleague from abroad."

"Well," said the priest, holding his hand out to K., "go on then."

"But I can't find my way in the dark alone," said K.

"Go left to the wall," said the priest, "then just keep to the wall all the way and you'll find a way out."

The priest had moved just a few steps away, but K. called out in a loud voice:

"Please, wait a moment."

"I'm waiting," said the priest. "Do you want anything else from me?"

"No," said the priest. "You were so friendly to me before," said K., "and explained everything, but now you're leaving as if I meant nothing to you."

"But you have to go," said the priest. "You were so friendly to me before," said K., "and explained everything, but now you're leaving as if I meant nothing to you."

"Yes," said K., "you must see that."

"First you must see who I am," said the priest. "You're the prison chaplain," said K. and drew nearer to the priest; his immediate return to the bank wasn't so important as he'd thought, he could easily stay here longer.

"Therefore I belong to the court," said the priest. "Why should I want something from you. The court wants nothing from you. It receives you when you come and dismisses you when you go."
On the eve of his thirty-first birthday, it was around nine in the evening, when the streets are quiet, two gentlemen entered K.’s lodgings. In frock coats, pale and fat, with top hats that seemed immovable. After brief formalities at the outer door over who would enter first, the same formalities were repeated more elaborately before K.’s door. Without having been informed of their visit, K., also dressed in black, was sitting in an armchair near the door, slowly pulling on new gloves that stretched tightly over his fingers, with the look of someone expecting guests. He stood up immediately and regarded the gentlemen curiously. “So you are meant for me?” he asked.

The gentlemen nodded, each pointing with the top hat in his hand toward the other. K. admitted to himself that he had been expecting different visitors. He went to the window and looked out again into the dark street. Almost all the windows across the way were still dark, in many the curtains had been lowered. In a lighted window on that floor two small children were playing together behind a grille, reaching out toward each other with their little hands, not yet capable of moving from the spot. “They’ve sent old supporting actors for me,” K. said to himself, and looked around again to confirm his impression.

“They want to finish me off cheaply.” K. turned to them abruptly and asked: “Which theater are you playing at?”

“Theater?” one of them asked, the corners of his mouth twitching, turning to the other for help. His companion gestured like a mute man struggling with his stubborn vocal cords.

“They’re not prepared for questions,” K. said to himself, and went to get his hat.

The men wanted to take hold of K.’s arms on the stairway, but K. said:

“Wait till we’re in the street, I’m not ill.” Just beyond the entrance, however, they took his arms in a manner K. had never before experienced in walking with anyone. They held their shoulders right behind his, didn’t crook their
arms, but instead wrapped them about the whole length of his, seizing K.'s hands below with a well-trained, practiced, and irresistible grip. K. walked along stiffly between them; now they formed such a close unit that had one of them been struck down they would all have fallen. It was a unit of the sort seldom formed except by lifeless matter.

Beneath the street lamps K. tried several times, in spite of the difficulty imposed by their tight formation, to see his escorts more clearly than he had in the semidarkness of his room. "Perhaps they're tenors," he thought as he regarded their thick double chins. He was nauseated by the cleanliness of their faces. You could practically still see the cleansing hand that had wiped the corners of their eyes, rubbed their upper lips, scrubbed the folds of their chins.

When K. noticed that, he stopped, causing the others to stop as well; they were on the edge of an open, deserted square decorated with flower beds. "Why did they send you of all people?" he shouted more than asked. The men were apparently at a loss for an answer; they waited with their free arms dangling, like male nurses with a patient who needs to rest. "I'm not going any farther," said K. to see what would happen. The men didn't need to reply; they simply maintained their grip and tried to pry K. from the spot, but K. resisted. "I won't need my strength much longer, I'll use all I have now," he thought. He pictured flies, tearing their tiny legs off as they struggled to escape the flypaper. "These gentlemen have their work cut out for them."

At that moment, coming up a small flight of stairs to the square from a narrow lane below, Fräulein Bürstner appeared before them. He couldn't be absolutely sure it was her; there was certainly a strong resemblance. But to K. whether it was really Fräulein Bürstner; the futility of resistance was suddenly clear to him. There would be nothing heroic in resistance, in making trouble for these men, in trying to enjoy a final vestige of

\textit{tr. by Breon Mitchell}

\textit{tr. de José Rafael Hernández Arias}

\textit{brazos, sino que los utilizaban para rodear los brazos de K en toda su lar-
gura, por debajo agarraban las manos de K con una maña de colegio, pero estudiada e irresistible. K iba muy rec-
to entre ambos, ahora los tres forma-
ban tal unidad que, si alguno hubiese golpeado a uno de ellos, todos habrían sentido el golpe. Constituían una uni-
dad como sólo la materia inanimada puede formar.}

\textit{bajo la luz de las farolas, intentó a menudo contemplar mejor a sus acompañantes de lo que lo había hecho en la pe-
numbra de su vivienda, a pesar de que la forma en que lo llevaban dificultaba esa operación. «A lo me-
jor son tenores» —pensó al mirar sus dobles papadas. La limpieza de sus rostros le daba asco. Vio cómo la mano lustrosa restregó el rabillo del ojo, frotó el labio superior, ras-
có las arrugas de la barbilla.}

\textit{Cuando K le advirtió, se de-
tuvo, así que los otros también se detuvieron. Se encontraban al borde de una plaza solitaria, adornada con jardines.}

—¿Por qué les han enviado precisamen-
tente a ustedes! —gritó más que preguntó. Los hombres no supieron qué contestar, se limitaron a esperar con el brazo libre colgando, como enfermeros \textit{cuando} el enfermo quiere descansar. —No sigo ——dijo K para pro-
barlos. A eso no necesitaron contestar, apretaron las manos de K e intentaron moverle de su sitio, pero K se resistió. —No necesitaré más mi fuerza ——pensó K,—, la emplearé toda ahora!. Recordó a las moscas que intentan escapar con las patitas rotas del papel \textit{encolado}. —Los señores van a tener trabajo —se dijo.

\textit{pry 1 (usu. foll. by into) inquire impertinently (into a person's private affairs etc.). fisgar, inmiscuirse. 2 (usu. foll. by into, about, etc.) look or peer inquisitively. U.S. = prise v. & n. (also prize) force open or out by leverage (prised up the lid; prised the box open).}
life by fighting back. He started moving again, and part of the pleasure he gave the men by doing so was transmitted back to him. Now they allowed him to choose the direction they should take, and he chose to follow in the steps of the young woman ahead of them, not because he wanted to catch up with her, and not because he wanted to keep her in sight for as long as possible, but simply not to forget the reminder she signified for him. “The only thing I can do now,” he said to himself, and the way his steps matched those of the other three confirmed his thoughts, “the only thing I can do now is keep my mind calm and analytical to the last. I’ve always wanted to seize the world with twenty hands, and what’s more with a motive that was hardly laudable. That was wrong; do I want to show now that even a yearlong trial could teach me nothing? Do I want to leave the parting impression that I’m slow-witted? Shall they say of me that at the beginning of my trial I wanted to end it, and now, at its end, I want to begin it again? I don’t want them to say that. I’m grateful they’ve sent these half-mute, insensitive men to accompany me on this journey, and that it’s been left to me to say myself what needs to be said.”

In the meantime the young woman had turned into a side street, but K. could do without her now and submitted to the men escorting him. Now all three of them, in total accord, crossed a bridge in the moonlight, the men yielding willingly to K.’s slightest move, and when he turned slightly toward the railing they too turned, presenting a solid front. Glittering and trembling in the moonlight, the water parted around a small island upon which the foliage of trees and shrubbery rose in masses, as if crowded together. Beneath the foliage, invisible now, were gravel paths with comfortable benches where for many a summer K. had relaxed and stretched his legs. “I didn’t really want to stop,” K. said to his escorts, shamed by their ready compliance. One of them seemed to be gently reproaching the other behind K.’s back for the mistaken stop, then they went on.
They walked along a few narrow, steeply rising lanes in which policemen were standing or walking about, at times in the distance and at times quite near to them. One of them with a bushy mustache and his hand on the hilt of his saber stepped up to the not entirely unsuspicious-looking group with what appeared to be a purposeful stride. The men hesitated, the policeman seemed about to open his mouth, then K. pulled the men forward forcibly. He turned around cautiously several times to make sure the policeman wasn’t following; but when they had a corner between them and the policeman, K. started to run and the men had to run with him, although they were gasping for breath.

They were thus soon out of the city, which in this direction bordered on open fields with almost no transition. A small stone quarry, abandoned and desolate, lay beside a building which was still quite urban. Here the men halted, either because this spot had been their goal from the beginning, or because they were too tired to go any farther. Now they released K., who waited silently as they removed their top hats and wiped the perspiration from their foreheads with their handkerchiefs while they looked about the quarry. Moonlight lay everywhere with the naturalness and serenity no other light is granted.

After a brief polite exchange about who was responsible for the first of the tasks to come—the men seemed to have received their assignment without any specific division of labor—one of them went to K. and removed his jacket, his vest, and finally his shirt. K. shivered involuntarily, whereupon the man gave him a gentle, reassuring pat on the back. Then he folded the clothes carefully, as if they would be needed again, though not in the immediate future. In order not to leave K. standing motionless, exposed to the rather chilly night air, he took him by the arm and walked back and forth with him a little, while

Pasaron por algunas calles empinadas, en las que, más lejos o más cerca, vieron a algunos policías. Uno de ellos, con un bigote poblado, se acercó al grupo con la mano en la empuñadura del sable, probablemente le resultó sospechoso (39). Los hombres se detuvieron, el policía iba a abrir la boca, pero entonces K. empujó a sus acompañantes hacia adelante. Se volvió con frecuencia para comprobar si el policía les seguía. Pero en cuanto doblaron una esquina y perdieron de vista al policía, K. comenzó a correr. Sus acompañantes tuvieron que correr con él perdiendo el aliento.

Así, salieron rápidamente de la ciudad, que, en esa dirección, limitaba prácticamente sin transición con el campo. Cerca de una casa de pisos, como las de la ciudad, había una pequeña cantera, abandonada y desierta. Allí se pararon, ya fuese porque ese lugar había sido su destino desde el principio, ya porque estuvieran demasiado agotados para seguir andando. Dejaron libre a K., que, mudo, se limitó a observar. Los dos hombres se quitaron las chisteras y, mientras inspeccionaban con la mirada la cantera, se secaron el sudor de la frente con un pañuelo. La luz de la luna iluminaba todo el escenario con la naturalidad y tranquilidad que ninguna otra luz posee.

Después de intercambiar algunas cortesias sobre quién debería hacerse cargo de las próximas tareas—aquéllos señores parecían haber recibido el encargo sin que les asignaran sus respectivas competencias—, uno de ellos se acercó a K. y le quito la chaqueta, el chaleco y, finalmente, la camisa. K. tembló involuntariamente, por lo que uno de los hombres le dio una palmada tranquilizadora en la espalda. A continuación, dobló cuidadosamente las prendas, como si se fueran a utilizar otra vez, aunque no en un periodo inmediato. Para no exponer a K. al aire frío de la noche, le tomó bajo su brazo y anduvo con él de un lado a otro, mientras el com-
the other man searched for some suitable spot in the quarry. When he had found it, he waved, and the other gentleman led K. over to it. It was near the quarry wall, where a loose block of stone was lying. The men sat K. down on the ground, propped him against the stone, and laid his head down on it. In spite of all their efforts, and in spite of the cooperation K. gave them, his posture was still quite forced and implausible. So one of the men asked the other to let him work on positioning K. on his own for a while, but that didn’t improve things either. Finally they left K. in a position that wasn’t even the best of those they had already tried. Then one man opened his frock coat and, from a sheath on a belt that encircled his vest, drew forth a long, thin, double-edged butcher knife, held it up, and tested its sharpness in the light. Once more the nauseating courtesies began, one of them passed the knife across K. to the other, who passed it back over K. K. knew clearly now that it was his duty to seize the knife as it floated from hand to hand above him and plunge it into himself. But he didn’t do so; instead he twisted his still-free neck and looked about him. He could not rise entirely to the occasion, he could not relieve the authorities of all their work; the responsibility for this final failure lay with whoever had denied him the remnant of strength necessary to do so. His gaze fell upon the top story of the building adjoining the quarry. Like a light flicking on, the casements of a window flew open, a human figure, faint and insubstantial at that distance and height, leaned far out abruptly, and stretched both arms out even further. Who was it? A friend? A good person? Someone who cared? Someone who wanted to help? Was it just one person? Was it everyone? Was there still help? Were there objections that had been forgotten? Of course there were. Logic is no doubt unshakable, but it can’t withstand a person who wants to live. Where was the judge he’d never seen? Where was the high court he’d never reached? He raised his hands and spread out all his fingers.

pañero buscaba un lugar apropiado en la cantera. Cuando lo hubo encontrado, hizo una seña y el otro acompañó a K hasta allí. Estaba cerca del corte, al lado de una piedra desprendida. Los hombres sentaron a K en el suelo, le apoyaron contra la piedra y reclinaron su cabeza. A pesar del esfuerzo que ponían y de toda la ayuda de K, su posición quedaba forzada e inverosímil. Uno de los hombres pidió al otro que le dejase a él buscar una postura mejor, pero tampoco logró nada. Finalmente, dejaron a K en una posición que ni siquiera era la mejor entre todas las que habían probado. Entonces uno de los hombres abrió su levita y sacó de un cinturón que rodeaba al chaleco un cuchillo de carnicero largo, afilado por ambas partes; lo mantuvo en alto y comprobó el filo a la luz. De nuevo comenzaron las repugnantes cortesías, uno entregaba el cuchillo al otro por encima de la cabeza de K, y el último se lo devolvía al primero. K sabía que su deber hubiera consistido en coger el cuchillo cuando pasaba de mano en mano sobre su cabeza y clavárselo. Pero no lo hizo; en vez de eso, giró el cuello, aún libre, y miró alrededor. No podía satisfacer todas las exigencias, quitarle todo el trabajo a la organización; la responsabilidad por ese último error la sorataba el que le había privado de las fuerzas necesarias para llevar a cabo esa última acción. Su mirada recayó en el último piso de la casa que lindaba con la cantera. Del mismo modo en que una luz parpadeara, así se abrieron las dos hojas de una ventana. Un hombre, débil y delgado por la altura y la lejanía, se asomó con un impulso y extendió los brazos hacia afuera. ¿Quién era? ¿Un amigo? ¿Un buen hombre? ¿Alguien que participaba? ¿Alguien que quería ayudar? ¿Era sólo una persona? ¿Eran todos? ¿Era ayuda? ¿Había objeciones que se habían olvidado? Seguro que las había. La lógica es inalterable, pero no puede resistir a un hombre que quiere vivir. ¿Dónde estaba el juez al que nunca había visto? ¿Dónde estaba el tribunal supremo ante el que nunca había comparecido? Levantó las manos y estiró todos los dedos.
But the hands of one man were right at K.'s throat, while the other thrust the knife into his heart and turned it there twice. With failing sight K. saw how the men drew near his face, leaning cheek-to-cheek to observe the verdict. "Like a dog!" he said; it seemed as though the shame was to outlive him.

Over the next few days K. was unable to exchange even a few words with Fräulein Bürstner. He tried any number of approaches, but she always managed to avoid him. He came straight home from the office, sat on the divan in his room without turning on the light, and concentrated all his attention on the hall. If the maid happened to pass by and shot the door to the apparently empty room, he would get up after a moment or so and open it again. He rose an hour earlier than usual each morning on the chance that he might meet Fräulein Bürstner alone as she was leaving for the office. But none of these attempts succeeded. Then he wrote a letter, both to her office and to her lodgings, in which he tried again to justify his behavior, offered to make whatever amends he could, promised never to transgress whatever boundaries she might choose to set, and asked only for a chance to speak with her, particularly since he couldn't settle things with Frau Grubach without first conferring with her, and finally, informed her that he would...
When Frau Grubach brought K. his breakfast ever since she had angered K. so, she no longer entrusted the maid with even the smallest task—K. couldn’t resist speaking to her for the first time in five days. “Why is there such a racket in the hall today?” he asked as he poured his coffee. “Isn’t there some way to stop it? Must we have housecleaning on a Sunday?” Even though K. didn’t glance up at Frau Grubach, he noticed that she seemed to sigh in relief. Even these stern queries on K.’s part she read as forgiveness, or the initial stage of forgiveness. “It’s not a housecleaning, Herr K.,” she said, “Fräulein Montag is simply moving in with Fräulein Bürstner and she’s carrying her things over.” She said nothing more, waiting to see K.’s reaction and whether he would permit her to go on talking. But K. put her to the test, stirring his coffee pensively and saying nothing. Then he looked up at her and said: “Have you put aside your earlier suspicions about Fräulein Bürstner yet?” “Herr K.,” cried Frau Grubach, who had been waiting for just this question and now stretched her clasped hands toward him, “you took a casual remark so
seriously then. I hadn’t the least intention of offending you or anyone else. You’ve known me long enough to know that, Herr K. You don’t know how I’ve suffered the last few days! That I would slander my boarders! And you thought I had, Herr K! And said I should give you notice! Give you notice!”

Her final exclamation was already choked by tears; she raised her apron to her face and sobbed aloud.

“Please don’t cry, Frau Grubach,” said K., gazing out the window; he was thinking only of Fräulein Bürstner and that she was taking a stranger into her room.

“Please don’t cry,” he said again, as he turned back toward the room and Frau Grubach continued to weep. “I didn’t mean to be so harsh either then. We just misunderstood one another. That happens sometimes, even to old friends.”

Frau Grubach lowered the apron from her eyes to see if K. was truly appeased.

“That’s all it was,” said K., and ventured to add, since he gathered from Frau Grubach’s behavior that the captain hadn’t told her anything: “Do you really think I’d let some young woman I don’t really know come between us?”

“No, precisely — dijo la señora Grubach; su desgracia consistía en decir algo inadecuado cada vez que se sentía un poco libre —, siempre me pregunté: ¿por qué se toma tan en serio el señor K el asunto de la señorita Bürstner? ¿Por qué discute conmigo por su causa aun sabiendo que cada una de sus malas palabras me quita el sueño? De la señorita Bürstner sůlo he dicho lo que he visto con mis ojos.

K no dijo nada, la tendría que haber echado de la habitación nada más abrir la boca, pero no quería hacerlo. Se contentó con tomarse el café y con hacer notar a la señora Grubach que allí sobraba. Fuera se volvió a oír el paso arrastrado de la señorita Montag, que atravesaba todo el recibidor.

“Do you hear that?” asked K., pointing toward the door.

“Yes,” Frau Grubach said with a sigh, “I wanted to help her, and have the maid help too, but she’s stubborn, she wants to move everything herself. I’m surprised at Fräulein Bürstner. I regret having Fräulein Montag as a boarder often
enough, and now Fräulein Bürstner is taking her into her own room.”

“That shouldn’t bother you,” said K., crushing the sugary residue in his cup.

“Do you lose anything by it?”

“No,” said Frau Grubach, “it’s even good as far as I’m concerned; it leaves a room free for my nephew, the captain. I’ve been worried he might have bothered you the last few days while I had to let him sleep next door in the living room. He’s not particularly considerate.”

“What an idea!” said K., standing up; “not in the least. You seem to think I’m overly sensitive just because I can’t stand listening to Fräulein Montag-there she goes back again-making all those trips.”

Frau Grubach found herself at a loss.

“Should I tell her to postpone the rest of the move, Herr K.? I’ll do so at once if you wish.”

“But she’s moving in with Fräulein Bürstner!” said K. “Yes,” said Frau Grubach, not quite seeing K.’s point. “Well, then,” said K., “she has to take her things there.”

Frau Grubach merely nodded. This silent helplessness, which had the surface appearance of stubbornness, irritated K. even further. He began pacing back and forth in the room from window to door, giving Frau Grubach no opportunity to slip away, which she would otherwise no doubt have done.

K. had just reached the door again when there was a knock. It was the maid, who reported that Fräulein Montag would like a few words with Herr K. and requested that he join her for that purpose in the dining room, where she was awaiting him. K. listened pensively to the maid; then turned with an almost scornful look to a startled Frau Grubach. His look seemed to say he’d long since expected Fräulein Montag’s invitation and that it fit in quite well with the general annoyance he was being forced to suffer at the hands of Frau Grubach’s boarders this Sunday morning. He sent the maid back to say that he would come at once, then went to his wardrobe to change his jacket, responding to Frau Grubach, who was complaining under her breath about the irksome young woman, Bürstner, sin embargo, se la lleva inclu-

“—Eso no debe preocuparle —dijo K, y deshizo los restos de azúcar en la taza—, ¿Le resulta perjudicial?
—No —dijo la señora Grubach—, en lo que a mi respecta no hay ningún problema. Además, así se queda una habitación libre y puedo alojar allí a mi sobrino, el capitán. Desde hace tiempo temo que me molesté por vivir ahí al lado, en el salón. Él no es muy considerado.
—¿Qué ocurrencia! —dijo K, y se levantó—. Ni una palabra sobre eso. Parece que me toma por un hipersensible sólo por el hecho de que no puedo soportar los paseos de la señorita Montag, y ahí la tiene, ya regresa otra vez.
La señora Grubach se vio impotente.
—¿Quiere que le diga que retrasé el resto de la mudanza? Si usted quiere, lo hago en seguida.
—¡Pero tiene que mudarse a la habitación de la señorita Bürstner!
—Sí —dijo la señora Grubach, que no entendió muy bien lo que K quiso decir.
—Bien —dijo K—, pues entonces tendrá que trasladar todas sus cosas.
La señora Grubach se limitó a asen-

tir. Esa impotencia muda, que se reflejaba exteriormente en un gesto de consuelo, irritaba aún más a K. Comenzó a pasear de un lado a otro de la habitación, de la ventana hasta la puerta y de ésta, de nuevo, a la ventana, y la señora Grubach aprovechó la oportunidad para alejarse, lo que probablemente hubiera hecho de todos modos.

Acababa de llegar K a la puer-
ta, cuando alguien llamó. Era la criada. Anunció que la señorita Montag deseaba hablar con el señor K y por eso le pedía que fuera al comedor, donde ella le esperaba. K escuchó pensativo a la criada, luego se volvió hacia la asustada señora Grubach con una mirada irónica. Esa mirada parecía decir que K hacía tiempo que esperaba esa invitación y que se adaptaba perfectamente al tormento que los inquilinos de la señora Grubach le estaban infligiendo esa mañana dominical. Envió a la criada con la respuesta de que iría en seguida, se acercó al armario para cambiarse de chaqueta y como respuesta a la señora Grubach, que se quejaba en voz baja de esa persona tan desagradable, le
merely by asking her to please clear away the breakfast dishes. “But you’ve hardly touched anything,” said Frau Grubach. “Oh, just take it away,” cried K; it seemed to him as if Fräulein Montag were somehow mixed up with it all, making it disgusting.

As he passed through the hall, he looked over at the closed door to Fräulein Bürstner’s room. He hadn’t been invited there, however, but to the dining room instead, where he pulled the door open without knocking.

It was a very long but narrow room with a single window. There was only enough space to place two cupboards at an angle in the corners on the wall at the door, while the remainder of the room was totally occupied by the long dining table, which began near the door and extended almost to the large window, practically blocking it off. The table was already set, and for several people, since almost all the boarders took their midday meal there on Sunday.

As K. entered, Fräulein Montag left the window and approached him along one side of the table. They greeted each other in silence. Then Fräulein Montag, as always holding her head unusually erect, said: “I don’t know if you know me.” K. regarded her with a frown. “Of course,” he said, “you’ve been living at Frau Grubach’s for some time now.” “But I don’t think you pay much attention to the affairs of the boardinghouse,” said Fräulein Montag. “No,” said K., “I won’t you sit down,” said Fräulein Montag. In silence, they both drew out chairs from the very end of the table and sat down across from each other. But Fräulein Montag rose again immediately, for she had left her little handbag on the window sill and went back to get it; she limped the whole length of the room. When she returned, gently swinging the little handbag she said: “I just want to have a few words with you on behalf of my friend. She wanted to come herself, but she’s not feeling very well today. She asks you...
to forgive her and to hear me out instead. She couldn’t have said anything to you but what I’m going to say anyway. On the contrary, I think I can say more, since I’m relatively uninvolved. Don’t you think?”

“Well, what is there to say!” replied K., who was tired of seeing Fräulein Montag stare so fixedly at his lips. By this means she already assumed control over what he had yet to say. “Apparently Fräulein Bürstner doesn’t wish to grant me the personal discussion I requested.” “That’s right,” said Fräulein Montag, “or rather, that’s not it at all, you put it much too strongly. As a general rule, discussions are neither granted nor denied. But they may be considered unnecessary, as in this case. Now after what you’ve said I can speak frankly. You asked my friend, either in writing or orally, to discuss something with you. But my friend knows what this discussion would concern, or so I at least assume, and is therefore convinced, for reasons unknown to me, that it would be to no one’s benefit for the discussion to actually take place. She mentioned it to me for the first time yesterday, by the way, and then only in passing; she said among other things that the discussion couldn’t be all that important to you, for you could only have hit upon such an idea by chance, and that, even without a specific explanation, you would soon recognize how pointless the whole thing was, if you hadn’t realized it already. I replied that she might be right, but nonetheless I felt that, in order to make everything perfectly clear, it might still be preferable to give you some explicit answer. I offered to take on this task myself, and after some hesitation my friend yielded. I hope I’ve acted as you would have wished, for the slightest uncertainty in the most minor matter is always annoying, and if, as in this case, the uncertainty can be dispelled so easily, it’s best to do so at once.”

“I thank you,” K. replied at once, rose slowly, gazed at Fräulein Montag, then across the table, then out the window—the building opposite stood in sunlight—and walked toward the door. Fräulein Montag followed him for disculpe y que me oiga a mí en vez de a ella. No le hubiera podido decir nada diferente a lo que le voy a decir yo. Todo lo contrario, creo que yo le voy a decir más, ya que no tengo ningún interés en el asunto, ¿no cree?

—¡Qué podría decir yo! —respondió K., ya cansado de que la señorita Montag no parese de mirar sus labios. Así se arrogaba un dominio sobre lo que él quería decir.

—La señorita Bürstner, como veo, no está dispuesta a sostener conmigo la entrevista que le he solicitado.

—Así es —dijo la señorita Montag—, o, mejor, no es así, usted lo expresa con demasiada dureza. En general las conversaciones ni se conceden ni se niegan. Pero puede ocurrir que determinadas conversaciones se consideren innecesarias, y éste es uno de esos casos. Después de su mención, ya puedo hablar abiertamente. Usted ha pedido por escrito u oralmente a mi amiga que sostenga una entrevista con usted. Pero mi amiga no sabe, al menos eso es lo que yo deduzco, cuál puede ser el objeto de esa entrevista y, por motivos que desconozco, está convencida de que, si tuviera lugar, no sería útil para nadie. Por lo demás, ayer me explicó, aunque de un modo fugaz, que a usted tampoco le podía importar mucho esa conversación, porque se le debía de haber ocurrido por casualidad y que reconocería pronto, sin necesidad de aclaraciones, lo absurdo de la pretensión. Yo le respondí que podía tener razón, pero que sería más ventajoso, para una clarificación completa del asunto, hacerle llegar una respuesta. Yo me ofrecí a asumir esa tarea y, después de dudar algo, mi amiga consintió en ello. Espero haber trabajado también en su beneficio, pues la menor inseguridad en el asunto más insignificante siempre resulta desagradable. Además, si se puede resolver fácilmente, como en este caso, lo mejor es hacerlo en seguida.

—Se lo agradezco —dijo K con rapidez, se levantó lentamente, miró a la señorita Montag, luego deslizó su mirada a lo largo de la mesa hasta dejarla reposar en la ventana —en la casa de enfrente daba el sol— y, finalmente, se dirigió hacia la puerta.

La señorita Montag le siguió
a few steps as if she didn’t trust
him completely. But at the door
they both had to draw back, for it
opened and Captain Lanz entered.
K. saw him for the first time up
close. He was a tall man of about
forty, with a tanned, fleshy face.
He made a slight bow, which was
meant for K. as well, then went up
to Fräulein Montag and kissed her
hand respectfully. He moved with
easy assurance. His politeness
toward Fräulein Montag differed
strikingly from the treatment K.
had accorded her. Even so,
Fräulein Montag didn’t seem angry
with K., for as far as he could tell,
she was about to introduce him to
the captain. But K. had no desire
for introductions; he felt incapable
of showing any friendliness toward
either the captain or Fräulein
Montag, for in his eyes the kiss of
her hand had united them as a pair
that desired, beneath the
appearance of utmost
inoffensiveness and unselfishness,
to keep him from seeing Fräulein
Bürstner. K. not only believed this
but felt as well that Fräulein
Montag had selected an excellent,
albeit two-edged, weapon to
accomplish her aim. She
exaggerated the importance of the
relationship between Fräulein
Bürstner and K., and above all the
importance of the discussion he
sought, while at the same time
attempting to twist things around
so that K. seemed to be the one
exaggerating everything. She
would be proved wrong; K. had no
desire to exaggerate anything; he
knew that Fräulein Bürstner was an
ordinary little typist who couldn’t
resist him for long. In this
connection, he deliberately omitted
any consideration of what he had
learned about Fräulein
Bürstner from Frau Grubach.
He was thinking about all this as
he left the room with scarcely a
nod. He intended to go straight
to his room, but a little laugh he
heard coming from Fräulein
Montag in the dining room gave
him an idea that would give both
the captain and Fräulein Montag
a surprise. He looked around
and listened to see if an interruption might
be expected from any of the adjoining
rooms; it was quiet everywhere; the
only sound was the conversation
in the dining room and, from the hall
leading to the kitchen, Frau
unos pasos como si no confiase en
él. No obstante, ambos tuvieron
que apartarse nada más llegar a la
puerta, pues el capitán Lanz entró.
K era la primera vez que lo veía
de cerca. Era un hombre alto, de
unos cuarenta años, con un rostro
carnoso y bronceado. Hizo una
ligeramente inclinación, también dirigida
do, luego se acercó hasta donde
estaba la señorita Montag y besó
obsequioso su mano. Su cortesía
frente a la señorita Montag con-
trastaba con la actitud que K.
había tenido ante ella. Pero
la señorita Montag no pare-
ce enojada con K., pues, se-
gún le pareció, quiso presen-
tarle al capitán. Pero K no
quería que le presentaran,
no hubiese sido adecuado ser
amable con el capitán o con
la señorita Montag, el beso
en la mano la había unido,
para él, a un grupo que, bajo
la apariencia de una extre-
mada inocencia y desinterés,
intentaba apartarle de la se-
ñorita Bürstner. K no sólo cre-
yó reconocer esto, sino también
que la señorita Montag había
escogido un buen medio, aun-
que de dos filos. Por una par-
te, exageraba la importancia de
la relación entre la señorita
Bürstner y K., por otra, exage-
rabala la importancia de la entre-
vista solicitada e intentaba
darle la vuelta a la argumenta-
ción, de tal modo que K apare-
ciese como el que lo exageraba
todo. Se equivocaba, K no que-
ería exagerar nada, K sabía que la
señorita Bürstner no era más
que una pequeña mecanógrafa
que no podría ofrecerle resis-
tencia durante mucho tiempo.
Ni siquiera había tomado en
cuenta lo que la señora Grubach
sabía de la señorita Bürstner.
Reflexionó sobre todo esto
mientras salía de la habitación
sin apenas despedirse. Quiso
volver de inmediato a su cuar-
to, pero oyó, desde el comedor,
la risa de la señorita Montag, y
pensó que podría prepararles
una sorpresa a ambos, tanto a
ella como al capitán. Miró alre-
dero y escuchó por si acaso po-
día ser descubierto por alguien de
las habitaciones vecinas. Reinaba
el silencio, sólo se oía la conver-
sación en el comedor y, en el pa-
sillo que conducía a la cocina,
Grubach’s voice. It seemed like a good opportunity; K went to Fräulein Bürstner’s door and knocked softly. Since nothing stirred, he knocked again, but there was still no response. Was she asleep? Or was she truly ill? Or just pretending she wasn’t there because she sensed that only K. would knock so softly? K. decided she was pretending and knocked more loudly, and since his knocking went unanswered, finally opened the door cautiously, not without the feeling he was doing something wrong, and pointless as well. There was no one in the room. Moreover it scarcely resembled the room as K. knew it. Two beds were now placed in a row against the wall, three armchairs near the door were piled high with clothes and undergarments, a wardrobe stood open. Fräulein Bürstner had probably departed while Fräulein Montag was talking to K. in the dining room. K. was not particularly thrown by this, he had hardly expected to find Fräulein Bürstner so easily; he had made this attempt largely to spite Fräulein Montag. That, however, made it all the more embarrassing when, as he was re-closing the door, he saw Fräulein Montag and the captain conversing in the open doorway of the dining room. They might have been standing there since the moment K. first opened the door; they avoided any appearance of having been watching K.; they were talking softly and merely followed K.’s movements with occasional glances as people do without thinking in the midst of a conversation. But their glances weighed heavily upon K., and he hurried along the wall to reach his room.
In spite of the human insight and worldly experience K. had acquired during his long period of service in the bank, the company at his regular table had always seemed to him unusually worthy of respect, and he never denied in his own mind that it was a great honor to belong to such a group. It consisted almost exclusively of judges, public prosecutors, and lawyers, to which were added a few quite young clerks and legal assistants, who, however, sat at the very end of the table and were only allowed to join in the debates when questions were put directly to them. For the most part such queries were intended only for the company’s amusement, and Public Prosecutor Hasterer, who generally sat next to K., took particular pleasure in embarrassing the young men in this way. Whenever he spread out his strong, hairy hand in the middle of the table and turned toward its lower end, they all immediately pricked up their ears. And when someone there took up his question but either failed from the very start to decipher it, or stared thoughtfully into his beer, or instead of speaking simply clamped his jaw shut, or even—that was the worst—broke into an impetuous flood of words to back up some erroneous or unverified opinion, then the older men shifted about in their chairs with a smile and seemed to be really enjoying themselves for the first time. Truly serious professional conversations remained their exclusive preserve.

K. had been introduced into this company by a lawyer, the bank’s legal representative. At one period, K. had been involved in several long conferences with this lawyer which kept them at the bank late into the evening, and so it happened that he joined the lawyer for supper at his regular table and took pleasure in the company he found there. He considered them all scholarly, respectable, and relatively powerful gentlemen, whose relaxation consisted in trying to solve complex questions far removed from everyday life, and who worked hard to do so. If, as was natural, he was unable to join in

A pesar de los conocimientos psicológicos y de la experiencia adquirida durante su larga actividad bancaria, sus compañeros de tertulia siempre le habían parecido dignos de admiración y jamás negaba que para él suponía un gran honor pertenecer a un grupo semejante. Estaba constituido casi exclusivamente por jueces, fiscales y abogados; a algunos jóvenes funcionarios y pasantes se les admitía en la reunión, pero se sentaban al final de la mesa y sólo podían intervenir en los debates cuando se les preguntaba expresamente algo. Pero esas preguntas solían tener el único objetivo de divertir a la concurrencia: especialmente el fiscal Hasterer, habitual vecino de mesa de K., gustaba de avergonzar así a los jóvenes. Cuando ponía su gran mano peluda en el centro de la mesa, la extenia y miraba hacia el extremo, todos aguzaban los oídos. Y cuando uno de los jóvenes se adjudicaba la pregunta, pero no podía descifrarla o se quedaba mirando la cerveza pensativo, moviendo las mandíbulas en vez de hablar, o —lo que era más enojoso defendía con un torrente de palabras una opinión falsa o desautorizada, entonces todos los señores volvían a acomodarse riendo en sus asientos y sólo a partir de ese momento parecían sentirse realmente a gusto. Las conversaciones serias y especializadas quedaban reservadas para ellos.
to any great degree, he could still make use of the opportunity to learn a great deal that might sooner or later be of advantage to him at the bank, while establishing the sort of personal contacts with the court that were always useful. And those present seemed to enjoy his company as well. He was soon acknowledged as an expert in business, and his views on such matters were accepted—though not without a touch of irony—as the final word. It was by no means rare for two members who disagreed on some legal question to request K.’s view of the matter, and for K.’s name to recur in their subsequent statements and rejoinders, and be brought even into the most abstract analyses, which K. had long since ceased to follow. Of course he gradually came to understand a good deal, particularly since he had a good advisor at his side in Hasterer, the public prosecutor, who also drew closer to him as a friend. K. even often accompanied him home at night. But it took a long time for him to grow used to walking arm in arm with this giant of a man, who could have hidden him quite unobtrusively in his cycling cape.

In the course of time, however, they grew so intimate that all distinctions of education, profession, and age were gradually effaced. They acted as if they had always been together, and if one occasionally appeared superior to the other in the relationship, it was not Hasterer but K., for in the end his practical experience usually proved correct, since it was gained so directly, as almost never happens at the courtroom table.

This friendship was of course soon generally recognized at the table, and no one really remembered who had first introduced K. into the company; by now at any rate it was Hasterer who stood behind K.; if K.’s right to sit there was ever questioned, he was fully justified in calling on Hasterer for support. K. thus achieved a particularly privileged position, for Hasterer was as
respected as he was feared. The power and skill of his legal thought were no doubt admirable, but in this there were many who were at least his equal, yet no one matched the savagery with which he defended his opinions. K. had the impression that if Hasterer couldn’t convince his opponent, he at least frightened him, for many drew back when he merely raised his outstretched finger. It seemed as if the opponent had forgotten he was in the company of old acquaintances and colleagues, that the questions under discussion were after all merely theoretical, that there was no way anything could actually happen to him-instead he fell silent, and even shaking his head took courage. It was an almost painful sight when his opponent was sitting so far away, Hasterer realized, that no agreement was possible at such a distance, when he would shove back his plate of food and slowly rise to approach the roan himself. Those close by would lean their heads back to observe his face. Of course these incidents were relatively rare; for the most part only legal questions excited him, and in particular those concerning trials he himself had conducted, or was conducting. When such questions were not involved he was friendly and calm, his laugh was kindly, and his passion devoted to food and drink. On occasion he even ignored the general conversation, turned toward K., placed his arm on the back of his chair, questioned him in an undertone about the bank, then spoke of his own work or even told stories about women he knew who kept him almost as busy as the court did. He was not to be seen conversing thus with any other person among the company and in fact if someone wanted to ask a favor of Hasterer—generally it was to effect a reconciliation with some colleague—they came first to K. and asked him to intercede, which he always did gladly and easily. He was in general quite polite and modest toward everyone, without exploiting his relationship with Hasterer in any way, and, more important than politeness or modesty, he was capable of admiring as he was feared. La fuerza de su argumentación jurídica era digna de admiración, pero había otros señores que estaban a su altura en ese terreno. No obstante, ninguno de ellos alcanzaba la impetuosidad con que defendía su opinión. K. tenía la impresión de que Hasterer, cuándo no podía convencer a su contrario, al menos le quería asustar, sólo ante su dedo índice admonitorio había más de uno que retrocedía. Entonces era como si el oponente olvidara que estaba en la compañía de buenos conocidos y colegas, que sólo se trataba de cuestiones teóricas y de que en realidad no podía ocurrirle nada. A pesar de todo esto, enmudecía y un ligero balanceo de cabeza ya era un acto de valor. Era un espectáculo patético cuando el oponente estaba sentado lejos; Hasterer sabía que con esa distancia no se podría llegar a ninguna unanimidad, a no ser que desplazara el plato de la cena y se levantase lentamente para buscar al hombre en cuestión. Los que estaban a su lado miraban hacia arriba para observar su rostro. Pero esos incidentes eran relativamente escasos, ante todo se irritaba tratando de cuestiones jurídicas, principalmente en aquellas que aludían a procesos en los que él mismo participaba o había participado. Si no se trataba de esas cuestiones, permanecía tranquilo y amable, su sonrisa era cariñosa y su pasión era comer y beber. Podía ocurrir incluso que no escuchase la conversación, se volviera hacia K, pusiera el brazo sobre el respaldo de la silla de éste, le preguntase algo en voz baja acerca del banco, luego hablase él sobre su propio trabajo y contase algo sobre las damas que conocía, que le daban tanto o más trabajo que el tribunal. Con ningún otro hablaba así, podíase ocurrir, incluso, que cuando alguien quería solicitar algo de Hasterer —la mayoría de las veces para lograr una reconciliación con algún colega— se dirigiera primero a K y le pidiera su intercesión, a lo que él siempre accedía. Sin aprovecharse en este sentido de la amistad con Hasterer, K era amable y modesto con todos los demás y sabía distinguir —lo que era mucho más importante que la cortesía y la mo-
accurately assessing the rank of the various gentlemen, and knew how to treat each according to his station. Of course Hasterer constantly instructed him in this regard; it was the only set of rules Hasterer himself never violated, even in the most heated debate. Thus Hasterer never addressed the young men at the end of the table, who had almost no rank at all, in any but the most general of terms. But it was precisely these gentlemen who showed him the greatest respect, and when he arose around eleven o’clock to go home, there was always someone there to help him on with his heavy coat, and another who opened the door for him with a low bow, and who of course still held it open as K. left the room behind Hasterer.

While in the beginning K. would walk part way home with Hasterer, or Hasterer with K., later such evenings generally ended with Hasterer inviting K. up to his apartment for a while. There they would sit for another hour over brandy and cigars. Hasterer enjoyed these evenings so much that he didn’t even want to forgo them when he had a woman by the name of Helene living with him for a few weeks. She was a thickset older woman with a yellowish complexion and black curls ringing her forehead. At first K. saw her only in bed; she usually lay there shamelessly, reading a serial novel and paying no attention to the gentlemen’s conversation. Only when it grew late would she stretch, yawn, and, if she could get his attention by no other means, even throw an installment of her novel at Hasterer. Then he would rise with a smile and K. would take his leave. Later of course, when Hasterer began to tire of Helene, she was a major irritant during their evenings together. Now she always waited the men fully clothed, and usually in a dress she no doubt considered expensive and becoming, but which was in reality an old, overly ornate ball gown with several embarrassing rows of long fringe dangling from it for decoration. K. was unaware of the precise appearance of this dress, since he more or less destia—los distintos rangos jerárquicos y tratar a cada uno según su posición. Hasterer le ilustraba a este respecto una y otra vez, éras eran las únicas normas que ni siquiera Hasterer rompía en sus debates más enconados. Por el respeto a estas normas se juzgaba también a los jóvenes situados al fondo de la mesa, que aún no poseían rango alguno y a los que se dirigían como si no fueran individuos, sino una masa compacta. Pero precisamente estos jóvenes eran los que brindaban mayores honores a Hasterer, y cuando se levantaba a las once para irse a casa, siempre había uno dispuesto a ayudarle a ponerse el pesado abrigo y otro que con inclinaciones se apresuraba a abrirle la puerta y, naturalmente, la manteñía abierta hasta que K. abandonaba la estancia detrás de él.

Mientras que al principio K. acompañaba a Hasterer, o este último a K., un trecho del camino, más tarde Hasterer comenzó a invitar a K para que subiese a su vivienda y conversaran un rato. Permanecían alrededor de una hora juntos bebien- do licor y fumando cigarrillos. A Hasterer le gustaban tanto esas veladas que no quiso renunciar a ellas cuándo una mujer, Helene de nombre, vivió allí durante unas semanas. Era una mujer gorda y ya mayor, con una piel amarillenta y rizos negros que le caían por la frente. K. al principio sólo la vio en la cama; permanecía tendida sin vergüenza alguna, leyendo una novelita y sin interesarse por la conversación de los dos hombres. Sólo cuando se había: hecho tarde acostumbraba estirarse y bostezar. Y si así no podía llamar la atención, entonces le arrojaba la novela a Hasterer. Éste se levantaba sonriendo y se despedía de K. Después, cuando Hasterer comenzó a cansarse de Helene, ésta perturbaba considerablemente los encuentros. Esperaba la llegada de ambos completamente vestida y, además, con un traje que ella, probablemente, consideraba muy elegante, pero que en realidad era un vestido de baile pasado de moda y que llamaba desagradablemente la atención por una serie de volantes que ella misma le había añadido como adorno. K. ignoraba el aspecto real que podía haber tenido ese vestido, él se
The very next morning in the course of a business discussion, the president of the bank mentioned he thought he’d seen K. the previous evening. If he wasn’t mistaken, K. had been walking arm in arm with Hasterer, the public prosecutor. The president seemed to find this so striking that—totally in keeping with his usual precision of course—he named the church beside which, near the fountain, the encounter had taken place. Had he wished to describe a mirage, he would not have expressed himself differently. K. now explained that the public prosecutor was his friend and that they had in fact passed by the church that evening. The president smiled in astonishment and asked K. to take a seat. It was one of those moments that so endeared the president to K., moments in which a certain concern for K.’s well-being and his future surfaced in this weak, ill, coughing man weighed down with work of the highest responsibility, a concern that some of course might call cold and superficial, as other officers who had similar experiences with the president tended to do, simply a good way to bind valuable officers to him for years by sacrificing two minutes of his time—but that as it may, K. succumbed to the president in such moments. Perhaps the president negaba a mirarlo y permanecía sentado durante horas con los ojos bajos, mientras ella iba y venía contoneándose por la habitación o se sentaba cerca de él. Más tarde, cuando su situación empezaba a ser insostenible, intentó dar, llevada por la desesperación, un trato de preferencia a K para, así, poner celoso a Hasterer. Era sólo por desesperación, no por maldad, cuando apoyaba su grasa espalda desnuda en la mesa, acercaba su rostro a Y le que ría obligar a que la mirara. Ella sólo consiguió que K renunciase a visitar a Hasterer y cuando, trascurrido un tiempo, regresó, ya se había desembarazado de Helene. K lo tomó como algo evidente. Esa noche permanecieron juntos más de lo habitual, celebraron su hermandad por iniciativa de Hasterer y K regresó a casa algo mayor a causa de los cigarrillos y del licor.

Precisamente a la mañana siguiente, el director del banco, durante una conversación de negocios, mencionó que le había parecido ver a K la noche anterior. Si no se equivocaba, había visto a K andando con el fiscal Hasterer cogidos del brazo. Al director le parecía tan extraño, que nombró la iglesia—esto correspondía a su pasión por la exactitud—en cuyo muro lateral, cerca de la fuente, se había producido ese encuentro. Si hubiese querido describir un espejismo, no lo hubiera podido expresar mejor. K le explicó que el fiscal era amigo suyo y que, en efecto, la noche anterior habían pasado por la iglesia mencionada. El director rió asombrado y pidió a K que se sentase. Era uno de esos momentos por los que K tenía tanto cariño al director. Eran instantes en que ese hombre enfermo y débil, que apenas dejaba de toser, sobrecargado de trabajo y lleno de responsabilidad, se preocupaba por el bienestar de K y por su futuro. Se trataba de una preocupación que, según otros funcionarios que habían experimentado algo parecido, se podía denominar fría y superficial, pues no era nada más que un buen método para ganarse a valiosos funcionarios por muchos años con el sacrificio de dos minutos. Pero fuera lo que fuese, K quedaba sometido al director en esos instantes. Tal vez el director
spoke to K. somewhat differently than he did to the others; it wasn’t that he ignored his superior position and dealt with K. on an equal footing—something he generally tended to do in everyday business affairs—but rather he seemed to disregard K.’s position altogether, speaking to him as if he were a child, or as if he were an inexperienced young man seeking his first job, who for some unknown reason had awakened the president’s good will. K. would certainly never have allowed himself to be spoken to in this way by anyone else, or even by the president himself, had the president’s solicitude not appeared to him genuine, or at least the possibility of this solicitude as it appeared in such moments not cast such a total spell upon him. K. recognized his weakness; perhaps it was based on the fact that in this respect there was indeed still something childlike about him, since without ever having experienced the care of his own father, who had died quite young, he had left home early, and had always tended to reject rather than elicit the tenderness of his mother, whom he had last visited some two years ago, and who, half blind, still lived out in the small, unchanging village.

“I knew nothing of this friendship,” said the president, and only a faint friendly smile softened the severity of these words.
TO ELSA

One evening shortly before quitting time, K. was instructed by phone to appear immediately at the law court offices. He was warned against any failure to obey. His outrageous statements—that the interrogations were useless, that they could and would yield nothing, that he would refuse to appear again, that he would ignore all summons, whether by phone or in writing, and throw any messengers out the door—all these statements had been entered into the record and had already done him considerable damage. Why was he refusing to cooperate? After all, weren't they attempting to straighten out his complex case, regardless of the time and cost? Was he going to wantonly disturb this process and force them to violent measures he had thus far been spared? Today's summons was a final attempt. He could do as he wished, but he should bear in mind that the high court could not permit itself to be mocked.

Now K. had set up his visit with Elsa for that evening, and this alone was reason enough not to appear in court; he was pleased he could justify his failure to appear before the court, although of course he would never make use of this excuse, and what's more would probably have refused to appear in court even if he'd had no other obligation of any kind that evening. Nevertheless, fully aware he had a good excuse, he asked over the phone what would happen if he didn't come. "We'll know how to find you," was the reply. "And will I be punished for failing to come of my own free will?" asked K. and smiled in anticipation of what he would hear. "No," was the reply. "Splendid," said K., "but then what possible reason do I have to comply with today's summons?" "People generally avoid inciting the court to exercise its powers on them," said the voice, becoming fainter and finally dying away. "It would be very unwise not to incite them," thought K. as he left, "after all, one should try to get to know those powers."

HACIA LA CASA DE ELSA

Una noche, poco antes de irse, K. recibió una llamada en la que le exhortaban a que se presentase inmediatamente en las oficinas del juzgado. Se le advertía que obedeciese. Sus inauditas indicaciones acerca de la inutilidad de los interrogatorios, de que éstos no conducían a nada, de que él no volvería a comparecer, de que no atendería ninguna notificación, ni por teléfono ni por escrito, y de que echaría a todos los ujieres, todas esas indicaciones constaban en acta y ya le habían perjudicado mucho. ¿Por qué no se quería plegar? ¿Acaso no se esforzaban, sin considerar el tiempo invertido ni los costes, en ordenar algo su confusa causa? ¿Acaso pretendían molestar y que se tomassen medidas violentas, de las que hasta ahora había sido eximido? La citación de ese día era un último intento. Que hiciera lo que quisiese, pero que supiese que el tribunal supremo no iba a tolerar que se burlasen de él.

Precisamente esa noche K había avisado a Elsa de su visita y por ese motivo no podía comparecer ante el tribunal. Estaba contento de poder justificar su incomparabilidad con ese motivo, aunque, naturalmente, jamás utilizaria semejante excusa ni, con toda probabilidad, acudiría esa noche al tribunal aun cuando no tuviera la obligación más nimia. En todo caso, con la conciencia de estar en su derecho, planteó la pregunta de qué ocurriría si no fuera.

—Sabremos encontrarle —fue la respuesta.
—¿Y seré castigado porque no me he presentado voluntariamente? —preguntó K. y sonrió en espera de lo que le iban a responder.
—No —fue la respuesta.
—Estupendo —dijo K.—, ¿qué motivo podría tener entonces para cumplir con la citación de hoy?
—No se suele acosar con los medios punitivos del tribunal —dijo la voz ya debilitada y que terminó por extinguirse.

«Es muy imprudente si no se hace —pensó K mientras se marchaba—. Hay que conocer esos medios punitivos». 
He drove directly to Elsa without delay. Leaning back comfortably in the corner of the cab, his hands in his coat pockets—it was already turning cool—he observed the busy streets. He meditated with a certain satisfaction on the fact that if the court was truly in session, he was causing it no small difficulty. He hadn’t said clearly whether or not he would appear in court; thus the judge was waiting, perhaps the entire assembly was waiting; K. alone would fail to appear, to the particular disappointment of the gallery. Unperturbed by the court, he was heading exactly where he wanted to go. For a moment he couldn’t be sure that he hadn’t absentmindedly given the driver the court’s address, so he called out Elsa’s address loudly to him; the driver nodded, he had been given no other. From then on K. gradually forgot about the court, and thoughts of the bank began to occupy him fully once more, as in earlier times.

STRUGGLE WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT

One morning K. felt much fresher and more resistant than usual. He scarcely thought about the court at all; when it did come to mind, however, it seemed to him as if there must be some grip, hidden of course, one would have to feel about in the dark, by means of which this huge and totally obscure organization could easily be seized, pulled up, and destroyed. His unusual state even tempted K. to invite the vice president into his office to discuss a business matter that had been pending for some time. On such occasions the vice president always acted as if his relationship to K. had not changed in the least over the past months. He would enter calmly, just as in the early period.
of his continuous rivalry with K., listen equally calmly to K.’s exposition, show his interest by brief remarks of a confidential and even comradesely nature, and would confuse K., but not necessarily intentionally, only by refusing to allow himself to be deflected in any way from the main business at hand and devoting himself to the affair literally to the depths of his being, while in the face of this model of conscientiousness K.’s thoughts would begin at once to swarm in every direction, forcing him to turn the matter itself over to the vice president with scarcely any show of resistance. On one occasion things got so bad that K. finally took notice only when the vice president stood up abruptly and returned to his office without a word. K. didn’t know what had happened; it was possible that the conference had come to a proper conclusion, but it was equally possible that the vice president had broken it off because K. had unknowingly offended him, or said something nonsensical, or because it had become abundantly clear to the vice president that K. no longer listening and had his mind on other things. It was even possible that K. had made some ludicrous decision, or that the vice president had elicited it from him and was now rushing to put it into effect, to K.’s detriment. The affair had not been brought up again either; K. had no wish to recall it and the vice president himself remained taciturn; there were no further visible consequences of course, at least for the time being. In any case K. was not intimidated by the incident, and whenever a suitable opportunity arose and he felt even partially up to it, he would be right at the vice president’s door, ready to enter or to invite him into his own office. Now was not the time to hide from him, as he had done in the past. He no longer hoped for a quick and decisive victory that would free him all at once from every care and automatically reestablish his old relationship to the vice president. K. realized he didn’t dare let up; if he retreated, as the state of things perhaps demanded, there was a chance he might never be able to advance again. The vice president must not be left with the
impression that K. had been disposed of; he mustn’t be allowed to sit quietly in his office under that impression, he had to be disturbed, he had to be made aware as often as possible that K. was alive, and that, like all living things, he might one day show surprising new capabilities, no matter how harmless he appeared at the moment. Indeed K. sometimes told himself that he was simply struggling to protect his honor, for in actuality it could do him little good in his present state of weakness to keep confronting the vice president, strengthening the latter’s feeling of power and giving him the opportunity to make observations and take measures precisely suited to the immediate circumstances. But K. could not change his behavior; he succumbed to self-deception: he sometimes believed quite firmly that he could now compete with the vice president without worrying; the most disheartening practical experiences taught him nothing, and if he failed at a thing ten times, he thought he could succeed on the eleventh try, in spite of the fact that everything went wrong with unvarying regularity. When, after such a confrontation, he came away exhausted, perspiring, his mind empty, he no longer knew if it had been hope or despair that had driven him to the vice president, but next time it was again totally clear that hope alone impelled him toward the vice president’s door.

So it was today as well. The vice president entered at once, then paused near the door, polished his pince-nez in a newly adopted habit, and regarded first K., and then, in order not to be too obviously concerned with K., the whole room as well, in greater detail. He seemed to be taking advantage of the opportunity to test his vision. K. withstood his gaze, even smiled slightly, and invited the vice president to sit down. He himself dropped into his armchair, moved it as close as possible to the vice president, picked up the necessary yese que K estaba acabado, no podía permanecer sentado tranquilamente en su despacho con esa suposición, había que ponerlo nervioso, tenía que experimentar con tanta frecuencia como fuera posible que K vivía y que, como todo lo que poseía vida, un día podría sorprender con nuevas capacidades, por muy inofensivo que pareciese hoy. A veces, sin embargo, K se decía que con ese método lo único que conseguía era luchar por su honor, pero que no le sería de ninguna utilidad, puesto que siempre que se enfrentaba al subdirector terminaba fortaleciendo la posición de éste y, además, le daba la oportunidad de realizar observaciones y tomar las medidas adecuadas que reclamaban las circunstancias que en ese momento se impoían. Pero K no hubiera podido alterar su comportamiento, estaba sometido a ilusiones generadas por él mismo, a veces creía que podía medirse con el subdirector con despreocupación. No aprendió de las experiencias más desgraciadas; lo que no había resultado en diez intentos, creía que podría resultar en el decimoprimer, aunque las circunstancias eran las mismas y todo estaba en su contra. Cuando, después de uno de esos encuentros, regresaba agotado, sudoroso, con la mente vacía, no sabía si lo que le había impulsado a entrevistarse con el subdirector había sido la esperanza o la desesperación. En la siguiente ocasión fue claramente la esperanza la que le indujo a apresurarse hacia la puerta del subdirector.

Así era hoy. El subdirector entró en seguida, permaneció cerca de la puerta, limpió sus quevedos—era una nueva costumbre que había adquirido—, miró a K y, a continuación, para no dar la impresión de fijarse demasiado en él, paseó la mirada por la habitación. Era como si aprovechara la oportunidad para examinar su vista. K resistió sus miradas, incluso sonrió un poco e invitó al subdirector a que tomase asiento. K se reclinó en su sillón, lo acercó un poco al subdirector, tomó los papeles necesarios y co-
papers immediately from his desk, and began his report. At first the vice president scarcely seemed to listen. The surface of K.’s desk was bordered by a low carved balustrade. The entire desk was splendid work and even the balustrade was firmly set into the wood. But the vice president acted as if he had just discovered it was coming loose and attempted to correct the problem by banging on the balustrade sharply with his index finger. K. started to break off his report, but the vice president urged him to go on, since, as he explained, he was listening carefully and following it all. But while K. was unable in the meantime to elicit a single pertinent remark from him, the balustrade appeared to require special measures, for the vice president now pulled out his pocket knife, took K.’s ruler as a counter-lever, and attempted to pry up the balustrade, in all likelihood to make it easier to push it back in more firmly. K. had incorporated a completely new type of proposal in his report, one he expected would make a major impression on the vice president, and as he now came to this proposal he could hardly contain himself, so caught up was he in his own work, or rather so pleased was he to enjoy the increasingly rare conviction that he still was of importance to the bank, and that his ideas had the power to vindicate him. Perhaps this way of defending himself was best, not only in the bank but in his trial as well, much better perhaps than any other defense he had tried thus far or planned. Since he was speaking rapidly, K. had no time to draw the vice president explicitly away from his work on the balustrade; he merely stroked the balustrade two or three times with his free hand as he read aloud, as if in reassurance, to show the vice president, almost without realizing it, that there was no problem with the balustrade and that even if there were, it was more important at the moment for him to listen, and more proper than any repair work. But, as is often the case with active men who devote themselves solely to mental labor, this small practical task had excited the zeal of the vice president; a section of the balustrade had at last indeed been menzó a informarle. El subdirector parecía s como si apenas escuchara. La tabla de la mesa de K estaba rodeada por una pequeña moldura labrada. Toda la mesa estaba excepcionalmente trabajada y también la moldura era de madera y estaba sólidamente adosada a la tabla. Pero el subdirector hizo como si hubiese encontrado ahí precisamente una pieza suelta y quisiera repararla con el dedo índice. K pensó en interrumpir su informe, pero el subdirector no quiso, pues él, como explicó, lo escuchaba y comprendía todo. Mientras K era incapaz de son sacarle una mera indicación, la moldura parecía requerir un tratamiento especial, pues el subdirector sacó una navaja de bolsillo, tomó la regla de K como palanca e inten to levantar la moldura para poder encajarla mejor. K había incluido en su informe una propuesta novedosa, la cual esperaba que ejerciera un efecto especial en el subdirector, pero cuando llegó el momento de mencionarla, no pudo parar, tanto le obsesionaba el trabajo o, mejor, tanto se alegraba de esa conciencia, cada vez más rara, de que aún era alguien en el banco y de que sus pensamientos tenían la fuerza de justificarle. Tal vez fuese esa forma de justificarse la mejor, y no sólo en el banco, sino también en el proceso, quizá mucho mejor que cualquier otra defensa ya intentada o planeada. Con su prisa por decirlo todo, K no tuvo tiempo de desviar la atención del subdirector de su actividad, se limitó, dos o tres veces, mientras leía, a pasar la mano sobre la moldura con un ademán tranquilizador, para, así, sin ser consciente de ello, mostrar al subdirector que la moldura no tenía ningún defecto y que, si encontraba uno, era más importante escuchar y comportarse decentemente que cualquier mejoras en el mueble. Pero el subdirector, como ocurrió con frecuencia con hombres activos, asumió ese trabajo con celo, ya había levantado un trozo de moldura y aho-
lifted, and it was now a case of reinserting the little pegs in their respective holes. This was the most difficult task yet. The vice president had to stand up and try to press the balustrade back into the desktop with both hands. But in spite of all his efforts it wouldn’t go in. While he had been reading aloud--ad-libbing a good deal as well--K. had only dimly perceived that the vice president had arisen. Although he had almost never lost sight of the vice president’s activities, he had nonetheless assumed that the vice president’s movements were still related in some way to his presentation, so he stood up as well, and with his finger pressed beneath a figure he held out a sheet of paper to the vice president. In the meantime, however, the vice president had come to realize that the pressure of his hands was insufficient, and so with sudden decisiveness he sat on the balustrade with his full weight. Of course that did it; now the little pegs went squeaking into the holes, but in the rush one peg broke off and in another place the delicate upper strip broke in two. “Poor-quality wood,” said the vice president with annoyance, got off the desk and sat.

THE BUILDING

With no definite purpose in mind at first, K. had tried on various occasions to discover the location of the office from which the initial notification of his case had been issued. He found out without difficulty; both Titorelli and Wolfhart gave him the exact number of the building the first time he asked. Later, with a smile that he always held in reserve for secret plans that K. had not submitted for his assessment, Titorelli filled in this information by maintaining that the office was not of the slightest importance, that it simply communicated whatever it was instructed to, and was merely the external agent of the vast Office of Prosecution itself, which was of course inaccessible to the parties.
involved. So if you wished something from the Office of Prosecution—there were always many wishes of course, but it wasn’t always wise to express them—then naturally you had to turn to the lower office in question, but in doing so you could neither make your way to the actual Office of Prosecution, nor ever convey your wish to them.

K. was already familiar with the painter’s nature, so he didn’t contradict him, nor inquire further, but simply nodded and took note of what had been said. Again it seemed to him, as so often in the recent past, that as far as torture went, Titorelli was filling in quite amply for the lawyer. The only difference consisted in the fact that K. was less dependent on Titorelli, and could get rid of him easily if he liked, further that Titorelli was extremely communicative, indeed even garrulous, though less so now than formerly, and finally that K. for his part could certainly torture Titorelli as well.

And so he did in this matter, often speaking of the building in a tone that implied he was hiding something from Titorelli, as if he had established contacts with the office, which, however, had not yet been developed to the point where they could be revealed without danger; but if Titorelli then pressed him for further details, K. suddenly changed the subject and didn’t mention it again for a long time. He took pleasure in these small victories; he felt then that he understood the people on the periphery of the court much better; now he could toy with them, almost join them himself, gaining for the moment at least the improved overview afforded, so to speak, by standing on the first step of the court. What difference did it make if he were to end up losing his place on the level below? A further possibility of escape was offered here as well, he need only slip in among the ranks of these people; if, due to their inferior status or for any other reason, they were unable to aid him in his trial, they could at least take him in and hide him; indeed if he thought it all through carefully and carried it out secretly, he felt they could scarcely refuse to serve him in this way,

K. ya conocía la manera de ser del pintor, así que no le contradijo, tampoco quiso pedirle más información, se limitó a asentir y a darse por enterado. Una vez más le pareció que Titorelli, **cuando** se trataba de atormentar, superaba al abogado. La diferencia consistía en que K. no dependía tanto de Titorelli y hubiera podido liberarse de él **cuando** hubiese querido. Además, Titorelli era hablador, incluso parlanchín, si bien antes más que ahora y, en definitiva, también K. podía atormentar a Titorelli.

Y así lo hizo en esa oportunidad, habló con frecuencia a Titorelli de esa casa como si quisiera ocultarle algo, como si tuviera algún contacto con ese organismo, aunque no lo suficientemente intenso como para darlo a conocer sin peligro. Titorelli intentó obtener alguna información de K., pero éste, repentinamente, ya no volvió a hablar más del asunto. K. se alegraba de esos pequeños éxitos, él creía después que entendía mejor a esas personas del tribunal, incluso que podía jugar con ellas, estar por encima y disfrutar, al menos en algunos instantes, de una mejor visión de las cosas, ya que ellas estaban en el primer nivel del tribunal. Pero, ¿qué ocurriría si perdía su posición? Aún habría una posibilidad de salvación, no tenía nada más que deslizarse entre esas personas, si no le habían podido ayudar en su proceso a causa de su baja o por otros motivos, al menos le podrían aceptar y esconder, si, ni siquiera, si él lo planeaba bien y ejecutaba su plan en secreto, podrían rechazar ayudarle de esa manera,
particularly not Titorelli, since K. was after all his benefactor now, and a close acquaintance.

K. did not nourish hopes of such and similar nature on a daily basis; in general he still was quite discerning and was careful not to overlook or skip over any difficulty, but at times—mostly states of total exhaustion in the evening after work—he found consolation in the most trifling and, what is more, equivocal incidents of the day. Then he would generally lie on the divan in his office—he could no longer leave his office without an hour’s rest on the divan—and mentally assemble his observations. He did not restrict himself narrowly to those people connected with the court, for here in half sleep they all mingled; he forgot then the magnitude of the court’s tasks, it seemed to him as if he were the only defendant and all the others were walking about as officials and lawyers in the halls of a courthouse, even the dullest of them with his chin resting on his chest, his lips pursed, and the fixed stare of someone meditating on matters of great account. Then the tenants of Frau Grubach always stepped forward as a closed group, standing side by side, their mouths gaping like an accusing chorus. There were many strangers among them, for K. had long since ceased paying the least attention to the affairs of the boardinghouse. Because so many of them were strangers he felt uncomfortable regarding the group more closely, but he had to do so from time to time when he sought among them for Fräulein Bürstner. For example, as he scanned the group quickly, two totally unknown eyes suddenly gleamed at him and brought him to a stop. Then he couldn’t find Fräulein Bürstner; but when, in order to avoid any mistake, he searched again, he found her right in the middle of the group, her arms around two men standing on either side of her. That made absolutely no impression on him, particularly because this sight was nothing new, but merely the indelible memory of

Sin embargo K no se alimentaba diariamente de esas esperanzas, en general aún distinguía con precisión y se guardaba mucho de ignorar o pasar por alto alguna dificultad, pero a veces—normalmente en estados de agotamiento por la noche, después del trabajo—encontraba consuelo en los más pequeños y significativos incidentes del día. Usualmente permanecía tendido en el canapé de su despacho—no podía abandonar su despacho sin tener que recuperarse después una hora en el canapé—y se dedicaba a encadenar en su mente observación tras observación. No se limitaba a las personas que pertenecían a la organización de la justicia, en ese estado de duermevela se mezclaban todos, entonces se olvidaba del enorme trabajo del tribunalturno, le parecía que él era el único acusado y veía cómo el resto de las personas, una confusión de funcionarios y juristas, pasaban por los pasillos de un edificio. Ni los más lerdos hundían la barbilla en el pecho, todos mostraban los labios fruncidos y una mirada fija de reflexión responsable. Los inquilinos de la señora Grubach siempre aparecían como un grupo cerrado, permanecían juntos uno al lado del otro con las bocas abiertas, como los miembros de un coro. Entre ellos había muchos desconocidos, pues K hacia tiempo que no prestaba ninguna atención a la pensión. A causa de los muchos desconocidos le causaba desagrado acercarse al grupo, lo que a veces se veía obligado a hacer cuando buscaba entre ellos a la señorita Bürstner. Sobrevoló, por ejemplo, el grupo y, de repente, brillaron dos ojos completamente desconocidos que lo detuvieron. No encontró a la señorita Bürstner, pero cuando siguió buscando para evitar cualquier error, la encontró en el centro del grupo, rodeando a dos hombres con sus brazos. No le causó ninguna impresión, sobre todo porque esa visión no era nueva, sino un recuerdo imborrable de una fotografía de la
JOURNEY TO HIS MOTHER

Suddenly at lunch it occurred to him that he ought to visit his mother. Spring was drawing to a close, and with it the third year since he’d seen her. She’d asked him at that time to visit her on his birthday, and in spite of several obstacles he had complied with her wish, and even made her a promise to spend every birthday with her, a promise, it must be said, that he had already broken twice. Now, however, to make up for it, he wouldn’t wait until his birthday, although it was just two weeks away, but would go at once. He did tell himself there was no particular

VISITA A LA MADRE

De repente, durante la comida, se le ocurrió visitar a su madre. La primavera ya estaba llegando a su fin y con ella se cumplía el tercer año desde que no la había visto. Su madre le había pedido hacía tres años que fuese a su cumpleaños y él había cumplido la promesa, a pesar de algunos impedimentos. Luego le había prometido visitarla en todos sus cumpleaños, una promesa que había dejado de cumplir dos veces. Ahora no quería esperar hasta su cumpleaños: aunque sólo faltaran catorce días, deseaba viajar en seguida. Sin embargo, se dijo que no había nin-

a photograph on the beach he had once seen in Fräulein Bürstner’s room. All the same this sight drove K. away from the group, and even though he often returned there, now he hurried back and forth through the courthouse with long strides. He still knew his way around the rooms quite well, forlorn passages he could never have seen seemed familiar to him, as if he had been living there forever; details kept impressing themselves upon his brain with painful clarity: for example, a foreigner strolling through a lobby, dressed like a bullfighter, his waist carved inward as if by knives, with a short stiff little jacket of coarse yellow lace, a man who allowed K. to gaze at him in unremitting astonishment, without ever pausing in his stroll for an instant. K. slipped around him, stooping low, and stared at him wide-eyed. He knew all the patterns of the lace, all the frayed fringes, every swing of the little jacket, and still he hadn’t seen enough. Or rather he had long since seen more than enough, or even more accurately had never wanted to see it in the first place, but it held him fast. “What masquerades foreign countries offer!” he thought, and opened his eyes still wider. And he trailed after this man until he rolled over on the divan and pressed his face into the leather.

(40) En el manuscrito hay varios intentos para continuar el fragmento: «Así permaneció largo tiempo y realmente pudo descansar. Aunque seguía reflexionando, lo hacía en la oscuridad y sin que nadie le molestara. Pensaba en Tl. Tl. estaba sentado en una silla y K permanecía arrodillado ante él, acariciando sus brazos y aduándolos de todas las maneras posibles. Tl. sabía lo que K pretendía, pero hacía como si no lo supiera y así le atormentaba un poco. No obstante, K sabía que al final conseguiría lo que se proponía, pues Tl. era un imprudente, un hombre fác- cilit de convencer, sin conciencia del deber. Era incom- preensible cómo el tribunal podía tener tratos con un tipo así. K se dio cuenta: era posible influir en él. No se dejó confundir por su sonrisa desvergonzada, di- rígida al vacío, se mantuvo en su petición y alzó las manos hasta acariciar con ellas las mejillas de Tl. No se esforzaba mucho, lo hacía casi con pereza, prolongó su gesto por puro placer, estaba seguro de su éxito. ¿Qué fácil era engañar al tribunal? Como si obedeciera a una ley natural, Tl. se inclinó hacia él y un guiño de ojos amigable y lento le mostró que esta-
obedeciera a una ley natural, Tl. se inclinó hacia él y un guiño de ojos amigable y lento le mostró que esta-

tr. de José Rafael Hernández Arias
reason to go just now; on the contrary, the reports he received every two months from his cousin, who owned a shop in the village and administered the money K. sent for his mother, were more reassuring than ever before. His mother’s vision was failing, to be sure, but K. had been expecting that for years after what the doctors had said; other than that her condition had improved and various ailments of old age had abated rather than worsening, or at any rate she complained less. In his cousin’s judgment this might be connected with the fact that over the past few years—K. had already noticed, almost with repugnance, minor signs of this during his last visit—she had become excessively pious. His cousin had described quite vividly in a letter how the old woman, who had previously struggled to drag herself about, now positively strode along on his arm when he took her to church on Sunday. And K. could trust his cousin, for he was normally anxious, and tended to exaggerate the negative aspects of his report rather than the positive ones.

Be that as it may, K. had now decided to go; among other distressing things, he had recently noted a certain tendency toward self-pity, an almost irresistible urge to give in to every desire—well, in this case his weakness was at least serving a good purpose.

He stepped to the window to gather his thoughts, then had his meal cleared away at once, sent his assistant to Frau Grubach to inform her of his departure and bring back an attaché case in which Frau Grubach was to pack whatever she thought necessary, then gave Herr Kühne a few business assignments to handle in his absence, scarcely even irritated this time by Herr Kühne’s rude manner, which had now become habitual, of receiving assignments with his face averted, as if he knew quite well what needed to be done and endured the communication of these assignments merely for form’s sake, and last of all went to see the president. When he requested a two-day leave of absence because...
he needed to visit his mother, the president naturally asked if K.'s mother were ill. “No,” said K., without further explanation. He was standing in the middle of the room, his hands clasped behind his back. Frowning, he thought things over. Had he perhaps made preparations for departure too hastily? Wouldn’t it be better to remain here? What did he want there? Was he going out of mere sentimentality? And out of sentimentality possibly neglecting some important matter here, an opportunity to intervene, which might turn up any day or hour now, since the trial seemed to have been at a standstill for weeks and scarcely a single piece of concrete news about it had reached him? And might he not shock the old woman as well, without wishing to of course, but against his will, since so many things were happening now against his will. And his mother was not even asking for him. Previously, pressing invitations from his mother had appeared regularly in his cousin’s letters, but for some time now they had not. He wasn’t going for his mother’s sake then, that was clear. But if he was going in hopes of something, for his own sake, then he was a total fool and would reap only final despair as a reward for his foolishness. But as if all these doubts were not his own, but being pushed upon him instead by strangers, he suddenly snapped out of his reverie and stuck with his decision to go. In the meantime the president, either by chance, or more likely out of special consideration for K., had bent over a newspaper; now he raised his eyes, held his hand out to K. as he arose, and without a single further question wished him a pleasant journey.

K. then waited in his office for his assistant, pacing up and down; saying as little as possible, he warded off the vice president, who came in several times to try to discover the reason for K.’s departure; when K. finally had his attaché case, he hurried straight down to the cab, which he had ordered in advance. He was already on the stairs when, at the last moment, Kullych the clerk appeared at the top, holding in his
hand a letter he had started, apparently wanting to ask K. for some instruction about it. K. tried to wave him off, but dull-witted as this big-headed blond fellow was, he misunderstood the gesture and raced after him in perilous leaps and bounds, waving the sheet of paper in his hand. K. was so exasperated by this that when Kullych caught up with him on the stairs he grabbed the letter from his hand and tore it to pieces. When, once in the cab, K. turned around, there stood Kullych, who probably still didn’t understand what he’d done wrong, still in the same spot, gazing after the departing cab, while beside him the porter tugged his cap sharply. K. was still one of the highest officials in the bank; if he tried to deny it, the porter would refute him. And in spite of all his arguments to the contrary, his mother thought he was the president of the bank and had been for years now. He wouldn’t fall in her opinion, no matter what damage his reputation had suffered otherwise. Perhaps it was a good sign that just before leaving, he had convinced himself he could still seize a letter from a clerk, even one who was connected with the court, and tear it to pieces without a word of apology. Of course what he would have liked to do best he couldn’t: give Kullych two loud slaps on his pale round cheeks.
REFERENTES A EL PROCESO

«Josef K, el hijo de un rico comerciante, se dirigió una noche, después de una gran disputa con su padre —el padre le había reprochado su vida licenciosa y le había exigido que cambiase de vida—, hacia la casa de comercio, situada en las cercanías del puerto, sin ninguna intención definida, inseguro y cansado. El guardián ante la puerta se inclinó profundamente. Josef le miró fugazmente sin saludarle. “Estas personas mudas y subordinadas hacen todo lo que se espera de ellas pensó—. Si pienso que me observa con mirada impertinente, así lo hace en realidad”. Y se volvió de nuevo hacia el guardián de la puerta sin saludar. Éste se volvió a su vez hacia la calle y contempló el cielo cubierto» (29 de julio de 1914).

«Comencé con tantas esperanzas y ahora rechazado por las tres historias, hoy más que nunca. Tal vez sea conveniente trabajar en la historia rusa después del Proceso. En esta ridiculez esperanza, que sólo se apoya en una fantasía maquinal, comienzo de nuevo el Proceso. No fue del todo en vano» (21 de agosto de 1914).

«Fracaso al intentar terminar el capítulo, otro comienza y no podrá continuarlo tan bien, mientras que aquella vez, por la noche, me habría sido posible. No puedo abandonarme, estoy completamente solo» (29 de agosto de 1914).

«Frio y vacío. Siento demasiado los límites de mi capacidad, que, cuando no estoy plenamente concentrado, me estrechan» (30 de agosto de 1914).

«Un completo desamparo, apenas 2 páginas escritas. Hoy he estado muy cansado, aunque he dormido bien. Pero sé que no puedo doblarme si quiero llegar a la gran libertad que tal vez me espera más allá de los padecimientos más bajos de mi actividad literaria, tan nína a causa de mi forma de vida» (1 de septiembre de 1914).

«Otra vez sólo 2 páginas. Al principio pensé que la tristeza provocada por las derrotas austriacas y el miedo ante el futuro (un miedo que me parece al mismo tiempo ridículo e infame) me impedirían seguir escribiendo. No ha sido así, sólo una abulía que me asalta una y otra vez y que tengo que superar continuamente. Para la tristeza hay tiempo suficiente cuando no escribo» (13 de septiembre de 1914).

«He tomado para una semana de vacaciones para dar un impulso a la novela. He fracasado, estoy en la noche del miércoles, el lunes se acaban las vacaciones. He escrito poco y débil» (7 de octubre de 1914).

«14 días, en parte un buen trabajo, comprensión completa de mi situación» (15 de octubre de 1914).

«Desde hace 4 días no he trabajado apenas nada, alguna hora y un par de líneas, pero he dormido bien, los dolores de cabeza prácticamente han desaparecido por esta razón» (21 de octubre de 1914).

«Ayer, después de un largo espacio de tiempo, avancé un buen trecho, hoy de nuevo casi nada, los 14 días de vacaciones se han perdido prácticamente del todo» (1 de noviembre de 1914).

«—... A causa del miedo al dolor de cabeza, que ya ha comenzado, como he dormido poco por la noche, no he trabajado nada, en parte también porque temo estropear un pasaje soportable escrito ayer. El cuarto día desde agosto en el que no he escrito nada» (3 de noviembre de 1914).

«No puedo seguir escribiendo. He llegado al límite definitivo en el que tendré que permanecer otra vez muchos años, luego comenzaré, a lo mejor, otra historia, que probablemente también quedará inconclusa. Este destino me persigue. También estoy frío y confuso, sólo me ha quedado el amor senil a la completa tranquilidad. Y como un animal cualquiera apartado del hombre vuelvo a doblegarme si quiero llegar a la gran libertad que tal vez me espera más allá de los padecimientos más bajos de mi actividad literaria, como debería haber sido, sobre todo considerando que mi capacidad, según todos los indicios (insomnio, dolores de cabeza, insuficiencia cardíaca), no durará mucho. He trabajado en algunos textos incompletos: En el primer sentido ni en el segundo hasta los límites de mi capacidad, como debería haber sido, sobre todo considerando que mi capacidad, según todos los indicios (insomnio, dolores de cabeza, insuficiencia cardíaca), no durará mucho. He trabajado en algunos textos incompletos: El proceso, Recuerdos del Kaldabahn, Un maestro rural, El ayudante del fiscal y pequeños inicios. Completado sólo: En la colonia penitenciaria y un capítulo de El ausente, ambos durante los 14 días de vacaciones. No sé por qué hago este repaso, no es propio de mí» (31 de diciembre de 1914).

«He resistido los muchos deseos de comenzar una nueva historia. Todo es inútil. No puedo seguir escribiendo las historias durante las noches, se interrumpen y se pierden, como con El ayudante del fiscal» (4 de enero de 1915).

«He dejado provisionalmente Un maestro rural y El ayudante del fiscal, pero también incapaz de continuar El proceso» (6 de enero de 1915).

«También se lo he leído a ella (Felice), las frases irrumpían repugnantes y confusas, ninguna conexión con la oyente, que yacía en el canapé con los ojos cerrados y muda. Una tibia solicitud para llevarse el manuscrito y copiarlo. Gran atención a la historia del centinela y buena observación. En ese momento comprendí la importancia de la historia, también ella la comprendió correctamente, luego hicimos algunos burdos comentarios acerca de ella, yo comencé» (24 de enero de 1915).