

window was so wet I couldn't see so I ran downstairs as I was and slipped out the back into the garden and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering.

—And did you not tell him to go back? asked Gabriel.

—I implored of him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree.

—And did he go home? asked Gabriel.

—Yes, he went home. And when I was only a week in the convent he died and he was buried in Oughterard where his people came from. O, the day I heard that, that he was dead!

She stopped, choking with sobs, and, overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window.

She was fast asleep, looking for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and half-open mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath. So she had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife. His curious eyes rested long upon her face and on her hair; and, as he thought of what she must have been then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul. He did not like to say even to himself that her face was no longer beautiful but he knew that it was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death.

Perhaps she had not told him all the story. His eyes moved to the chair over which she had thrown some of her clothes. A petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side. He wondered at his riot of emotions of an hour before. From what had it proceeded? From his aunt's supper, from his own foolish speech, from the wine and dancing, the merry-making when saying goodnight in the hall, the pleasure of the walk along the river in the snow. Poor Aunt Julia! She, too, would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing *Arryed for the Bridal*. Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon.

The air of the room chilled his shoulders. He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dully with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had looked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live.

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears

gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling.

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon's waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

5. An estuary of the Shannon River, west-southwest of Dublin. The Bog of Allen is southwest of Dublin.

FRANZ KAFKA

1883–1924

Franz Kafka's stories and novels contain such nightmarish scenarios that the word *Kafkaesque* has been coined to describe the most unpleasant and bizarre aspects of modern life, especially when it comes to bureaucracy. Despite the bleakness of the world he depicted, Kafka was in fact a highly amusing writer who, when reading his work to friends, would sometimes leave them laughing out loud. A master of dark humor and an artist of unique vision, Kafka captures perfectly the anxiety and absurdity of contemporary urban society.

Born in Prague, a majority Catholic, Czech-speaking city in the Austro-

Hungarian Empire, to a nonobservant Jewish, German-speaking family, Kafka trained as a lawyer and went to work for an insurance company, while living at home with his parents. He began writing in his twenties and published his first short prose works in 1908. Around the same time, he developed a renewed interest in Judaism, which he had mostly ignored as a child. Although he was an attractive and popular person—in this respect not much like his character Gregor Samsa—he was never quite satisfied with his relationships with women or with his family. He was engaged three times, twice to the same woman, and

broke off all three engagements. Kafka had a difficult relationship with his father, a self-made man who could not take his son's writing seriously. Having learned from friends about the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, Kafka recognized the oedipal tension in aspects of his family life and expressed uneasiness with authority, especially parental authority, in his fiction. He also kept extensive diaries about his dissatisfaction with his personal and work life and, in his late thirties, wrote a long letter to his father harshly criticizing his upbringing.

Most of Kafka's writing published during his life consisted of short stories, parables, and two novellas, including *The Metamorphosis*, the selection here, which were released in six slim volumes. Kafka did not believe himself to be a successful author, although he had won a prestigious literary award, the Fontane Prize of the City of Berlin, for one of his early stories, "The Stoker." He wrote three long novels, *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika*, but completed none of them. In despair, he asked his friend and executor, Max Brod, to have them all burned at his death. Brod disobeyed Kafka's instructions and, instead, had the three novels published posthumously. Apparently reflecting the guilt their author experienced over his relations with women, and his failure to get married, the three novels are haunted by regret and a sense of culpability, although the source of the characters' disquiet can never be identified with certainty.

Unlike some of his characters—resentful employees of large bureaucracies—Kafka was a successful senior executive who handled an array of business matters. Nonetheless, he was unhappy with his day job and blamed the hours he spent at work for his inability to complete the novels; in his mind, he was a failure both in life and in art. After developing tuberculosis in his mid-

thirties, Kafka quit his job, at age thirty-nine, in 1922. He published a number of stories, collected in *The Hunger Artist*, and traveled extensively, spending a year in Berlin; but as his health deteriorated, he eventually moved to a sanatorium outside Vienna, where he died. Once Brod released the novels and unfinished stories, the author's fame quickly grew. During the Great Depression and the political crises of the 1930s, Kafka became popular in the English-speaking world. Readers viewed his work as demonstrating the anxiety and isolation of modern life, particularly the problem of living in alienation from God, a major theme of existentialist philosophers after World War II. More recently, however, critics have emphasized Kafka's humor and the social contexts of his work, including his experiences in his native Prague.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Jews had been excluded from most aspects of Austro-Hungarian society. Kafka and his family felt a strong affinity for the emperor, who represented for them German high culture and whose family had emancipated the Jews. The old city of Prague, with its narrow streets, crowded apartment houses, Gothic cathedral, and huge medieval castle, was cosmopolitan for a small town. After 1918, Czechoslovakia became an independent republic, and Czech replaced German as the official language. Kafka was able to adapt—he knew Czech well—and in fact was one of the few "German" business executives who were retained after Czech independence. And yet he felt himself to be an outsider—a German-speaking Jew among Czech-speaking Christians. This feeling was no doubt reinforced by a resurgent anti-Semitism that coincided with the rise of Czech nationalism and that threatened the Jews' relatively recent emancipation. (Kafka didn't live to see the final confirmation of his sense of alienation and isolation,

but his three sisters would later die in Nazi concentration camps.) In his thirties, Kafka studied Hebrew and Yiddish and became interested in the Yiddish theater; the Jewish Enlightenment of his friend Martin Buber (Austrian philosopher, 1878–1965); Jewish folklore; and the philosophical writings of Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). Kafka's work seldom discusses Judaism directly, but the sense of exclusion and persecution that underlies much of his writing may spring in part from his experience of anti-Semitism; certainly his interest in interpretation and the nature of language owes much to his understanding of Jewish thought.

THE METAMORPHOSIS

Written in 1912 and published in 1915, *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka's longest work published in his lifetime, was, as well, his most famous work released before his death. It is a connumerate narrative: from the moment Gregor Samsa wakes up to find himself transformed into a "monstrous cockroach," the reader asks, "What happens next?" Although the events seem dreamlike, the narrator assures us "it was no dream," no nightmarish fantasy in which Gregor temporarily identified himself with other downtrodden vermin of society. Instead, this grotesque transformation is permanent, a single, unshakable fact that renders almost comic his family's calculations and attempts to adjust. Indeed, the events of the story are described in great detail, often with vivid imagery that plays a prominent role in dreams and in Freud's interpretations of them: the father's fist, the bug's blood, the sister's violin playing.

When the novella begins, Gregor seems to be simply a man in a bug suit, but as the tale progresses, his thinking

becomes increasingly buglike, and he loses touch with the people around him. A major theme of the work is the meaning of humanity, and Gregor experiences a sense of exclusion from what Kafka calls the "human circle." As the author relays the protagonist's thoughts, the reader gets the impression that Gregor considers himself to be put upon: he has taken a job he dislikes in order to pay off his parents' debt. Yet even before his transformation, he felt that his family misunderstood him. Once he becomes a bug, he loses the power of speech; although he continues to think, he cannot express his thoughts. Thus, when he turns into a despised species, the lack of communication Gregor perceived as a man becomes an actuality.

"The terror of art," said Kafka in a conversation about *The Metamorphosis*, is that "the dream reveals the reality." This dream, which in the novella becomes Gregor's reality, sheds light on the intolerable nature of his former existence. Another aspect of his professional life is its mechanical rigidity, personal traits, and threatening suspicion of any deviation from the norm. Gregor himself is part of this world, as he shows when he fawns on the chief clerk and tries to manipulate him by criticizing their boss.

More disturbing is the transformation that takes place in Gregor's family, where the expected love and support turns into shamed acceptance and animmal resentment now that Gregor has let the family down. Mother and sister are ineffectual, and their sympathy is slowly replaced by disgust. Gregor father quickly reasserts his position of authority and beats the vermin back into his room; first with the newspaper and chief clerk's cane, and later with a barrage of apples from the family table. Gregor eventually becomes an "it" for whom the family feels no affection. Even before his transformation, Gregor seems to have lost all purpose in life

except earning money to repay his parents' debts.

These frustrated desires contribute to the central conflict: whether Gregor can ever emerge from his bedroom and become part of the family again. The slapstick-like comedy of Gregor's attempts to use his insect body underlines the sense of exclusion and broadens the novella's appeal. Perhaps everyone has, occasionally, felt like an outsider, but Gregor's metamorphosis makes him an alien of a literal sort. His attitude at times reflects the sullenness of an unhappy teenager; at other times, he seems more like a terminal patient who fears placing an undue burden on his family. The theme of transformation goes back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which frustrated sexual desire often plays a role in turning people into plants or animals. The dark humor and uncanniness of Kafka's work links it to fantastic works by authors such as

Edgar Allan Poe (American, 1809–1849) and Heinrich Wilhelm Kleist (German, 1771–1811) and to the analysis of the psyche conducted, during Kafka's lifetime, by Sigmund Freud.

Without directly blaming Gregor, Kafka sometimes seems to hint that his transformation results in part from the protagonist's desire to escape from human interaction. All possesses a subtle humor of the situation, and for this reason the story retains its attraction today. He has been recognized as an important influence by a range of modern writers, including Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter (English playwright, 1930–2008), and many Latin Americans—among them, Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez. Kafka was one of the great storytellers of modern life, capable of showing the emptiness that can lie at the heart even of a busy life in a crowded city and apartment.

The Metamorphosis!

When Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from troubled dreams, he found himself changed into a monstrous cockroach in his bed. He lay on his tough, armoured back, and, raising his head a little, managed to see—sectioned off by little crescent-shaped ridges into segments—the expanse of his arched, brown belly, atop which the coverlet perched, forever on the point of slipping off entirely. His numerous legs, pathetically frail by contrast to the rest of him, waved feebly before his eyes.

What's the matter with me? he thought. It was no dream. There, quietly between the four familiar walls, was his room, a normal human room, if always a little on the small side. Over the table, on which an array of cloth samples was spread out—Samsa was a travelling salesman—hung the picture he had only recently clipped from a magazine, and set in an attractive gilt frame. It was a picture of a lady in a fur hat and stole, sitting bolt upright, holding in the direction of the onlooker a heavy fur muff into which she had thrust the whole of her forearm.

From there, Gregor's gaze directed itself towards the window, and the drab weather outside—raindrops could be heard plinking against the tin window-

1. Translated by Michael Hofmann.

ledges—made him quite melancholy. What if I went back to sleep for a while, and forgot about all this nonsense? he thought, but that proved quite impossible, because he was accustomed to sleeping on his right side, and in his present state he was unable to find that position. However vigorously he flung himself to his right, he kept rocking on to his back. He must have tried it a hundred times, closing his eyes so as not to have to watch his wriggling legs, and only stopped when he felt a slight ache in his side which he didn't recall having felt before.

Oh, my Lord! he thought. If only I didn't have to follow such an exhausting profession! On the road, day in, day out. The work is so much more strenuous than it would be in head office, and then there's the additional ordeal of travelling, worries about train connections, the irregular, bad meals, new people all the time, no continuity, no affection. Devil take it! He felt a light itch at the top of his belly; slid a little closer to the bedpost, so as to be able to raise his head a little more effectively; found the itchy place, which was covered with a sprinkling of white dots, the significance of which he was unable to interpret; assayed the place with one of his legs, but hurriedly withdrew it, because the touch caused him to shudder involuntarily. He slid back to his previous position. All this getting up early, the thought, 'is bound to take its effect. A man needs proper bed rest. There are some other travelling salesmen I could mention who live like harem women. Sometimes, for instance, when I return to the pension in the course of the morning, to make a note of that morning's orders, some of those gents are just sitting down to breakfast. I'd like to see what happened if I tried that out with my director some time; it would be the order of the boot just like that. That said, it might be just the thing for me. If I didn't have to exercise restraint for the sake of my parents, then I would have quit a long time ago! I would have gone up to the director and told him exactly what I thought of him. He would have fallen off his desk in surprise! That's a peculiar way he has of sitting anyway, up on his desk, and talking down to his staff from on high, making them step up to him very close because he's so hard of hearing. Well, I haven't quite given up hope: once I've got the money together to pay back what my parents owe him—it may take me another five or six years—then I'll do it, no question. Then we'll have the parting of the ways. But for the time being, I'd better look sharp, because my train leaves at five.

And he looked across at the alarm clock, ticking away on the bedside table. Great heavenly Father! he thought. It was half past six, and the clock hands were moving smoothly forward—in fact it was after half past, it was more like a quarter to seven. Had the alarm not gone off? He could see from the bed that it had been quite correctly set for four o'clock; it must have gone off. But how was it possible to sleep calmly through its ringing, which caused even the furniture to shake? Well, his sleep hadn't exactly been calm, but maybe it had been all the more profound. What to do now? The next train left at seven; to catch it meant hurrying like a madman, and his samples weren't yet packed, and he himself didn't feel exactly agile or vigorous. And even if he caught that train, he would still get a carpeting from the director, because the office boy would be on the platform at five o'clock, and would certainly have reported long since that Gregor hadn't been on the train. That boy was a real piece of work, so utterly beholden to the director, without any backbone or nous. Then what if he called

in sick? That would be rather embarrassing and a little suspicious too, because in the course of the past five years, Gregor hadn't once been ill. The director was bound to retaliate by calling in the company doctor, would upbraid the parents for their idle son, and refute all objections by referring to the doctor, for whom there were only perfectly healthy but workshy patients. And who could say he was wrong, in this instance anyway? Aside from a continuing feeling of sleepiness that was quite unreasonable after such a long sleep, Gregor felt perfectly well, and even felt the stirrings of a healthy appetite.

As he was hurriedly thinking this, still no nearer to getting out of bed—the alarm clock was just striking a quarter to seven—there was a cautious knock on the door behind him. 'Gregor,' came the call—it was his mother—it's a quarter to seven. Shouldn't you ought to be gone by now? The mild voice, Gregor was dismayed when he heard his own in response. It was still without doubt his own voice from before, but with a little admixture of an irrepressible squeaking that left the words only briefly recognizable at the first instant of their sounding, only to set about them afterwards so destructively that one couldn't be at all sure what one had heard. Gregor had wanted to offer a full explanation of everything but, in these circumstances, kept himself to: 'All right, thank you, Mother, I'm getting up!' The wooden door must have muted the change in Gregor's voice, because his mother seemed content with his reply, and shuffled away. But the brief exchange had alerted other members of the family to the surprising fact that Gregor was still at home, and already there was his father, knocking on the door at the side of the room, feebly, but with his fist. 'Gregor, Gregor?' he shouted, 'what's the matter?' And after a little while, he came again, in a lower octave: 'Gregor! Gregor! On the door on the other side of the room, meanwhile, he heard his sister lamenting softly: 'Oh, Gregor? Are you not well? Can I bring you anything?' To both sides equally, Gregor replied, 'Just coming,' and tried by careful enunciation and long pauses between the words to take any unusual quality from his voice. His father soon returned to his breakfast, but his sister whispered: 'Gregor, please, will you open the door.' Gregor entertained no thought of doing so; instead he gave silent thanks for the precaution, picked up on his travels, of locking every door at night, even at home.

His immediate intention was to get up calmly and leisurely, to get dressed and, above all, to have breakfast before deciding what to do next, because he was quite convinced he wouldn't arrive at any sensible conclusions as long as he remained in bed. There were many times, he remembered, when he had lain in bed with a sense of some dim pain somewhere in his body, imagining, lying awkwardly, which then turned out, as he got up, to be mere, imagining, and he looked forward to his present fanciful state gradually falling from him. He had not the least doubt that the alteration in his voice was just the first sign of a head-cold, always an occupational malady with travelling salesmen.

Casting off the blanket proved to be straightforward indeed; all he needed to do was to inflate himself a little, and it fell off by itself. But further tasks were more problematical, not least because of his great breadth. He would have needed arms and hands with which to get up; instead of which all he had were those numerous little legs, forever in varied movement, and evidently not under his control. If he wanted to bend one of them, then it was certain that that was the one that was next fully extended; and once he finally succeeded in performing whatever task he had set himself with that leg, then all its neglected

fellows would be in a turmoil of painful agitation. 'Whatever I do, I mustn't loaf around in bed,' Gregor said to himself. 'I know what I must do: I must get half of himself, which he had yet to see, and as to whose specifications he was perfectly ignorant, turned out to be not very manoeuvrable; progress was slow, and when at last, almost in fury, he pushed down with all his strength, he misjudged the direction, and collided with the lower bedpost, the burning pain he felt teaching him that this lower end of himself might well be, for the moment, the most sensitive to pain.

He therefore tried to lever his top half out of bed first, and cautiously turned his head towards the edge of the bed. This was easily done, and, in spite of its breadth and bulk, the rest of his body slowly followed the direction of the head. But, now craning his neck in empty space well away from the bed, he was afraid to move any further, because if he were to fall in that position, it would take a miracle if he didn't injure his head. And he mustn't lose consciousness at any price; it were better then to stay in bed.

But as he sighed and lay there at the end of his endeavours, and once again beheld his legs struggling, if anything, harder than before, and saw no possibility of bringing any order or calm to their randomness, he told himself once more that he couldn't possibly stay in bed and that the most sensible solution was to try anything that offered even the smallest chance of getting free of his bed. At the same time, he didn't forget to remind himself periodically that clarity and calm were better than counsels of despair. At such moments, he levelled his gaze as sharply as possible at the window, but unfortunately there was little solace or encouragement to be drawn from the sight of the morning fog, which was thick enough to obscure even the opposite side of the street. 'Seven o'clock already,' he said to himself as his alarm clock struck another quarter, 'seven o'clock already, and still such dense fog.' And he lay there for a while longer, panting gently, as though perhaps expecting that silence would restore the natural order of things.

But then he said to himself: 'By quarter past seven, I must certainly have got out of bed completely. In any case, somebody will have come from work by then to ask after me, because the business opens before seven o'clock.' And he set about rhythmically rocking his body clear of the bed. If he dropped out of bed in that way, then he would try to raise his head sharply at the last moment, so that it remained uninjured. His back seemed to be tough; a fall on to the carpet would surely not do it any harm. What most concerned him was the prospect of the loud crash he would surely cause, which would presumably provoke anxiety, if not consternation, behind all the doors. But that was a risk he had to take.

As Gregor was already half-clear of the bed—this latest method felt more like play than serious exertion, requiring him only to rock himself from side to side—he thought how simple everything would be if he had some help. Two strong people—he thought of his father and the servant-girl—would easily suffice: they needed only to push their arms under his curved back, peel him out of bed, bend down under his weight, and then just pay attention while they flipped him over on to the floor, where his legs would hopefully come into their own. But then, even if the doors hadn't been locked, could he have really contemplated calling for help? Even in his extremity, he couldn't repress a smile at the thought.

He had already reached the point where his rocking was almost enough to send him off balance, and he would soon have to make up his mind once and for all what he was going to do, because it was ten past seven—when the doorbell rang. 'It must be someone from work,' he said to himself and went almost rigid, while his little legs, if anything, increased their agitation. For a moment there was silence. 'They won't open the door,' Gregor said to himself, from within some mad hope. But then of course, as always, the servant-girl walked with firm stride to the door and opened it. Gregor needed only to hear the first word from the visitor to know that it was the chief clerk in person. Why only was Gregor condemned to work for a company where the smallest lapse was greeted with the gravest suspicion? Were all the employees without exception scoundrels, were there really no loyal and dependable individuals among them, who, if once a couple of morning hours were not exploited for work, were driven so demoted by pangs of conscience that they were unable to get out of bed? Was it really not enough to send a trainee to inquire—if inquiries were necessary at all—and did the chief clerk need to come in person, thereby demonstrating to the whole blameless family that the investigation of Gregor's delinquency could only be entrusted to the seniority and trained intelligence of a chief clerk? And more on account of the excitement that came over Gregor with these reflections, than as the result of any proper decision on his part, he powerfully swung himself right out of bed. There was a loud impact, though not a crash as such. The fall was somewhat muffled by the carpet: moreover, his back was suppler than Gregor had expected, and therefore the result was a dull thump that did not draw such immediate attention to itself. Only he had been a little careless of his head, and had bumped it: frantic with rage and pain, he turned and rubbed it against the carpet.

'Something's fallen down in there,' said the chief clerk in the hallway on the left. Gregor tried to imagine whether the chief clerk had ever experienced something similar to what had happened to himself today; surely it was within the bounds of possibility. But as if in blunt reply to this question, the chief clerk now took a few decisive steps next door; his patent-leather boots creaking. From the room on the right, his sister now whispered to Gregor: 'Gregor, the chief clerk's here.' 'I know,' Gregor replied to himself; but he didn't dare say it sufficiently loudly for his sister to hear him.

'Gregor,' his father now said from the left-hand room, 'the chief clerk has come, and wants to know why you weren't on the early train. We don't know what to tell him. He wants a word with you too. So kindly open the door. I'm sure he'll turn a blind eye to the untidiness in your room.' 'Good morning, Mr Samsa,' called the cheery voice of the chief clerk. 'He's not feeling well.' Gregor's mother interjected to the chief clerk, while his father was still talking by the door, he's not feeling well, believe me, Chief Clerk. How otherwise could Gregor miss his train! You know that boy has nothing but work in his head! It almost worries me that he never goes out on his evenings off; he's been in the city now for the past week, but he's spent every evening at home. He sits at the table quietly reading the newspaper, or studying the railway timetable. His only hobby is a little occasional woodwork. In the past two or three evenings, he's carved a little picture-frame: I think you'll be surprised by the workmanship; he's got it up on the wall in his room; you'll see it the instant Gregor opens the door. You've no idea how happy I am to see you, Chief Clerk; by ourselves we would never have been able to induce Gregor to open the door, he's so obstinate; and I'm sure he's not

feeling well, even though he told us he was fine.' 'I'm just coming,' Gregor said slowly and deliberately, not stirring, so as not to miss a single word of the conversation outside. 'I'm sure you're right, madam,' said the chief clerk. 'I only hope it's nothing serious. Though again I have to say that—unhappily or otherwise—we businesspeople often find ourselves in the position of having to set aside some minor ailment, in the greater interest of our work.' 'So can we admit the chief clerk now?' asked his impatient father, knocking on the door again. 'No,' said Gregor. In the left-hand room there was now an awkward silence, while on the right his sister began to sob.

Why didn't his sister go and join the others? She had presumably only just got up, and hadn't started getting dressed yet. And then why was she crying? Because he wouldn't get up and admit the chief clerk, because he was in danger of losing his job, and because the director would then pursue his parents with the old claims? Surely those anxieties were still premature at this stage. Gregor was still here, and wasn't thinking at all about leaving the family. For now he was sprawled on the carpet, and no one who was aware of his condition could have seriously expected that he would allow the chief clerk into his room. But this minor breach of courtesy, for which he could easily find an explanation later, hardly constituted reason enough for Gregor to be sent packing. Gregor thought it was much more sensible for them to leave him alone now, rather than bother him with tears and appeals. It was just the uncertainty that afflicted the others and accounted for their behaviour.

'Mr Samsa,' the chief clerk now called out loudly, 'what's the matter? You've barricaded yourself into your room, you give us one-word answers, you cause your parents grave and needless anxiety and—this just by the by—you're neglecting your official duties in a quite unconscionable way. I am talking to you on behalf of your parents and the director, and I now ask you in all seriousness for a prompt and full explanation. I must say, I'm astonished. I'm astonished. I had taken you for a quiet and sensible individual, but you seem set on indulging a bizarre array of moods. This morning the director suggested a possible reason for your missing your train—it was to do with the authority to collect payments recently entrusted to you—but I practically gave him my word of honour that that couldn't be the explanation. Now, though, in view of your baffling obstinacy, I'm losing all inclination to speak up on your behalf. And your position is hardly the most secure. I had originally come with the intention of telling you as much in confidence, but as you seem to see fit to waste my time, I really don't know why your parents shouldn't get to hear about it as well. Your performances of late have been extremely unsatisfactory; it's admittedly not the time of year for the best results, we freely concede that; but a time of year for no sales, that doesn't exist in our calendars, Mr Samsa, and it mustn't exist.'

'But Chief Clerk,' Gregor exclaimed, in his excitement forgetting everything else, 'I'll let you in right away. A light indisposition, a fit of goldiness, have prevented me from getting up. I'm still lying in bed. But I feel almost restored! I'm even now getting out of bed. Just one moment's patience! It seems I'm not as much improved as I'd hoped. But I feel better just the same. How is it something like this can befall a person! Only last night I felt fine, my parents will confirm it to you, or rather, last night I had a little inkling already of what lay ahead. It probably showed in my appearance somewhere. Why did I not think to inform work! It's just that one always imagines that one will get over an illness without having to take time off. Chief Clerk, sir! Spare my parents! All

those complaints you bring against me, they're all of them groundless: it's the first I've heard of any of them. Perhaps you haven't yet perused the last batch of orders I sent in. By the way, I mean to set out on the eight o'clock train—the couple of hours rest have done me the world of good. Chief Clerk, don't detain yourself any longer; I'll be at work myself presently. Kindly be so good as to let them know, and pass on my regards to the director!

While Gregor blurred all this out, almost unaware of what he was saying, he had moved fairly effortlessly—no doubt aided by the practice he had had in bed—up to the bedside table, and now attempted to haul himself into an upright position against it. He truly had it in mind to open the door; to show himself and to speak to the chief clerk; he was eager to learn what the others, who were all clamouring for him, would say when they got to see him. If they were shocked, then Gregor would have no more responsibility, and could relax. Whereas if they took it all calmly, then he wouldn't have any cause for agitation either, and if he hurried, he might still get to the station by eight o'clock. To begin with he could get no purchase on the smooth bedside table, but at last he gave himself one more swing, and stood there upright; he barely noticed the pain in his lower belly, though it did burn badly. Then he let himself drop against the back of a nearby chair, whose edges he clasped with some of his legs. With that he had attained mastery over himself, and was silent, because now he could listen to the chief clerk.

Did you understand a single word of that? the chief clerk asked Gregor's parents, you don't suppose he's pulling our legs, do you? In the name of God, his mother cried, her voice already choked with tears, perhaps he's gravely ill, and we're tormenting him. Grete! Grete! she called out. Mother? his sister called back from the opposite side. They were communicating with one another through Gregor's room. Go to the doctor right away. Gregor's ill. Hurry and fetch the doctor. Were you able to hear him just now? That was the voice of an animal, said the chief clerk, strikingly much more quietly than his mother and her screaming. Anna! Anna! his father shouted through the hallway, in the direction of the kitchen, and clapped his hands, get the locksmith right away! And already two girls in rustling skirts were hurrying through the hallway—however had his sister managed to dress so quickly?—and out through the front door. There wasn't the bang of it closing either; probably they had left it open, as happens at times when a great misfortune has taken place.

Meanwhile, Gregor had become much calmer. It appeared his words were no longer comprehensible, though to his own hearing they seemed clear enough, clearer than before, perhaps because his ear had become attuned to the sound. But the family already had the sense of all not being well with him, and were ready to come to his assistance. The clarity and resolve with which the first instructions had been issued did him good. He felt himself back within the human ambit, and from both parties, doctor and locksmith, without treating them really in any way as distinct one from the other, he hoped for magnificent and surprising feats. In order to strengthen his voice for the decisive conversations that surely lay ahead, he cleared his throat a few times, as quietly as possible, as it appeared that even this sound was something other than a human cough, and he no longer trusted himself to tell the difference. Next door, things had become very quiet. Perhaps his parents were sitting at the table, holding whispered consultations with the chief clerk, or perhaps they were all pressing their ears to the door, and listening.

Gregor slowly pushed himself across to the door with the chair, there let go of it and dropped against the door, holding himself in an upright position against it—the pads on his little legs secreted some sort of sticky substance—and there rested a moment from his exertions. And then he set himself with his mouth to turn the key in the lock. Unfortunately, it appeared that he had no teeth as such—what was he going to grip the key with?—but luckily his jaws were very powerful; with their help, he got the key to move, and he didn't stop to consider that he was certainly damaging himself in some way, because a brown liquid came out of his mouth, ran over the key, and dribbled on to the floor. Listen, the chief clerk was saying next door, he's turning the key. This was a great encouragement for Gregor; but they all of them should have called out to him, his father and mother too: Go, Gregor, they should have shouted, keep at it, work at the lock! And with the idea that they were all following his efforts with tense concentration, he bit fast on to the key with all the strength he possessed, to the point when he was ready to black out. The more the key moved in the door, the more he danced around the lock; now he was holding himself upright with just his mouth, and, depending on the position, he either hung from the key, or was pressing against it with the full weight of his body. The light click of the snapping lock brought Gregor round, as from a spell of unconsciousness. Sighing with relief, he said to himself: Well, I didn't need the locksmith after all, and he rested his head on the door handle to open the door fully.

As he had had to open the door in this way, it was already fairly ajar while he himself was still out of sight. He first had to twist round one half of the door, and very cautiously at that, if he wasn't to fall flat on his back just at the point of making his entry into the room. He was still taken up with the difficult manoeuvre, and didn't have time to think about anything else, when he heard the chief clerk emit a sharp Oh!—it actually sounded like the rushing wind—and then he saw him as well, standing nearest to the door, his hand pressed against his open mouth, and slowly retreating, as if being pushed back by an invisible but irresistible force. Gregor's mother—in spite of the chief clerk's arrival, she was standing there with her hair loose, though now it was standing up stiffly in the air—first looked at his father with folded hands, then took two steps towards Gregor and collapsed in the midst of her skirts spreading out around her; her face irretrievably sunk against her bosom. His father clenched his fist with a pugnacious expression, as if ready to push Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly round the living room, covered his eyes with his hands and cried, his mighty chest shaking with sobs. Now Gregor didn't even set foot in the room, but leaned against the inside of the fixed half of the door, so that only half his body could be seen, and the head with which he was peering across at the others cocked on its side a little. It was much brighter now, a little section of the endless grey-black frontage of the building opposite—it was still raining, but now only in single large drops, indistinctly fashioned and flung to the ground. The breakfast things were out on the table in profusion, because for his father breakfast was the most important meal of the day, which he liked to draw out for hours over the perusal of several newspapers, just opposite, on the facing wall, was a photograph of Gregor from his period in the army, as a lieutenant, his hand on his sabre, smiling confidently, the posture and uniform demanding respect. The door to the hallway was open,

and as the front door was open too one could see out to the landing, and the top of the flight of stairs down.

Now, said Gregor, in the knowledge that he was the only one present to have maintained his equanimity, I'm just going to get dressed, pack up my samples, and then I'll set off. Do you want to let me set out, do you? You see, Chief Clerk, you see, I'm not stubborn. I like my work; the travel is arduous, but I couldn't live without it. Where are you off to, Chief Clerk? To work? Is that right? Will you accurately report everything you've seen here? It is possible to be momentarily unfit for work, but that is precisely the time to remind oneself of one's former achievements, and to reflect that, once the present obstacle has been surmounted, one's future work will be all the more diligent and focused. As you know all too well: I am under a very great obligation to the director. In addition, I have responsibilities for my parents and my sister. I am in a jam, but I will work my way out of it. Only don't make it any harder for me than it is already! Give me your backing at head office! I know the travelling salesman is not held in the highest regard there. People imagine he earns a packet, and has a nice life on top of it. These and similar assumptions remain unexamined. But you, Chief Clerk, you have a greater understanding of the circumstances than the rest of the staff, you even, if I may say this to you in confidence, have an understanding superior to that of the director himself, who, as an entrepreneur, is perhaps too easily swayed against an employee. You are also very well aware that the travelling salesman, spending, as he does, the best part of the year away from head office, may all too easily fall victim to title-tattle, to mischance, and to baseless allegations, against which he has no way of defending himself—mostly even does not get to hear of—and when he returns exhausted from his travels, it is to find himself confronted directly by practical consequences of whose causes he is ignorant. Chief Clerk, don't leave without showing me by a word or two of your own that you at least partly agree with me!

But the chief clerk had turned his back on Gregor the moment he had begun speaking, and only stared back at him with mouth agape, over his trembling shoulder. All the while Gregor was speaking, he wasn't still for a moment, but, without taking his eyes off Gregor, moved towards the door, but terribly gradually, as though in breach of some secret injunction not to leave the room. Already he was in the hallway, and to judge by the sudden movement with which he snatched his foot back out of the living room for the last time, one might have supposed he had burned his sole. Once in the hallway, he extended his right hand fervently in the direction of the stairs, as though some supernatural salvation there awaited him.

Gregor understood that he must on no account allow the chief clerk to leave in his present frame of mind, not if he wasn't to risk damage to his place in the company. His parents didn't seem to grasp this issue with the same clarity; over the course of many years, they had acquired the conviction that in this business Gregor had a job for life and, besides, they were so consumed by their anxieties of the present moment, that they had lost any premonitory sense they might have had. Gregor, though, had his. The chief clerk had to be stopped, calmed, convinced, and finally won over: the future of Gregor and his family depended on that! If only his sister were back already! There was a shrewd person: she had begun to cry even as Gregor was still lying calmly on his back. And no doubt the chief clerk, notorious skirt-chaser that he was, would have allowed himself to be influenced by her; she would have closed the front door,

and in the hallway talked him out of his panic. But his sister wasn't there. Gregor would have to act on his own behalf. Without stopping to think that he didn't understand his given locomotive powers, without even thinking that his latest speech of his had possibly—no, probably—not been understood either, he left the shelter of the half-door and pushed through the opening, making for the chief clerk, who was laughably holding on to the balustrade on the landing with both hands. But straightaway, looking for a grip, Gregor dropped with a short cry on to his many little legs. No sooner had this happened, than for the first time that morning he felt a sense of physical well-being: the little legs had solid ground under them; they obeyed perfectly, as he noticed to his satisfaction, even seeking to carry him where he wanted to go, and he was on the point of believing a final improvement in his condition was imminent. But at that very moment, while he was still swaying from his initial impetus, not far from his mother and just in front of her on the ground, she, who had seemed so utterly immersed in herself, suddenly leaped into the air, arms wide, fingers spread, and screamed: Help, oh please God, help me!, inclined her head as though for a better view of Gregor, but then, quite at variance with that, ran senselessly away from him; she forgot the breakfast table was behind her, on reaching it, she hurriedly, in her distractiveness, sat down on it, seeming oblivious to the fact that coffee was gushing all over the carpet from the large upset coffee pot.

Mother, mother, Gregor said softly, looking up at her. For the moment, he forgot all about the chief clerk; on the other hand, he couldn't help but move his jaws several times at the sight of the flowing coffee. At that his mother screamed again and fled from the table into the arms of Gregor's father who was rushing towards her. But now Gregor had no time for his parents: the chief clerk was already on the stairs; his chin on the balustrade, he stared behind him one last time. Gregor moved sharply to be sure of catching him up; the chief clerk must have sensed something, because he took the last few steps at a single bound and disappeared. 'Oof!' he managed to cry, the sound echoing through the stairwell. Regrettably, the consequence of the chief clerk's flight was finally to turn the senses of his father, who to that point had remained relatively calm, because, instead of himself taking off after the man, or at least not getting in the way of Gregor as he attempted to do just that, he seized in his right hand the chief clerk's cane, which he had left behind on a chair along with his hat and coat, with his left grabbed a large newspaper from the table, and, by stamping his feet, and brandishing stick and newspaper, attempted to drive Gregor back into his room. No pleas on Gregor's part were any use, no pleas were even understood. However imploringly he might turn his head, his father only stamped harder with his feet. Meanwhile, in spite of the cool temperature, his mother had thrown open a window on the other side of the room and, leaning out of it, plunged her face in her hands. A powerful draught was created between the stairwell and the street outside, the window curtains flew up, the newspapers rustled on the table, some individual pages fluttered across the floor. His father was moving forward implacably, emitting hissing sounds like a savage. Gregor had no practice in moving backwards, and he was moving, it had to be said, extremely slowly. If he had been able to turn round, he would have been back in his room in little or no time, but he was afraid lest the delay incurred in turning around would make his father impatient, and at any moment the stick in his father's hand threatened to strike him a fatal blow to

the back of the head. Finally, Gregor had no alternative, because he noticed to his consternation that in his reversing he was unable to keep to a given course; and so, with continual fearful sidelong looks to his father, he started as quickly as possible, but in effect only very slowly, to turn round. It was possible that his father was aware of his good intentions, because he didn't obstruct him, but even directed the turning manoeuvre from a distance with gestures from his cane. If only there hadn't been those unbearable hissing sounds issuing from his father! They caused Gregor to lose all orientation. He had turned almost completely round, when, distracted by the hissing, he lost his way, and moved a little in the wrong direction. Then, when he found himself with his head successfully in the doorway, it became apparent that his body was too wide to slip through it. To his father, in his present frame of mind, it didn't remotely occur to open the other wing of the door, and so make enough space for Gregor. He was, rather, obsessed with the notion of getting Gregor back in his room post-haste. He could not possibly have countenanced the cumbersome preparations Gregor would have required to get up and perhaps so get around the door. Rather, as though there were no hindrance at all, he drove Gregor forward with even greater din: the sound to Gregor's ears was not that of one father alone: now it was really no laughing matter, and Gregor drove himself—happen what might—against the door. One side of his body was canted up, he found himself lifted at an angle in the doorway, his flank was rubbed raw, and some ugly stains appeared on the white door. Before long he was caught fast and could not have moved any more unaided: his little legs on one side were trembling in mid-air while those on the other found themselves painfully pressed against the ground—when from behind his father now gave him a truly liberating kick, and he was thrown, bleeding profusely, far into his room. The door was battered shut with the cane, and then at last there was quiet.

Not until dusk did Gregor awake from his heavy, almost comatose sleep. Probably he would have awoken around that time anyway, even if he hadn't been roused, because he felt sufficiently rested and restored. Still, it seemed to him as though a hurried footfall and a cautious shutting of the door to the hallway had awoken him. The pale gleam of the electric street-lighting outside showed on the ceiling and on the upper parts of the furniture, but down on the floor, where Gregor lay, it was dark. Slowly he rose and, groping clumsily with his feelers, whose function he only now began to understand, he made for the door, to see what had happened there. His whole left side was one long, unpleasantly stretched scab, and he was positively limping on his two rows of legs. One of his little legs had been badly hurt in the course of the morning's incidents—it was a wonder that it was only one—and it dragged after the rest inertly. *Not until he reached the door did he realize what had tempted him there: it was the smell of food. There stood a dish full of sweetened milk, with little slices of white bread floating in it. He felt like laughing for joy, because he was even hungrier now than he had been that morning, and straightaway he dunked his head into the milk past his eyes. But before long he withdrew it again in disappointment: it wasn't just that he found eating difficult on account of his damaged left flank—it seemed he could only eat if the whole of his body, panting, participated—more that he disliked the taste of milk, which otherwise was*

a favourite drink, and which his sister had certainly put out for him for that reason. In fact, he pulled his head away from the dish almost with revulsion, and crawled back into the middle of the room. *In the living room the gas-jet had been lit, as Gregor saw by looking through the crack in the door, but whereas usually at this time his father would be reading aloud to Gregor's mother or sometimes to his sister from the afternoon edition of the newspaper, there was now silence. Well, it was possible that this reading aloud, of which his sister had written and spoken to him many times, had been discontinued of late. But it was equally quiet to either side, even though it was hardly possible that there was no one home. 'What a quiet life the family used to lead,' Gregor said to himself, and, staring into the blackness, he felt considerable pride that he had made such a life possible for his parents and his sister, and in such a lovely flat. But what if all peace, all prosperity, all contentment, were to come to a sudden and terrible end? So as not to fall into such thoughts, Gregor thought he would take some exercise instead, and he crawled back and forth in the room.*

Once in the course of the long evening one of the side-doors was opened a crack, and once the other, and then hurriedly closed again: someone seemed to feel a desire to step inside, but then again had too many cavils about so doing. Gregor took up position right against the living-room door, resolved to bring in the reluctant visitor in some way if he could, or, if nothing more, at least discover his identity; but then the door wasn't opened again, and Gregor waited in vain. Previously, when the doors were locked, everyone had tried to come in and see him, but now that he had opened one door himself, and the others had apparently been opened in the course of the day, no visitors came, and the keys were all on the outside too.

The light in the living room was left on far into the night, and that made it easy to verify that his parents and his sister had stayed up till then, because, as he could very well hear, that was when the three of them left on tiptoe feet. Now it was certain that no one would come in to Gregor's room until morning; so he had a long time ahead of him to reflect undisturbed on how he could reorder his life. But the empty high-ceilinged room where he was forced to lie flat on the floor disquieted him, without him being able to find a reason for his disquiet, because after all this was the room he had lived in these past five years—and with a half-unconscious turn, and not without a little shame, he hurried under the sofa, where, even though his back was pressed down a little, and he was unable to raise his head, he straightaway felt very much at home, and only lamented the fact that his body was too broad to be entirely concealed under the sofa.

He stayed there all night, either half asleep, albeit woken by hunger at regular intervals, or kept half awake by anxieties and unclear hopes, which all seemed to lead to the point that he would comfort himself quietly for the moment, and by patience and the utmost consideration for the family make the inconveniences he was putting them through in his present state a little bearable for them. Early the next morning, while it was almost still night, Gregor had an opportunity to put his resolutions to the test, because the door from the hallway opened, and his sister, almost completely dressed, looked in on him with some agitation. It took her a while to find him, but when she spotted him under the sofa—my God, he had to be somewhere, he couldn't have flown off into space—she was so terrified that in an uncontrollable revulsion she slammed the door

shut. But then, as if sorry for her behaviour, she straightaway opened the door again, and tiptoed in, as if calling on a grave invalid, or even a stranger. Gregor had pushed his head forward to the edge of the sofa, and observed her. Would she notice that he had left his milk, and then not by any means because he wasn't hungry, and would she bring in some different food that would suit him better? If she failed to do so of her own accord, then he preferred to die rather than tell her, even though he did feel an incredible urge to shoot out from under the sofa, hurt himself at his sister's feet, and ask her for some nice titbit to eat. But his sister was promptly startled by the sight of the full dish, from which only a little milk had been spilled round the edges. She picked it up right away, not with her bare hands but with a rag, and carried it out. Gregor was dying to see what she would bring him instead, and he entertained all sorts of conjectures on the subject. But never would he have been able to guess what in the goodness of her heart his sister did. She brought him, evidently to get a sense of his likes and dislikes, a whole array of things, all spread out on an old newspaper.

There were some half-rotten vegetables; bones left over from dinner with a little congealed white sauce; a handful of raisins and almonds; a cheese that a couple of days ago Gregor had declared to be unfit for human consumption; a piece of dry bread, a piece of bread and butter, and a piece of bread and butter sprinkled with salt. In addition she set down a dish that was probably to be given over to Gregor's personal use, into which she had poured some water. Then, out of sheer delicacy, knowing that Gregor wouldn't be able to eat in from of her, she hurriedly left the room, even turning the key, just as a sign to Gregor that he could settle down and take his time over everything. Gregor's legs trembled as he addressed his meal. His wounds too must have completely healed over, for he didn't feel any hindrance, he was astonished to realize, and remembered how a little more than a month ago he had cut his finger with a knife, and only the day before yesterday the place still had hurt. 'I wonder if I have less sensitivity now?' he thought, as he sucked avidly on the cheese, which of all the proffered foodstuffs had most spontaneously and powerfully attracted him. Then, in rapid succession, and with eyes watering with satisfaction, he ate up the cheese, the vegetables and the sauce; the fresh foods, on the other hand, were not to his liking—he couldn't even bear the smell of them, and dragged such things as he wanted to eat a little way away from them. He was long done with everything, and was just lounging lazily where he had eaten, when his sister, to signal that he was to withdraw, slowly turned the key in the lock. That immediately stung him out of his drowsiness, and he dashed back under the sofa. But it cost him a great effort to remain there, even for the short time his sister was in the room, because his big meal had filled out his belly, and he was scarcely able to breathe in his little space. Amidst little fits of panic suffocation, he watched with slightly bulging eyes, as his sister, all unawares, swept everything together with a broom—not only the leftovers, but also those elements of food that Gregor hadn't touched, as though they too were now not good for anything, and as she hastily tipped everything into a bucket, on which she set a wooden lid, whereupon she carried everything back out. No sooner had she turned her back than Gregor came out from under the sofa, stretched and pulled himself up.

This was how Gregor was now fed every day, once in the morning, while his parents and the maid were still asleep, and a second time after lunch, when his parents had their little lie down, and his sister sent the maid out on some errand or other. For sure, none of them wanted Gregor to starve, but maybe

they didn't want to confront in so much material detail the idea of him eating anything. Perhaps also his sister wanted to spare them a little grief, because certainly they were suffering enough as it was.

With what excuses the doctor and locksmith were got rid of on that first morning was something Gregor never learned, because as he was not able to make himself understood, it didn't occur to anyone, not even his sister, that he could understand others, and so, when his sister was in his room, he had to content himself with hearing her occasional sighs and appeals to various saints. Only later, once she had got adjusted to everything a little—of course there could be no question of becoming fully used to it—Gregor sometimes caught a well-intentioned remark, or one that was capable of being interpreted as such. He had a good appetite today, she said, when Gregor had dealt with his food in determined fashion, whereas, in the opposite case, which came to be the rule, she would sometimes say, almost sorrowfully: 'Oh, it's hardly been touched today.'

While Gregor was not given any news directly, he was sometimes able to glean developments from the adjoining rooms, and whenever he heard anyone speaking, he would rush to the door in question, and press his whole body against it. Especially in the early days, there was no conversation that did not somehow, in some oblique way, deal with him. For two days, at each meal, there were debates as to how one ought to behave, and in between meals, the same subject was also discussed, because there were always at least two members of the household at home, probably as no one wanted to be alone at home, and couldn't in any case wholly leave it. On the very first day the cook had begged on her knees—to be let go right away, and when she took her leave a quarter of an hour later, she said thank-you for her dismissal, as if it was the greatest kindness she had experienced here, and, without anyone demanding it of her, gave the most solemn oath never to betray the least thing to anyone.

Now his sister had to do the cooking in harness with his mother; admittedly, it didn't create much extra work for her, because no one ate anything. Gregor kept hearing them vainly exhorting one another to eat, and receiving no reply, other than: 'Thank you, I've enough,' or words to that effect. Perhaps they didn't drink anything either. Often, his sister asked his father whether he would like a beer, and offered to fetch it herself, and when her father made no reply, she said, to get over his hesitation, that she could equally well send the janitor woman out for it, but in the end his father said a loud 'No', and there was an end of the matter.

Already in the course of that first day his father set out the fortunes and prospects of the family to his mother and sister. From time to time, he got up from the table and produced some certificate or savings book from his little home safe, which he had managed to rescue from the collapse of his business five years ago. One could hear him opening the complicated lock, and shutting it again after taking out the desired item. These explanations from his father constituted the first good news that had reached Gregor's ears since his incarceration. He had been of the view that the winding-up of the business had left his father with nothing—at any rate his father had never said anything to the contrary, and Gregor hadn't questioned him either. At the time Gregor had bent all his endeavours to helping the family to get over the commercial catastrophe, which had plunged them all into complete despair, as quickly as

possible. And so he had begun working with an especial zeal and almost overmight had moved from being a little junior clerk to a travelling salesman, who of course had earning power of an entirely different order, and whose successes in the form of percentages were instantly turned into money, which could be laid out on the table of the surprised and delighted family. They had been good times, and they had never returned, at least not in that magnificence, even though Gregor went on to earn so much money that he was able to bear, and indeed bore, the expenses of the whole family. They had just become used to it, both the family and Gregor; they gratefully took receipt of his money, which he willingly handed over, but there was no longer any particular warmth about it. Only his sister had remained close to Gregor, and it was his secret project to send her, who unlike himself loved music and played the violin with great feeling, to the conservatory next year, without regard to the great expense that was surely involved, and that needed to be earned, most probably in some other fashion. In the course of Gregor's brief stays in the city, the conservatory often came up in conversations with his sister, but always as a beautiful dream, not conceivably to be realized, and their parents disliked even such innocent references; but Gregor thought about it quite purposefully, and meant to make a formal announcement about it at Christmas.

Such—in his present predicament—perfectly useless thoughts crowded his head, while he stuck to the door in an upright position, listening. Sometimes, from a general fatigue, he was unable to listen, and carelessly let his head drop against the door, before holding it upright again, because even the little noise he had made had been heard next door, and had caused them all to fall silent. 'Wonder what he's doing now,' said his father after a while, evidently turning towards the door, and only then was the interrupted conversation gradually resumed.

Because his father tended to repeat himself in his statements—partly because he had long disregarded these matters, and partly because Gregor's mother often didn't understand when they were first put to her—Gregor now had plenty of occasion to hear that, in spite of the calamity, an admittedly small nest egg had survived from the old days, and had grown a little over the intervening years through the compounding of interest. In addition to this, the money that Gregor had brought home every month—he kept back no more than a couple of guilders for himself—had not been used up completely, and had accrued to another small lump sum. Behind his door, Gregor nodded enthusiastically, delighted by this unexpected caution and prudence. The surplus funds might have been used to pay down his father's debt to the director, thereby bringing closer the day when he might quit this job, but now it seemed to him better done the way his father had done it.

Of course, the money was nowhere near enough for the family to live off the interest, say; it might be enough to feed them all for a year or two, at most, but no more. Really it was a sum that mustn't be touched, that ought to be set aside for an emergency; money for day-to-day living expenses needed to be earned. His father was a healthy, but now elderly man, who hadn't worked for five years now, and who surely shouldn't expect too much of himself; in those five years, which were the first holidays of a strenuous and broadly unsuccessful life, he had put on a lot of fat, and had slowed down considerably. And was his old mother to go out and earn money, who suffered from asthma, to whom

merely going from one end of the flat to the other was a strain, and who spent every other day on the sofa struggling for breath in front of the open window? Or was his sister to make money, still a child with her seventeen years, and who so deserved to be left in the manner of her life heretofore, which had consisted of wearing pretty frocks, sleeping in late, helping out at the pub, taking part in a few modest celebrations and, above all, playing the violin. Whenever the conversation turned to the necessity of earning money, Gregor would let go of the door, and throw himself on to the cool leather sofa beside it, because he was burning with sorrow and shame.

Often he would lie there all night, not sleeping a wink, and just scraping against the leather for hours. Nor did he shun the great effort of pushing a chair over to the window, creeping up to the window-sill, and propped against the armchair, leaning in the window, clearly in some vague recollection of the liberation he had once used to feel, gazing out of the window. For it was true to say that with each passing day his view of distant things grew fuzziest; the hospital across the road, whose ubiquitous aspect he had once cursed, he now no longer even saw, and if he hadn't known for a fact that he lived in the leafy, but perfectly urban Charlottenstrasse, he might have thought that his window gave on to a wasteland where grey sky merged indistinguishably with grey earth. His alert sister needed only to spot that the armchair had been moved across to the window once or twice, before she took to pushing the chair over there herself after tidying Gregor's room, and even leaving the inner window ajar.

Had Gregor been able to speak to his sister and to thank her for everything she had to do for him, he would have found it a little easier to submit to her ministrations; but, as it was, he suffered from them. His sister, for her part, clearly sought to blunt the embarrassment of the whole thing, and the more time passed, the better able she was to do so, but Gregor was also able to see through everything more acutely. Even her entry was terrible for him. No sooner had she stepped into his room, than without even troubling to shut the door behind her—however much care she usually took to save anyone passing the sight of Gregor's room—she darted over to the window and flung it open with febrile hands, almost as if she were suffocating, and then, quite regardless of how cold it might be outside, she stood by the window for a while, taking deep breaths. She subjected Gregor to her scurrying and her din twice daily; for the duration of her presence, he trembled under the sofa, even though he knew full well that she would have been only too glad to spare him the awkwardness, had it been possible for her to remain in the same room as her brother with the window closed.

On one occasion—it must have been a month or so after Gregor's metamorphosis, and there was surely no more cause for his sister to get agitated about Gregor's appearance—she came in a little earlier than usual and saw Gregor staring out of the window, immobile, almost as though set up on purpose to give her a fright. Gregor would not have been surprised if she had stopped in her tracks, seeing as he impeded her from going over and opening the window, but not only did she not come in, she leaped back and locked the door; a stranger might have supposed that Gregor had been lying in wait for her, to bite her. Naturally, Gregor straightaway went and hid under the sofa, but he had to wait till noon for his sister to reappear, and then she seemed more agitated than

usual. From that he understood that the sight of him was still unbearable to her and would continue to be unbearable to her, and that she probably had to control herself so as not to run away at the sight of that little portion of his body that peeped out from under the sofa. One day, in a bid to save her from that as well, he moved the tablecloth on to the sofa—the labour took him four hours—and arranged it in such a way that he was completely covered, and that his sister, even if she bent down, would be unable to see him. If this covering hadn't been required in her eyes, she could easily have removed it, because it was surely clear enough that it was no fun for Gregor to screen himself from sight so completely, but she left the cloth *in situ*, and once Gregor even thought he caught a grateful look from her, as he moved the cloth ever so slightly with his head to see how his sister was reacting to the new arrangement.

During the first fortnight, his parents would not be induced to come in and visit him, and he often heard their professions of respect for what his sister was now doing, whereas previously they had frequently been annoyed with her for being a somewhat useless girl. Now, though, both of them, father and mother, often stood outside Gregor's room while his sister was cleaning up inside, and no sooner had she come out than she had to tell them in precise detail how things looked in the room, what Gregor had eaten, how he had behaved this time, and whether there wasn't some sign of an improvement in his condition. His mother, by the way, quite soon wanted to visit Gregor herself, but his father and sister kept her from doing so with their common-sense arguments, to which Gregor listened attentively, and which met with his wholehearted approval. Later on, it took force to hold her back, and when she cried, 'Let me see Gregor, after all he is my unhappy son! Won't you understand that I have to see him?' then Gregor thought it might after all be a good thing if his mother saw him, not every day of course, but perhaps as often as once a week; she did have a much better grasp of everything than his sister, who, for all her pluck, was still a child, and ultimately had perhaps taken on such a difficult task purely out of childish high spirits.

Before very long, Gregor's desire to see his mother was granted. Gregor didn't care to sit in the window in the daytime out of regard for his parents, nor was he able to crawl around very much on the few square yards of floor; even at night he was scarcely able to lie quietly, his food soon stopped affording him the least pleasure, and so, to divert himself, he got into the habit of crawling all over the walls and ceiling. He was particularly given to hanging off the ceiling: it felt very different from lying on the floor; he could breathe more easily; a gentle thrumming vibration went through his body; and in the almost blissful distraction Gregor felt up there, it could even happen that to his own surprise he let himself go, and smacked down on the floor. Of course his physical mastery of his body was of a different order from what it had been previously, and so now he didn't hurt himself, even after a fall from a considerable height. His sister observed the new amusement Gregor had found for himself—as he crept here and there he couldn't avoid leaving some traces of his adhesive secretion—and she got it into her head to maximize the amount of crawling Gregor could do, by removing those pieces of furniture that got in his way, in particular the wardrobe and the desk. But it was not possible for her to do so unaided; she didn't dare ask her father for help; the maid would certainly not have helped, because while this girl of about sixteen had bravely stayed on after the cook's departure, she had also asked in return that she might keep the kitchen locked,

and only have to open it when particularly required to do so; so Gregor's sister had no alternative but to ask her mother on an occasion when her father was away. Gregor's mother duly came along with cries of joy and excitement, only to lapse into silence outside Gregor's door. First, his sister checked to see that everything in the room was tidy; only then did she allow her mother to step inside. In a very great rush, Gregor had pulled the tablecloth down lower, with more pleats, and the whole thing really had the appearance of a cloth draped casually over the sofa. He also refrained from peeping out from underneath it; he declined to try to see his mother on this first visit, he was just happy she had come. 'It's all right, you won't see him,' said his sister, who was evidently taking her mother by the hand. Now Gregor heard the two weak women shifting the heavy old wardrobe from its place, and how his sister always did the bulk of the work, ignoring the warnings of his mother, who kept fearing she might overstrain herself. It took a very long time. It was probably after fifteen minutes of toil that his mother said it would be better to leave the wardrobe where it was, because firstly it was too heavy, they would never manage to get it moved before father's return, and by leaving it in the middle of the room they would only succeed in leaving an irritating obstruction for Gregor, and secondly it was by no means certain that they were doing Gregor a favour by removing that piece of furniture anyway. She rather thought the opposite: the sight of the empty stretch of wall clutched at her heart, and why shouldn't Gregor have a similar sensation too, being as he was long accustomed to his bedroom furniture, and was therefore bound to feel abandoned in the empty room. 'And isn't it the case as well,' his mother concluded very quietly—indeed she was barely talking above a whisper throughout, as though to prevent Gregor, whose whereabouts she didn't know, from even hearing the sound of her voice, seeing as she felt certain that he wasn't capable of understanding her words anyway—'isn't it the case as well, that by taking away his furniture, we would be showing him we were abandoning all hope of an improvement in his condition, and leaving him utterly to his own devices? I think it would be best if we try to leave the room in exactly the condition it was before, so that, if Gregor is returned to us, he will find everything unaltered, and will thereby be able to forget the intervening period almost as if it hadn't happened.'

As he listened to these words of his mother, Gregor understood that the want of any direct human address, in combination with his monotonous life at the heart of the family over the past couple of months, must have confused his understanding, because otherwise he would not have been able to account for the fact that he seriously wanted to have his room emptied out. Was it really his wish to have his cosy room, comfortably furnished with old heirlooms, transformed into a sort of cave, merely so that he would be able to crawl around in it freely, without hindrance in any direction—even at the expense of rapidly and utterly forgetting his human past? He was near enough to forgetting it now, and only the voice of his mother, which he hadn't heard for a long time, had reraawakened the memory in him. Nothing was to be taken out; everything was to stay as it was: the positive influence of the furniture on his condition was indispensable; and if the furniture prevented him from crawling around without rhyme or reason, then that was no drawback either, but a great advantage.

But his sister was unfortunately of a different mind: she had become accustomed, not without some justification either, to cast herself in the role of a sort of expert when Gregor's affairs were discussed with her parents, and so her

mother's urgings now had the effect on his sister of causing her to insist on the removal not merely of the wardrobe and the desk, which was all she had originally proposed, but of all the furniture, with the sole exception of the indispensable sofa. It wasn't merely childish stubbornness and a surge of unexpected and hard-won self-confidence that prompted her to take this view; she had observed that Gregor needed a lot of space for his crawling, and in the course of it, so far as she had seen, made no use whatever of the furniture. Perhaps the natural enthusiasm of a girl of her age played a certain role too, a quality that seeks its own satisfaction in any matter, and this now caused Grete to present Gregor's situation in even starker terms, so that she might do even more for him than she had thus far. For it was unthinkable that anyone else would dare to set foot in a room where Gregor all alone made free with the bare walls.

And so she refused to abandon her resolution in the face of the arguments of her mother, who seemed to have been overwhelmed by uncertainty in this room, and who, falling silent, to the best of her ability helped his sister to remove the wardrobe from the room. Well, Gregor could do without the wardrobe if need be, but the writing-desk had to stay. And no sooner had the two women left with the wardrobe, against which they pressed themselves groaning with effort, than Gregor thrust his head out from under the sofa, to see how best, with due care and respect, he might intervene on his own behalf. It was unfortunate that it was his mother who came back in first, while Grete was still clasping the wardrobe in the next-door room, hefting it this way and that, without of course being able to budge it from the spot. His mother was not accustomed to the sight of Gregor, it could have made her ill, and so Gregor reversed hurriedly to the far end of the sofa, but was unable to prevent the cloth from swaying slightly. That was enough to catch his mother's attention. She paused, stood still for a moment, and then went back to Grete.

Even though Gregor kept telling himself there was nothing particular going on, just a few sticks of furniture being moved around, he soon had to admit to himself that the to-ing and fro-ing of the two women, their little exhortations to one another, the scraping of the furniture on the floor, did have the effect on him of a great turmoil nourished on all sides, and he was compelled to admit that, however he drew in his head and his legs and pressed his belly to the floor, he would be unable to tolerate much more of it. They were clearing his room out: taking away everything that was dear to him: they had already taken the wardrobe that contained his jigsaw and his other tools, now they were prising away the desk that seemed to have taken root in the floor, where he had done his homework at trade school, at secondary, even at elementary school—he really had no more time to consider the good intentions of the two women, whose existence he had practically forgotten, because they were now so exhausted they were doing their work in near silence, all that could be heard of them being their heavy footfalls.

And so he erupted forth—and four times changed his direction for he really didn't know what he should rescue first, when he saw the picture of the fur-clad woman all the more prominent now, because the wall on which it hung had now been cleared, crawled hurriedly up to it and pressed himself against the glass, which stuck to him and imparted a pleasant coolness to his hot belly. At least no one would now take away this picture, which Gregor now completely

covered. He turned his head in the direction of the living room door, to see the women as they returned.

They hadn't taken much of a break, and here they came again; Grete had laid her arm around her mother, and was practically carrying her. Well, what shall we take next? Grete said, looking around. Then her eyes encountered those of Gregor, up on the wall. She kept her calm, probably only on account of the presence of her mother, inclined her face towards her, to keep her from looking around, and said, with a voice admittedly trembling and uncontrolled: 'Oh, let's just go back to the living room for a moment, shall we?' Grete's purpose was clear enough to Gregor; she wanted to get her mother to safety, and then chase him off the wall. Well, just let her try! He would perch on his picture, and never surrender it. He would rather fly in Grete's face.

But Grete's words served only to disquiet her mother, who stepped to one side, spotted the giant brown stain on the flowered wallpaper, and, before she had time to understand what she saw, she cried in a hoarse, screaming voice, 'Oh my God, oh my God!' and with arms outspread, as though abandoning everything she had, fell across the sofa, and didn't stir. 'Oh, Gregor!' cried his sister, brandishing her fist and glowering at him. Since his metamorphosis, they were the first words she had directly addressed to him. She ran next door to find some smelling-salts to rouse her mother from her faint; Gregor wanted to help too—he could always go back and rescue the picture later on—but he was stuck fast to the glass, and had to break free of it by force; then he trotted next door as though he could give his sister some advice, as in earlier times; was forced to stand around idly behind her while she examined various different flasks; and gave her such a shock, finally, when she spun round, that a bottle crashed to the ground and broke. One splinter cut Gregor in the face, the fumes of some harshly corrosive medicine causing him to choke; Grete ended up by grabbing as many little flasks as she could hold, and ran with them to her mother; she slammed the door shut with her foot; Gregor was now shut off from his mother, who, through his fault, was possibly close to death; there was nothing he could do but wait, and assailed by reproach and dread, he began to crawl. He crawled over everything, the walls, the furniture, the ceiling, and finally in his despair, with the whole room already spinning round him, he dropped on to the middle of the dining table.

Some time passed. Gregor lay there dully, there was silence all round, perhaps it was a good sign. Then the bell rang. The maid, of course, was locked away in her kitchen, and so Grete had to go to the door. His father was back. 'What happened?' were his first words; Grete's appearance must have given everything away. She answered in muffled tones; clearly she must be pressing her face to her father's chest. 'Mother had a faint, but she's feeling better now. Gregor's got loose. I knew it,' said his father. 'Wasn't I always telling you, but you women never listen.' Gregor understood that his father must have put the worst possible construction on Grete's all too brief account, and supposed that Gregor had perpetrated some act of violence. Therefore Gregor must try to mollify his father, because for an explanation there was neither time nor means. And so he fled to the door of his room, and pressed himself against it, so that his father, on stepping in from the hallway, might see right away that Gregor had every intention of going back promptly into his room, and there was no necessity to use force; he had only to open the door for him, and he would disappear through it right away.

But his father wasn't in the mood to observe such details: 'Ah!' he roared, the moment he entered, in a tone equally enraged and delighted. Gregor withdrew his head from the door, and turned to look at his father. He really hadn't imagined him the way he was; admittedly, he had been distracted of late by the novel sensation of crawling, and had neglected to pay attention to goings-on in the rest of the flat, as he had previously, and so really he should have been prepared to come upon some alterations. But really, really, was that still his father? The same man who had lain feebly buried in bed, when Gregor had set out formerly on a business trip, who had welcomed him back at night, in his nightshirt and rocking-chair, not even properly able to get to his feet any more; but merely raising both arms in token of his pleasure; and who on his infrequent walks on one or two Sundays per year, and on the most solemn holidays, walked between Gregor and his wife slowly enough anyway, but still slower than them, bundled into his old overcoat, feeling his way forward with his carefully jabbing stick, and each time he wanted to speak, stopping to gather his listeners about him? And now here he was fairly erect, wearing a smart blue uniform with gold buttons, like the doorman of a bank; over the stiff collar of his coat, the bulge of a powerful double-chin; under the bushy eyebrows an alert and vigorous expression in his black eyes; his habitually unkempt white hair now briskly parted and combed into a shining tidy arrangement. He threw his cap, which had on it a gold monogram, presumably that of the bank, across the whole room in an arc on to the sofa, and, hands in his pockets, with the skirts of his long coat trailing behind him, he walked up to Gregor with an expression of grim resolve. He probably didn't know himself what he would do next; but even so, he raised his feet to an uncommon height, and Gregor was startled by the enormous size of his boots. But he didn't allow himself the leisure to stop and remark on it; he had understood from the first day of his new life that his father thought the only policy to adopt was one of the utmost severity towards him. And so he scurried along in front of his father, pausing when he stopped, and hurrying on the moment he made another movement. In this way, they circled the room several times, without anything decisive taking place; yes, even without the whole process having the appearance of a chase, because of its slow tempo. It was for that reason too that Gregor remained on the floor for the time being, because he was afraid that if he took to the walls or ceiling, his father might interpret that as a sign of particular wickedness on his part. Admittedly, Gregor had to tell himself he couldn't keep up even this slow pace for very long, because in the time his father took a single step, he needed to perform a whole multiplicity of movements. He was already beginning to get out of breath—even in earlier times his lungs hadn't been altogether reliable. As he teetered along, barely keeping his eyes open, in order to concentrate all his resources on his movement—in his dull-wittedness not even thinking of any other form of salvation beyond merely keeping going, and had almost forgotten that the walls were available to him, albeit obstructed by carefully carved items of furniture, full of spikes and obstructions—something whizzed past him, something had been hurled at him, something now rolling around on the floor in front of him. It was an apple; straightaway it was followed by another: Gregor in terror was rooted to the spot; there was no sense in keeping moving, not if his father had decided to have recourse to artillery. He had filled his pockets from the fruit bowl on the sideboard, and was hurling one apple after another, barely pausing to take aim.

These little red apples rolled around on the floor as though electrified, often caroming into one another. A feebly tossed apple brushed against Gregor's back, only to bounce off it harmlessly. One thrown a moment later, however, secured to pierce it; Gregor tried to drag himself away, as though the bewildering and scarcely credible pain might pass if he changed position; but he felt as though nailed to the spot, and in complete disorientation, he stretched out. With one last look he saw how the door to his room was flung open, and his mother ran out in front of his howling sister, in her chemise—his sister must have undressed her to make it easier for her to breathe after her fainting fit—how his mother ran towards his father, and as she ran her loosened skirts successively slipped to the floor, and how, stumbling over them she threw herself at his father, and embracing him, in complete union with him—but now Gregor's eyesight was failing him—with her hands clasping the back of his head, begged him to spare Gregor's life.

III

The grave wound to Gregor, from whose effects he suffered for over a month—as no one dared to remove the apple, it remained embedded in his flesh, as a visible memento—seemed to have reminded even his father that in spite of his current sorry and loathsome form, Gregor remained a member of the family, and must not be treated like an enemy, but as someone whom—all revision to the contrary—family duty compelled one to choke down, and who must be tolerated, simply tolerated.

Even if Gregor had lost his mobility, and presumably for good, so that now like an old invalid he took an age to cross his room—there could be no more question of crawling up out of the horizontal—this deterioration of his condition acquired a compensation, perfectly adequate in his view, in the fact that each evening now, the door to the living room, which he kept under sharp observation for an hour or two before it happened, was opened, so that, lying in his darkened room, invisible from the living room, he was permitted to see the family at their lit-up table, and, with universal sanction, as it were, though now in a completely different way than before, to listen to them talk together.

Admittedly, these were not now the lively conversations of earlier times, which Gregor had once called to mind with some avidity as he lay down exhausted in the damp sheets of some poky hotel room. Generally, things were very quiet. His father fell asleep in his armchair not long after supper was over; his mother and sister enjoined one another to be quiet; his mother, sitting well forward under the lamp, sewed fine linen for some haberdashery; his sister, who had taken a job as salesgirl, studied stenography and French in the evenings, in the hope of perhaps one day getting a better job. Sometimes his father would wake up, and as though unaware that he had been asleep, would say to his mother: 'Oh, you've been sewing all this time!' and promptly fall asleep again, while mother and sister exchanged tired smiles.

With an odd stubbornness, his father now refused to take off his uniform coat when he was at home; and while his dressing-gown hung uselessly on its hook, his fully dressed father dozed in his chair, as though ready at all times to be of service, waiting, even here, for the voice of his superior. As a result, the uniform, which even to begin with had not been new, in spite of all the precautions

of mother and sister, rapidly lost its cleanliness, and Gregor often spent whole evenings staring at this comprehensively stained suit, with its invariably gleaming gold buttons, in which the old man slept so calmly and uncomfortably.

As soon as the clock struck ten, his mother would softly wake his father, and talk him into going to bed, because he couldn't sleep properly where he was, and proper sleep was precisely what he needed, given that he had to be back on duty at six in the morning. But with the obstinacy that characterized him ever since he had become a commissionaire, he would always insist on staying at table longer, even though he quite regularly fell asleep there, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he was then persuaded to exchange his chair for bed. However Gregor's mother and sister pleaded and remonstrated with him, he would slowly shake his head for a whole quarter of an hour at a time, keep his eyes shut, and refuse to get up. Gregor's mother would tug at his sleeve, whisper blandishments in his ear, his sister would leave her work to support her mother, but all in vain. His father would only slump deeper into his chair. Only when the women took him under the arms did he open his eyes, look alternately at them both, and then usually say: What sort of life is this? What sort of peace and dignity in my old days? And propped up by the women, he would clumsily get to his feet, as though he was a great weight on himself, let them conduct him as far as the door, then gesture to them, and go on himself, while Gregor's mother hurriedly threw down her sewing, and his sister her pen, to run behind him and continue to be of assistance.

Who in this exhausted and overworked family had the time to pay any more attention to Gregor than was absolutely necessary? The household seemed to shrink: the maid was now allowed to leave after all; a vast bony charwoman with a great mane of white hair came in the morning and evening to do the brunt of the work; everything else had to be done by mother, in addition to her copious needlework. Things even came to such a pass that various family jewels, in which mother and sister had once on special occasions decked themselves, were sold off, as Gregor learned one evening, from a general discussion of the prices that had been achieved. The bitterest complaint, however, concerned the impossibility of leaving this now far too large apartment, as there was no conceivable way of moving Gregor. Gregor understood perfectly well that it wasn't any regard for him that stood in the way of a move, because all it would have taken was a suitably sized shipping crate, with a few holes drilled in it for him to breathe through; no, what principally kept the family from moving to another flat was their complete and utter despair—the thought that they in all the circle of relatives and acquaintances had been singled out for such a calamity. The things the world requires of poor people, they performed to the utmost, his father running out to get breakfast for the little bank officials, his mother hurrying herself at the personal linen of strangers, his sister trotting back and forth behind the desk, doing the bidding of the customers, but that was as far as the strength of the family reached. The wound in Gregor's back would start to play up again, when mother and sister came back, having taken his father to bed, and neglected their work to sit pressed together, almost cheek to cheek, when his mother pointed to Gregor's room and said, 'Will you shut the door now, Grete'; and when Gregor found himself once more in the dark, while next door the women were mingling their tears, or perhaps sitting staring dry-eyed at the table.

Gregor spent his days and nights almost without sleeping. Sometimes he thought that the next time they opened the door he would take the business of the family in hand, just exactly as he had done before; after a long time the director figured in his thoughts again, and the chief clerk, the junior clerk and the trainees, the dim-witted factorum, a couple of friends he had in other companies, a chambermaid in a hotel out in the provinces somewhere, a sweet, fleeting memory, a cashier in a hat shop whom he had courted assiduously, but far too slowly—all these appeared to him, together with others he never knew or had already forgotten, but instead of helping him and his family, they were all inaccessible to him, and he was glad when they went away again. And then he wasn't in the mood to worry about the family, but instead was filled with rage at how they neglected him, and even though he couldn't imagine anything for which he had an appetite, he made schemes as to how to inveigle himself into the pantry, to take there what was rightfully his, even if he didn't feel the least bit hungry now. No longer bothering to think what might please Gregor, his sister before going to work in the morning and afternoon now hurriedly shoved some food or other into Gregor's room with her foot, and in the evening reached in with the broom to hook it back out again, indifferent as to whether it had been only tasted or even—as most regularly happened—had remained quite untouched. The tidying of the room, which she now did always in the evening, really could not have been done more cursorily. The walls were streaked with grime, and here and there lay little tangled balls of dust and filth. At first, Gregor liked to take up position, for her coming, in the worst affected corners, as if to reproach her for their condition. But he could probably have stayed there for weeks without his sister doing anything better; after all, she could see the dirt as clearly as he could, she had simply taken it into her head to ignore it. And at the same time, with a completely new perverseness that seemed to have come over her, as it had indeed the whole family, she jealously guarded her monopoly on the tidying of Gregor's room. On one occasion, his mother had subjected Gregor's room to a great cleaning, involving several buckets full of water—the humidity was upsetting to Gregor, who lay miserably and motionlessly stretched out on the sofa—but his mother didn't get away with it either. Because no sooner had his sister noticed the change in Gregor's room that evening than, mortally offended, she ran into the sitting room, and ignoring her mother's imploringly raised hands, burst into a crying fit that her parents—their father had of course been shaken from his slumbers in his armchair—witnessed first with helpless surprise, and then they too were touched by it: his father on the one side blaming Gregor's mother for not leaving the cleaning of the room to his sister, while on the other yelling at the sister that she would never be allowed to clean Gregor's room again, while the mother tried to drag the father, who was quite beside himself with excitement, into the bedroom; his sister, shaken with sobs, pummelled at the table with her little fists, and Gregor hissed loudly in impotent fury that no one thought to shut the door, and save him from such a noise and spectacle.

But even if his sister, exhausted by office work, no longer had it in her to care for Gregor as she had done earlier, that still didn't mean that his mother had to take a hand to save Gregor from being utterly neglected. Because now there was the old charwoman. This old widow, who with her strong frame had survived everything that life had had to throw at her, was evidently quite undismayed by

Gregor. It wasn't that she was nosy, but she had by chance once opened the door to Gregor's room, and at the sight of Gregor, who, caught out, started to scurry hither and thither, even though no one was chasing him, merely stood there with her hands folded and watched in astonishment. Since then, she let no morning or evening slip without opening the door a crack and looking in on Gregor. To begin with, she called to him as well, in terms she probably thought were friendly, such things as: 'Come here, you old dung-beetle!' or 'Will you take a look at that old dung-beetle!' Gregor of course didn't reply, but ignored the fact that the door had been opened, and stayed just exactly where he was. If only this old charwoman, instead of being allowed to stand and gawp at him whenever she felt like it, had been instructed to clean his room every day! Early one morning—a heavy rain battered against the windowpanes, a sign, already, perhaps, of the approaching spring—Gregor felt such irritation when the charwoman came along with her words that, albeit slowly and ponderously, he made as if to attack her. The charwoman, far from being frightened, seized a chair that was standing near the door, and as she stood there with mouth agape it was clear that she would only close it when she had brought the chair crashing down on Gregor's back. So is that as far as it goes then? she asked, as Gregor turned away, and she calmly put the chair back in a corner. ¹⁰¹ Gregor was now eating almost nothing at all. Only sometimes, happening to pass the food that had been put out for him, he would desultorily take a morsel in his mouth, and keep it there for hours, before usually spitting it out again. At first he thought it was grief about the condition of his room that was keeping him from eating, but in fact the alterations to his room were the things he came to terms with most easily. They had started pushing things into his room that would otherwise have been in the way, and there were now a good many such items, since one room in the flat had been let out to a trio of bachelors. These serious-looking gentlemen—all three wore full beards, as Gregor happened to see once, peering through a crack in the door—were insistent on hygiene, not just where their own room was concerned, but throughout the flat where they were now tenants, and therefore most especially in the kitchen. Useless or dirty junk was something for which they had no tolerance. Besides, they had largely brought their own furnishings with them. For that reason, many things had now become superfluous that couldn't be sold, and that one didn't want to simply throw away either. All these things came into Gregor's room. And also the ash-rainy surplus to requirements was simply slung into Gregor's room by the charwoman, who was always in a tearing rush; it was fortunate that Gregor rarely saw more than the hand and the object in question, whatever it was. It might be that the charwoman had it in mind to reclaim the things at some future time, or to go in and get them all out one day, but what happened was that they simply lay where they had been thrown, unless Gregor, crawling about among the junk, happened to displace some of it, at first perforce, because there was simply no more room in which to move, but later on with increasing pleasure, even though, after such peregrinations he would find himself heartsore and weary to death, and wouldn't move for many hours. ¹⁰² Since the tenants sometimes took their supper at home in the shared living room, the door to it remained closed on some evenings, but Gregor hardly missed the opening of the door. After all, there were enough evenings when it

had been open, and he had not profited from it, but, instead, without the family noticing at all, had merely lain still in the darkest corner of his room. On one occasion, however, the charwoman had left the door to the living room slightly ajar, and it remained ajar, even when the tenants walked in that evening, and the lights were turned on. They took their places at the table, where previously father, mother and Gregor had sat, unfurled their napkins and took up their eating irons. Straightaway his mother appeared in the doorway carrying a dish of meat, and hard behind her came his sister with a bowl heaped with potatoes. The food steamed mightily. The tenants inclined themselves to the dishes in front of them, as though to examine them before eating, and the one who was sitting at the head of the table, and who seemed to have some authority over the other two flanking him, cut into a piece of meat in the dish, as though to check whether it was sufficiently done, and didn't have to be sent back to the kitchen. He seemed content with what he found, and mother and sister, who had been watching in some trepidation, broke into relieved smiles. ¹⁰³ The family were taking their meal in the kitchen. Even so, before going in there, the father came in and with a single reverence, cap in hand, walked once round the table! All the tenants got up and muttered something into their beards. Once they were on their own again, they ate in near silence. It struck Gregor that out of all the various sounds one could hear, it was that of their grinding teeth that stood out, as though to demonstrate to Gregor that teeth were needed to eat with, and the best toothless gums were no use. 'But I do have an appetite,' Gregor said to himself earnestly, 'only not for those things. The way those tenants fill their boots, while I'm left to starve!' ¹⁰⁴ On that same evening—Gregor couldn't recall having heard the violin once in all this time—it sounded from the kitchen. The tenants had finished their supper, the one in the middle had produced a newspaper, and given the other two a page apiece, and now they were leaning back, reading and smoking. When the violin sounded, they pricked up their ears, got up and tiptoed to the door of the hallway where they stayed pressed together. They must have been heard from the kitchen, because father called: 'Do the gentlemen have any objection to the music? It can be stopped right away.' On the contrary, said the middle gentleman, 'mightn't the young lady like to come in to us and play here, where it's more cosy and convenient?' 'Only too happy to oblige,' called the father, as if he were the violin player. The gentlemen withdrew to their dining room and waited. Before long up stepped the father with the music stand, the mother with the score, and the sister with the violin. Calmly the sister set everything up in readiness; the parents, who had never let rooms before, and therefore overdid politeness towards the tenants, didn't even dare to sit in their own chairs; Gregor's father leaned in the doorway, his right hand pushed between two buttons of his closed coat; Gregor's mother was offered a seat by one of the gentlemen, and, not presuming to move, remained sitting just where the gentleman had put her, off in a corner. ¹⁰⁵ The sister began to play; father and mother, each on their respective side, attentively followed the movements of her hands. Gregor, drawn by the music, had slowly inched forward, and his head was already in the living room. He was no longer particularly surprised at his lack of discretion, where previously this discretion had been his entire pride. Even though now he would have had additional cause to remain hidden, because as a result of the dust that lay

everywhere in his room, and flew up at the merest movement, he himself was covered with dust; on his back and along his sides he dragged around an assortment of threads, hairs and bits of food; his indifference to everything was far too great for him to lie down on his back, as he had done several times a day before, and rub himself clean on the carpet. And, in spite of his condition, he felt no shame at moving out on to the pristine floor of the living room.

Admittedly, no one paid him any regard. The family was completely absorbed by the violin playing; the tenants, on the other hand, hands in pockets, had initially taken up position far too close behind the music stand, so that they all could see the music, which must surely be annoying to his sister, but before long, heads lowered in half-loud conversation, they retreated to the window, where they remained, nervously observed by the father. It really did look all too evident that they were disappointed in their expectation of hearing some fine or entertaining playing, were fed up with the whole performance, and only suffered themselves to be disturbed out of politeness. The way they all blew their cigar smoke upwards from their noses and mouths indicated in particular a great nervousness on their part. And yet his sister was playing so beautifully. Her face was inclined to the side, and sadly and searchingly her eyes followed the columns of notes. Gregor crept a little closer and held his head close to the ground, so as to be prepared to meet her gaze. Could he be an animal, to be so moved by music? It was as though he sensed a way to the unknown sustenance he longed for. He was determined to go right up to his sister, to pluck at her skirt, and so let her know she was to come into his room with her violin, because no one rewarded music here as much as he wanted to reward it. He would not let her out of his room, at least not as long as he lived; for the first time his frightening form would come in useful for him: he would appear at all doors to his room at once, and hiss in the faces of attackers; but his sister wasn't to be forced, she was to remain with him of her own free will; she was to sit by his side on the sofa, and he would tell her he was resolved to send her to the conservatory, and that, if the calamity hadn't struck, he would have told everyone so last Christmas—was Christmas past? surely it was—without brooking any objections. After this declaration, his sister would burst into tears of emotion, and Gregor would draw himself up to her outer and kiss her on the throat, which, since she'd started going to the office, she wore exposed, with a ribbon or collar.

'Mr Samsa!' cried the middle of the gentlemen, and not bothering to say another word, pointed with his index finger at the slowly advancing Gregor. The violin stopped, the middle gentleman first smiled, shaking his head, at his two friends, and then looked at Gregor once more. His father seemed to think it his first priority, even before driving Gregor away, to calm the tenants, though they were not at all agitated, and in fact seemed to find Gregor more entertaining than they had the violin playing. He hurried over to them, and with outspread arms tried simultaneously to push them back into their room, and with his body to block their sight of Gregor. At this point, they seemed to lose their temper. It wasn't easy to tell whether it was the father's behaviour or the understanding now dawning on them that they had been living next door to someone like Gregor. They called on the father for explanations, they too started waving their arms around, plucked nervously at their beards, and were slow to retreat into their room. In the meantime, Gregor's sister had overcome

the confusion that had befallen her after the sudden interruption in her playing, had, after holding her violin and bow in her slackly hanging hands a while and continuing to read the score as if still playing, suddenly got a grip on herself, deposited the instrument in the lap of her mother who was still sitting on her chair struggling for breath, and ran into the next room, which the tenants, yielding now to pressure from her father, were finally more rapidly nearing. Gregor could see how, under the practised hands of his sister, the blankets and pillows on the beds flew up in the air and were plumped and pulled straight. Even before the gentlemen had reached their room, she was finished with making the beds, and had slipped out. Father seemed once more so much in the grip of his stubbornness that he quite forgot himself towards the tenants. He merely pushed and pushed, till the middle gentleman stamped thunderously on the floor, and so brought him to a stop. 'I hereby declare,' he said, raising his hand and with his glare taking in also mother and sister, 'that as a result of the vile conditions prevailing in this flat and in this family'—here, he spat emphatically on the floor—'I am giving notice with immediate effect. I of course will not pay one cent for the days I have lived here; in fact I will think very carefully whether or not to proceed with—believe me—very easily substantiated claims against you.' He stopped and looked straight ahead of him, as though waiting for something else. And in fact his two friends, chimed in with the words: 'We too are giving in our notice, with immediate effect.' Thereupon he seized the doorknob, and slammed the door with a mighty crash.

Gregor's father, with shaking hands, tottered to his chair, and slumped down into it; it looked as though he were settling to his regular evening snooze, but the powerful nodding of his somehow disconnected head showed that he was very far from sleeping. All this time, Gregor lay just exactly where he had been when the tenants espied him. Disappointment at the failure of his plan, perhaps also a slight faintness from his long fasting kept him from being able to move. With a certain fixed dread he awaited the calamity about to fall upon his head. Even the violin failed to startle him, when it slipped through the trembling fingers of his mother, and with a jangling echo fell to the floor. *and began* 'Dear parents,' said his sister, and brought her hand down on the table top to obtain silence, 'things cannot go on like this. You might not be able to see it, but I do. I don't want to speak the name of my brother within the hearing of that monster, and so I will merely say: we have to try to get rid of it. We did as much as humanly possible to try and look after it and tolerate it. I don't think anyone can reproach us for any measure we have taken or failed to take.'

'She's right, a thousand times right,' his father muttered to himself. His mother, who—with an expression of derangement in her eyes—was still experiencing difficulty breathing, started coughing softly into her cupped hand.

His sister ran over to her mother, and held her by the head. The sister's words seemed to have prompted some more precise form of thought in the father's mind, and he sat up and was toying with his doorman's cap among the plates, which still hadn't been cleared after the tenants' meal, from time to time shooting a look at the silent Gregor.

'We must try and get rid of it,' the sister now said, to her father alone, as her mother was caught up in her coughing and could hear nothing else, 'otherwise it'll be the death of you. I can see it coming. If we have to work as hard as we are all at present doing, it's not possible to stand this permanent torture at

home as well. I can't do it any more either.' And she burst into such a flood of tears that they flowed down on to her mother's face, from which she wiped them away, with mechanical movements of her hand. 'My child,' said her father compassionately and with striking comprehension, but what shall we do? Grete merely shrugged her shoulders as a sign of the uncertainty into which—in striking contrast to her previous conviction—she had now fallen in her weeping.

If only he understood us,' said the father, with rising intonation; the sister, still weeping, waved her hand violently to indicate that such a thing was out of the question. 'If only he understood us,' the father repeated, by closing his eyes accepting the sister's conviction of the impossibility of it, 'then we might come to some sort of settlement with him. But as it is . . . We must get rid of it, cried the sister again, 'that's the only thing for it, Father. You just have to put from your mind any thought that it's Gregor. Our continuing to think that it was, for such a long time, therein lies the source of our misfortune. But how can it be Gregor? If it was Gregor, he would long ago have seen that it's impossible for human beings to live together with an animal like that, and he would have left of his own free will. That would have meant I didn't have a brother, but we at least could go on with our lives, and honour his memory. But as it is, this animal hounds us, drives away the tenants, evidently wants to take over the whole flat, and throw us out on to the street. Look, Father,' she suddenly broke into a scream, 'he's coming again! And in an access of terror wholly incomprehensible to Gregor, his sister even quit her mother, actually pushing herself away from her chair, as though she would rather sacrifice her mother than remain anywhere near Gregor, and dashed behind her father, who, purely on the basis of her agitation, got to his feet and half-raised his arms to shield the sister. Meanwhile, Gregor of course didn't have the least intention of frightening anyone, and certainly not his sister. He had merely begun to turn around, to make his way back to his room, which was a somewhat laborious, and eye-catching process, as, in consequence of his debility he needed his head to help with such difficult manoeuvres, raising it many times and bashing it against the floor. He stopped and looked around. His good intentions seemed to have been acknowledged; it had just been a momentary fright he had given them. Now they all looked at him sadly and silently. There lay his mother in her armchair, with her legs stretched out and pressed together, her eyes falling shut with fatigue; his father and sister were sitting side by side, his sister having placed her hand on her father's neck. Well, maybe they'll let me turn around now, thought Gregor, and recommended the manoeuvre. He was unable to suppress the odd grunt of effort, and needed to take periodic rests as well. But nobody interfered with him, and he was allowed to get on with it by himself. Once he had finished his turn, he straightaway set off wandering back. He was struck by the great distance that seemed to separate him from his room, and was unable to understand how, in his enfeebled condition, he had just a little while ago covered the same distance, almost without noticing. Intent on making the most rapid progress he could, he barely noticed that no word, no exclamation from his family distracted him. Only when he was in the doorway did he turn his head, not all the

way, as his neck felt a little stiff, but even so he was able to see that behind him nothing had changed, only that his sister had got up. His last look lingered upon his mother, who was fast asleep.

No sooner was he in his room than the door was pushed shut behind him, and locked and bolted. The sudden noise so alarmed Gregor that his little legs gave way beneath him. It was his sister who had been in such a hurry. She had been already standing on tiptoe, waiting, and had then light-footedly leaped forward. Gregor hadn't even heard her until she cried 'At last!' as she turned the key in the lock. What now?' wondered Gregor, and looked around in the dark. He soon made the discovery that he could no longer move. It came as no surprise to him; if anything, it seemed inexplicable that he had been able to get as far as he had on his frail little legs. Otherwise, he felt as well as could be expected. He did have pains all over his body, but he felt they were gradually abating, and would finally cease altogether. The rotten apple in his back and the inflammation all round it, which was entirely coated with a soft dust, he barely felt any more. He thought back on his family with devotion and love. His conviction that he needed to disappear was, if anything, still firmer than his sister's. He remained in this condition of empty and peaceful reflection until the church clock struck three a.m. The last thing he saw was the sky gradually brightening outside his window. Then his head involuntarily dropped, and his final breath passed feebly from his nostrils.

When the charwoman came early in the morning—so powerful was she, and in such a hurry, that, even though she had repeatedly been asked not to, she slammed all the doors so hard that sleep was impossible after her coming—she at first found nothing out of the ordinary when she paid her customary brief call on Gregor. She thought he was lying there immobile on purpose, and was playing at being offended; in her opinion, he was capable of all sorts of understanding. Because she happened to be holding the long broom, she tried to tickle Gregor away from the doorway. When that bore no fruit, she grew irritable, and jabbed Gregor with the broom, and only when she had moved him from the spot without any resistance on his part did she take notice. When she understood what the situation was, her eyes went large and round, she gave a half-involuntary whistle, didn't stay longer, but tore open the door of the bedroom and loudly called into the darkness: 'Have a look, it's gone and perished; it's lying there, and it's perished!'

The Samsas sat up in bed, and had trouble overcoming their shock at the charwoman's appearance in their room, before even beginning to register the import of what she was saying. But then Mr and Mrs Samsa hurriedly climbed out of bed, each on his or her respective side. Mr Samsa flinging a blanket over his shoulders. Mrs Samsa coming along just in her nightdress; and so they stepped into Gregor's room. By now the door from the living room had been opened as well, where Grete had slept ever since the tenants had come; she was fully dressed, as if she hadn't slept at all, and her pale face seemed to confirm that. 'Dead?' said Mrs Samsa, and looked questioningly up at the charwoman, even though she was in a position to check it all herself, and in fact could have seen it without needing to check. 'I should say so,' said the charwoman and, by way of proof, with her broom pushed Gregor's body across the floor a ways. Mrs Samsa moved as though to restrain the broom, but did not do so. 'Ah,' said Mr

Samsa, 'now we can give thanks to God.' He crossed himself, and the three women followed his example: Grete, not taking her eye off the body, said: 'Look how thin he had become. He stopped eating such a long time ago. I brought food in and took it out, and it was always untouched.' Indeed, Gregor's body was utterly flat and desiccated—only so apparent now that he was no longer up on his little legs, and there was nothing else to distract the eye.

'Come in with us a bit, Grete,' said Mrs Samsa with a melancholy smile, and, not without turning back to look at the corpse. Grete followed her parents into the bedroom. The charwoman shut the door and opened the window as far as it would go. In spite of the early hour, there was already something sultry in the morning air. It was, after all, the end of March.

The three tenants emerged from their room and looked around for their breakfast in outrage; they had been forgotten about. 'Where's our breakfast?' the middle gentleman sulkily asked the charwoman. She replied by setting her finger to her lips, and then quickly and silently beckoning the gentlemen into Gregor's room. They followed and, with their hands in the pockets of their somewhat shiny little jackets stood around Gregor's body in the bright sunny room.

The door from the bedroom opened, and Mr Samsa appeared in his uniform, with his wife on one arm and his daughter on the other. All were a little teary: from time to time Grete pressed her face against her father's arm.

'Leave my house at once!' said Mr Samsa, and pointed to the door, without relinquishing the women. 'How do you mean?' said the middle gentleman, with a little consternation, and smiled a saccharine smile. The other two kept their hands behind their backs and rubbed them together incessantly, as if in the happy expectation of a great scene, which was sure to end well for them. 'I mean just exactly what I said,' replied Mr Samsa, and with his two companions, walked straight towards the tenant. To begin with the tenant stood his ground, and looked at the floor, as if the things in his head were recombining in some new arrangement. 'Well, I suppose we'd better go then,' he said, and looked up at Mr Samsa, as if he required authority for this novel humility. Mr Samsa merely nodded curtly at him with wide eyes. Thereupon the gentleman did indeed swing into the hallway with long strides: his two friends had been listening for a little while, their hands laid to rest, and now skipped after him, as if afraid Mr Samsa might get to the hallway before them, and cut them off from their leader. In the hallway all three took their hats off the hatstand, pulled their canes out of the umbrella holder, bowed silently, and left the flat. Informed by what turned out to be a wholly unjustified suspicion, Mr Samsa and his womentfolk stepped out on to the landing, leaning against the balustrade, they watched the three gentlemen proceeding slowly but evenly down the long flight of stairs, disappearing on each level into a certain twist of the stairwell and emerging a couple of seconds later: the further they descended, the less interest the Samsa family took in their progress, and when a butcher's apprentice passed them and eventually climbed up much higher with his tray on his head, Mr Samsa and the women left the balustrade altogether, and all turned back, with relief, into their flat.

They decided to use the day to rest and to go for a walk: not only had they earned a break from work, but they stood in dire need of one. And so they all sat down at the table, and wrote three separate letters of apology—Mr Samsa

to the board of his bank, Mrs Samsa to her haberdasher, and Grete to her manager. While they were so engaged, the charwoman came in to say she was leaving, because her morning's tasks were done. The three writers at first merely nodded without looking up, and only when the charwoman made no move to leave did they look up in some irritation. 'Well?' asked Mr Samsa. The charwoman stood smiling in the doorway, as though she had some wonderful surprise to tell the family about, but would only do so if asked expressly about it. The almost vertical ostrich feather in her hat, which had annoyed Mr Samsa the whole time she had been working for them, teetered in every direction. 'So what is it you want?' asked Mrs Samsa, who was the person most likely to command respect from the charwoman. 'Well,' replied the charwoman, and her happy laughter kept her from speaking, 'well, just to say, you don't have to worry about how to get rid of the thing next door. I'll take care of it.' Mrs Samsa and Grete inclined their heads over their letters, as if to go on writing; Mr Samsa, who noticed that the woman was about to embark on a more detailed description of everything, put up a hand to cut her off. Being thus debarred from speaking, she remembered the great rush she was in, and, evidently piqued, called out, 'Well, so long everyone', spun round and left the apartment with a terrible slamming of doors.

'I'm letting her go this evening,' said Mr Samsa, but got no reply from wife or daughter, because the reference to the charwoman seemed to have disturbed their concentration, no sooner than it had returned. The two women rose, went over to the window, and stayed there, holding one another in an embrace. Mr Samsa turned towards them in his chair, and watched them in silence for a while. Then he called: 'Well now, come over here. Leave that old business. And pay a little attention to me.' The women came straightaway, caressed him, and finished their letters.

Then the three of them all together left the flat, which was something they hadn't done for months, and took the tram to the park at the edge of the city. The carriage in which they sat was flooded with warm sunshine. Sitting back comfortably in their seats, they discussed the prospects for the future; it turned out that on closer inspection these were not at all bad, because the work of all of them, which they had yet to talk about properly, was proceeding in a very encouraging way, particularly in regard to future prospects. The greatest alleviation of the situation must be produced by moving house: they would take a smaller, cheaper, but also better situated and more practical apartment than their present one, which Gregor had found for them. While they were talking in these terms, almost at one and the same time Mr and Mrs Samsa noticed their increasingly lively daughter, the way that of late, in spite of the trouble that had made her cheeks pale, she had bloomed into an attractive and well-built girl. Falling silent, and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, they thought it was about time to find a suitable husband for her. And it felt like a confirmation of their new dreams and their fond intentions when, as they reached their destination, their daughter was the first to get up, and stretched her nubile young body.