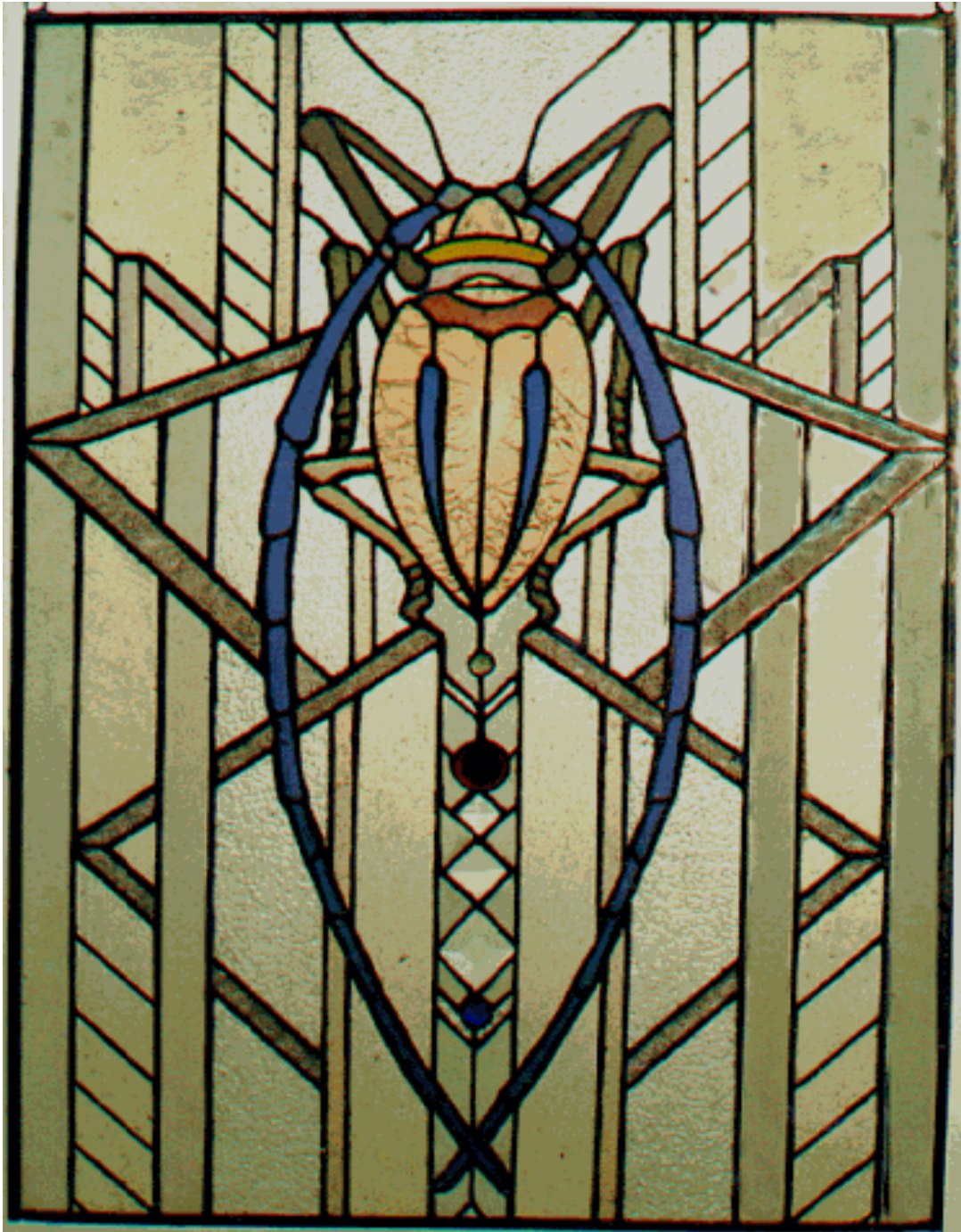


# THE METAMORPHOSIS



Franz Kafka

## The Metamorphosis

### I

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his domelike brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly stay in place and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes.

What has happened to me? he thought. It was no dream. His room, a regular human bedroom, only rather too small, lay quiet within its four familiar walls. Above the table on which a collection of cloth samples was unpacked and spread out—Samsa was a traveling salesman—hung the picture which he had recently cut out of an illustrated magazine and put into a pretty gilt frame. It showed a lady, with a fur hat on and a fur stole, sitting upright and holding out to the spectator a huge fur muff into which the whole of her forearm had vanished!

Gregor's eyes turned next to the window, and the overcast sky—one could hear raindrops beating on the window gutter—made him quite melancholy. What about sleeping a little longer and forgetting all this nonsense, he thought, but it could not be done, for he was accustomed to sleep on his right side and in his present condition he could not turn himself over. However violently he forced himself toward his right side he always rolled onto his back again. He tried it at least a hundred times, shutting his eyes to keep from seeing his struggling legs, and only desisted when he began to feel in his side a faint dull ache he had never felt before.

Oh God, he thought, what an exhausting job I've picked out for myself! On the road day in, day out. It's much more irritating work than doing the actual business in the home office, and on top of that there's the trouble of constant traveling, of worrying about train connections, the bad food and irregular meals, casual acquaintances that are always new and never become intimate friends. The devil take it all! He felt a slight itching up on his belly, slowly pushed himself on his back nearer to the top of the bed so that he could lift his head more easily, identified the itching place which was surrounded by many small white spots the nature of which he could not understand and was about to touch it with a leg, but drew the leg back immediately, for the contact made a cold shiver run through him.

He slid down again into his former position. This getting up early, he thought, can make an idiot out of anyone. A man needs his sleep. Other salesmen live like harem women. For instance, when I come back to the hotel

in the morning to write up my orders these others are only sitting down to breakfast. Let me just try that with my boss; I'd be fired on the spot. Anyhow, that might be quite a good thing for me, who can tell? If I didn't have to hold back because of my parents I'd have given notice long ago, I'd have gone to the boss and told him exactly what I think of him. That would knock him right off his desk! It's a peculiar habit of his, too, sitting on top of the desk like that and talking down to employees, especially when they have to come quite near because the boss is hard of hearing. Well, there's still hope; once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debts to him—that should take another five or six years—I'll do it without fail. I'll cut my ties completely then. For the moment, though, I'd better get up, since my train leaves at five.

He looked at the alarm clock ticking on the chest of drawers. Heavenly Father! he thought. It was half past six and the hands were quietly moving on, it was even past the half-hour, it was getting on toward a quarter to seven. Had the alarm clock not gone off? From the bed one could see that it had been properly set for four o'clock; of course it must have gone off. Yes, but was it possible to sleep quietly through that ear-splitting noise? Well, he had not slept quietly, yet apparently all the more soundly for that. But what was he to do now? The next train went at seven o'clock; to catch that he would need to hurry like mad and his samples weren't even packed, and he himself wasn't feeling particularly fresh and energetic. And even if he did catch the train he couldn't avoid a tirade from the boss, since the messenger boy must have been waiting for the five o'clock train and must have long since reported his failure to turn up. This messenger was a creature of the boss's, spineless and stupid. Well, supposing he were to say he was sick? But that would be very awkward and would look suspicious, since during his five years' employment he had not been ill once. The boss himself would be sure to come with the health insurance doctor, would reproach his parents for their son's laziness, and would cut all excuses short by handing the matter over to the insurance doctor, who of course regarded all mankind as perfectly healthy malingerers. And would he be so far wrong in this case? Gregor really felt quite well, apart from a drowsiness that was quite inexcusable after such a long sleep, and he was even unusually hungry.

As all this was running through his mind at top speed without his being able to decide to leave his bed—the alarm clock had just struck a quarter to seven—there was a cautious tap at the door near the head of his bed. "Gregor," said a voice—it was his mother's—"it's a quarter to seven. Didn't you have a train to catch?" That gentle voice! Gregor had a shock as he heard his own voice answering hers, unmistakably his own voice, it was true, but with a persistent horrible twittering squeak behind it like an undertone, which left the words in their clear shape only for the first moment and then rose up reverberating around them to destroy their sense, so that one could not be sure one had heard them rightly. Gregor wanted to answer at length

and explain everything, but in the circumstances he confined himself to saying: "Yes, yes, thank you, Mother, I'm getting up now." The wooden door between them must have kept the change in his voice from being noticeable outside, for his mother contented herself with this statement and shuffled away. Yet this brief exchange of words had made the other members of the family aware that Gregor was, strangely, still at home, and at one of the side doors his father was already knocking, gently, yet with his fist. "Gregor, Gregor," he called, "What's the matter with you?" And after a little while he called again in a deeper voice: "Gregor! Gregor!" At the other side door his sister was saying in a low, plaintive tone: "Gregor? Aren't you well? Do you need anything?" He answered them both at once: "I'm just about ready," and did his best to make his voice sound as normal as possible by enunciating the words very clearly and leaving long pauses between them. So his father went back to his breakfast, but his sister whispered: "Gregor, open the door, I beg you." However, he was not thinking of opening the door, and felt thankful for the prudent habit he had acquired on the road of locking all doors during the night, even at home.

His immediate intention was to get up quietly without being disturbed, to put on his clothes and above all eat his breakfast, and only then to consider what else had to be done, since he was well aware his meditations would come to no sensible conclusion if he remained in bed. He remembered that often enough in bed he had felt small aches and pains, probably caused by lying in awkward positions, which had proved purely imaginary once he got up, and he looked forward eagerly to seeing this morning's delusions gradually evaporate. That the change in his voice was nothing but the precursor of a bad cold, a typical ailment of traveling salesmen, he had not the slightest doubt.

To get rid of the quilt was quite easy; he had only to inflate himself a little and it fell off by itself. But the next move was difficult, especially because he was so unusually broad. He would have needed arms and hands to hoist himself up; instead he had only the numerous little legs which never stopped waving in all directions and which he could not control in the least. When he tried to bend one of them the first thing it did was to stretch itself out straight; and if he finally succeeded in making it do what he wanted, all the other legs meanwhile waved the more wildly in the most painful and unpleasant way. "But what's the use of lying idle in bed?" said Gregor to himself.

He thought that he might get out of bed with the lower part of his body first, but this lower part, which he had not yet seen and of which he could form no clear picture, proved too difficult to move; it shifted so slowly; and when finally, almost wild with annoyance, he gathered his forces together and thrust out recklessly, he had miscalculated the direction and bumped heavily against the lower end of the bed, and the stinging pain he

felt informed him that precisely this lower part of his body was at the moment probably the most sensitive.

So he tried to get the top part of himself out first, and cautiously moved his head toward the edge of the bed. That proved easy enough, and despite its breadth and mass the bulk of his body at last slowly followed the movement of his head. Still, when he finally got his head free over the edge of the bed he felt too scared to go on advancing, for, after all, if he let himself fall in this way it would take a miracle to keep his head from being injured. And under no circumstances could he afford to lose consciousness now, precisely now; he would rather stay in bed.

But when after a repetition of the same efforts he lay in his former position again, sighing, and watched his little legs struggling against each other more wildly than ever, if that were possible, and saw no way of bringing any calm and order into this senseless confusion, he told himself again that it was impossible to stay in bed and that the most sensible course was to risk everything for the smallest hope of getting away from it. At the same time, however, he did not forget to remind himself occasionally that cool reflection, the coolest possible, was much better than desperate resolves. At such moments he focused his eyes as sharply as possible on the window, but, unfortunately, the prospect of the morning fog, which enshrouded even the other side of the narrow street, brought him little encouragement and comfort. "Seven o'clock already," he said to himself when the alarm clock chimed again, "seven o'clock already and still such a thick fog." And for a little while he lay quiet, breathing lightly as if perhaps expecting the total silence around him to restore all things to their real and normal condition.

But then he said to himself: "Before it strikes a quarter past seven I absolutely must be quite out of this bed, without fail. Anyhow, by that time someone will have come from the office to ask for me, since it opens before seven." And he began to rock his whole body at once in a regular rhythm, with the idea of swinging it out of the bed. If he tipped himself out in that way he could keep his head from injury by lifting it at a sharp angle as he fell. His back seemed to be hard and was not likely to suffer from a fall on the carpet. His biggest worry was the loud crash he would not be able to help making which would probably cause anxiety, if not terror, behind all the doors. Still, he must take the risk.

When he was already half out of the bed—the new method was more a game than an effort, for he needed only to shift himself across by rocking to and fro—it struck him how simple it would be if he could get help. Two strong people—he thought of his father and the maid—would be amply sufficient; they would only have to thrust their arms under his convex back, lever him out of the bed, bend down with their burden, and then be patient enough to let him turn himself right over onto the floor, where it was to be hoped his little legs would then find their proper function. Well, ignoring the fact that the doors were all locked, should he

really call for help? In spite of his predicament he could not suppress a smile at the very idea of it.

He had already gotten to the point where he would lose his balance if he rocked any harder, and very soon he would have to make up his mind once and for all since in five minutes it would be a quarter past seven—when the front doorbell rang. "That's someone from the office," he said to himself, and grew almost rigid, while his little legs only thrashed about all the faster. For a moment everything stayed quiet. "They're not going to open the door," said Gregor to himself, grasping at some kind of irrational hope. But then of course the maid went as usual to the door with her determined stride and opened it. Gregor needed only to hear the first good morning of the visitor to know immediately who it was—the chief clerk himself. What a fate: to be condemned to work for a firm where the slightest negligence at once gave rise to the gravest suspicion! Were all the employees nothing but a bunch of scoundrels, was there not among them one single loyal devoted man who, had he wasted only an hour or so of the firm's time in the morning, was so tormented by conscience as to be driven out of his mind and actually incapable of leaving his bed? Wouldn't it really have been sufficient to send an office boy to inquire—if indeed any inquiry were necessary—did the chief clerk himself have to come and thus indicate to the entire innocent family that this suspicious circumstance could be investigated by no one less versed in affairs than himself? And more through the agitation caused by these reflections than through any act of will Gregor swung himself out of bed with all his strength. There was a loud thump, but it was not really a crash. His fall was broken to some extent by the carpet, his back, too, was less stiff than he had thought, and so there was merely a dull thud, not so very startling. Only he had not lifted his head carefully enough and had hit it; he turned it and rubbed it on the carpet in pain and irritation.

"Something fell in there," said the chief clerk in the adjacent room to the left. Gregor tried to suppose to himself that something like what had happened to him today might someday happen to the chief clerk; one really could not deny that it was possible. But, as if in brusque reply to this supposition, the chief clerk took a couple of firm steps in the next door room and his patent leather boots creaked. From the right-hand room his sister was whispering to inform him of the situation: "Gregor, the chief clerk's here." "I know," muttered Gregor to himself; but he didn't dare to make his voice loud enough for his sister to hear it.

"Gregor," said his father now from the room on the left, "the chief clerk has come and wants to know why you didn't catch the early train. We don't know what to say to him. Besides, he wants to talk to you in person. So open the door, please. He will be good enough to excuse the mess in your room." "Good morning, Mr. Samsa," the chief clerk was calling amiably meanwhile. "He's not well," said his mother to the visitor, while his father was still speaking through the door, "he's not well, sir, believe me. What else

would make him miss a train! The boy thinks about nothing but his work. It makes me almost cross the way he never goes out in the evening; he's been here all last week and has stayed at home every single evening. He just sits there quietly at the table reading a newspaper or looking through railroad timetables. The only amusement he gets is working with his jigsaw. For instance, he spent two or three evenings cutting out a little picture frame; you would be surprised to see how pretty it is; it's hanging in his room; you'll see it in a minute when Gregor opens the door. I must say I'm glad you've come, sir; we should never have gotten him to unlock the door by ourselves; he's so obstinate, and I'm sure he's unwell, even if he denied it earlier this morning." "I'll be right there," said Gregor slowly and carefully, not moving an inch for fear of losing one word of the conversation. "I can't think of any other explanation, madam," said the chief clerk, "I hope it's nothing serious. Although on the other hand I must say that we men of business—unfortunately or perhaps fortunately—very often simply have to ignore any slight indisposition, since business must be attended to." "Well, can the chief clerk come in now?" asked Gregor's father impatiently, again knocking on the door. "No," said Gregor. In the left-hand room a painful silence followed this refusal; in the right-hand room his sister began to sob.

Why didn't his sister join the others? She had probably just gotten out of bed and hadn't even begun to put on her clothes yet. Well, why was she crying? Because he wouldn't get up and let the chief clerk in, because he was in danger of losing his job, and because the head of the firm would begin dunning his parents again for the old debts? Surely these were things one didn't need to worry about for the present. Gregor was still at home and not in the least thinking of deserting the family. At the moment, true, he was lying on the carpet and no one who knew the condition he was in could seriously expect him to admit the chief clerk. But for such a small discourtesy, which could plausibly be explained away somehow later on, Gregor could hardly be fired on the spot. And it seemed to Gregor that it would be much more sensible to leave him in peace for the present than to trouble him with tears and entreaties. Still, of course, their uncertainty bewildered them all and excused their behavior.

"Mr. Samsa," the chief clerk called now in a louder voice, "what's the matter with you? Here you are, barricading yourself in your room, giving only 'yes' and 'no' for answers, causing your parents a lot of unnecessary trouble and neglecting—I mention this only in passing—neglecting your business duties in an incredible fashion. I am speaking here in the name of your parents and of your employer, and I beg you quite seriously to give me an immediate and precise explanation. You amaze me, you amaze me. I thought you were a quiet, dependable person, and now all at once you seem bent on making a disgraceful exhibition of yourself. The boss did hint to me early this morning a possible explanation for your disappearance—with reference to the cash payments that were entrusted to you recently—but I

almost pledged my solemn word of honor that this could not be so. But now that I see how incredibly obstinate you are. I no longer have the slightest desire to take your part at all. And your position in the firm is not exactly unassailable. I came with the intention of telling you all this in private, but since you are wasting my time so needlessly I don't see why your parents shouldn't hear it too. For some time now your work has been most unsatisfactory; this is not the best time of the year for business, of course, we admit that, but a time of the year for doing no business at all, that does not exist, Mr. Samsa, must not exist."

"But, sir," cried Gregor, beside himself and in his agitation forgetting everything else, "I'm just about to open the door this very minute. A slight illness, an attack of dizziness, has kept me from getting up. I'm still lying in bed. But I feel all right again. I'm getting out of bed right now. Just give me a moment or two longer! It's not going as well as I thought. But I'm all right, really. How such a thing can suddenly strike one down! Only last night I was quite well, my parents can tell you, or rather I did have a slight presentiment. I must have showed some sign of it. Why didn't I mention it at the office! But we always think we can get over any illness without having to stay at home. Oh sir, do spare my parents! All that you're reproaching me with now has no foundation; no one has ever said a word to me about it. Perhaps you haven't looked at the last orders I sent in. Anyway, I can still catch the eight o'clock train, I'm much the better for my few extra hours' rest. Don't let me detain you here, sir; I'll be attending to business very soon, and do be good enough to tell the boss so and to give him my best regards!"

And while all this was tumbling out in a rush and Gregor hardly knew what he was saying, he had reached the chest of drawers quite easily, perhaps because of the practice he had had in bed, and was now trying to get himself upright by means of it. He actually meant to open the door, actually meant to show himself and speak to the chief clerk; he was eager to find out what the others, after all their insistence, would say at the sight of him. If they were horrified then the responsibility was no longer his and he could relax. But if they took it in stride, then he had no reason either to be upset, and could actually get to the station for the eight o'clock train if he hurried. At first he slipped down a few times from the polished surface of the chest, but finally with one last heave he stood upright; he paid no more attention to the pains in the lower part of his body, no matter how much they smarted. Then he let himself fall against the back of a nearby chair, and clung to its frame with his little legs. With that he regained control over himself and he stopped speaking, for now he could hear that the chief clerk was saying something.

"Did you understand one single word of that?" the chief clerk was asking; "surely he can't be trying to make fools of us?" "Oh, dear God," cried his mother, in tears, "perhaps he's terribly ill and we're tormenting him. Grete! Grete!" she called out then. "Yes, Mother?" called his sister from the other side.

They were calling to each other through Gregor's room. "You must go this minute for the doctor. Gregor is ill. Go for the doctor, quick. Did you hear how he was speaking?" "That was the voice of an animal," said the chief clerk in a voice conspicuously soft compared to the shrillness of the mother's. "Anna! Anna!" his father was calling through the hall to the kitchen, clapping his hands, "get a locksmith at once!" And the two girls were already running through the hall with a swish of skirts—how could his sister have gotten dressed so quickly?—and were tearing the front door open. There was no sound of its closing again; they had evidently left it open, as one does in homes where some great misfortune has happened.

But Gregor was now much calmer. The words he uttered could no longer be understood apparently, although they seemed clear enough to him, even clearer than before, perhaps because his ear had grown accustomed to the sound of them. Yet at any rate people now believed that something was wrong with him, and were ready to help. The positive certainty with which these first measures had been taken comforted him. He felt himself drawn once more into the human circle and hoped for great and remarkable results from both the doctor and the locksmith, without really distinguishing precisely between them. To make his voice as clear as possible for the crucial consultations that were soon to take place he cleared his throat a little, as quietly as he could, of course, since this noise too might not sound human for all he was able to judge. In the next room meanwhile there was complete silence. Perhaps his parents were sitting at the table with the chief clerk, whispering, perhaps they were all leaning against the door and listening.

Slowly Gregor pushed the chair toward the door, then let go of it, caught hold of the door for support—the pads at the ends of his little legs were somewhat sticky—and rested against it for a moment after his efforts. Then he set himself to turning the key in the lock with his mouth. It seemed, unfortunately, that he didn't really have any teeth—what was he supposed to grip the key with?—but on the other hand his jaws were certainly very strong; with their help he did manage to get the key turning, heedless of the fact that he was undoubtedly damaging himself, since a brown fluid issued from his mouth, flowed over the key, and dripped onto the floor. "Just listen to that," said the chief clerk in the next room, "he's turning the key." That was a great encouragement to Gregor; but they should all have shouted encouragement to him, his father and mother too. "Come on, Gregor," they should have called out, "keep going, get a good grip on that key!" And in the belief that they were all following his efforts intently, he bit down frantically on the key with all the force at his command. As the turning of the key progressed he circled around the lock, holding on now only with his mouth, pushing on the key, as required, or pulling it down again with all the weight of his body. The louder click of the finally yielding lock literally quickened Gregor. With a deep breath of relief he said to

himself: "So I didn't need the locksmith," and laid his head on the handle to open the door wide.

Since he had to pull the door toward him, he was still invisible even when it was really wide open. He had to edge himself slowly around the near half of the double door, and to do it very carefully if he was not to fall flat on his back before he even got inside. He was still carrying out this difficult maneuver, with no time to observe anything else, when he heard the chief clerk utter a loud "Oh!"—it sounded like a gust of wind—and now he could see the man, standing as he was nearest to the door, clapping one hand over his open mouth and slowly backing away as if he were being repelled by some unseen but inexorable force. His mother—in spite of the chief clerk's presence her hair was still undone and sticking out in all directions—first clasped her hands and looked at his father, then took two steps toward Gregor and fell on the floor among her outspread skirts, her face completely hidden on her breast. His father clenched one fist with a fierce expression on his face as if he meant to knock Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly around the living room, covered his eyes with his hands, and wept until his great chest heaved.

Gregor did not go now into the living room, but leaned against the inside of the firmly shut wing of the door, so that only half his body was visible and his head above it tilted sideways to look at the others. It had meanwhile become much brighter outside; on the other side of the street one could see clearly a section of the endlessly long, dark gray building opposite—it was a hospital—its facade relentlessly punctuated by evenly spaced windows; the rain was still falling, but only in large, singly discernible drops, each one of which, it seemed, was literally being hurled to the ground below. The breakfast dishes were set out on the table in great number, for breakfast was the most important meal of the day for Gregor's father, who stretched it out for hours over various newspapers. Right opposite Gregor on the wall hung a photograph of himself in military service, as a lieutenant, hand on sword, a carefree smile on his face, inviting respect for his uniform and military bearing. The door leading to the hall was open, and one could see that the front door stood open too, showing the landing beyond and the beginning of the stairs going down.

"Well," said Gregor, knowing perfectly that he was the only one who had retained any composure, "I'll get dressed right away, pack up my samples, and start off. Will you, will you be willing to let me go? You see, sir, I'm not stubborn, and I like my work; traveling is a hard life, but I couldn't live without it. Where are you going now, sir? To the office? Yes? Will you give an honest account of all this? One can be temporarily incapacitated, but that's just the moment for remembering former services and for bearing in mind that later on, when the problem has been resolved, one will certainly work all the harder and with all the more concentration. I'm so indebted to the head of the firm, you know that very well. On the other hand, I have my

parents and my sister to worry about. I'm in great difficulties, but I'll get out of them again. Don't make things any worse for me than they already are. Stand up for me in the firm. Salesmen are not popular there, I know. People think they earn piles of money and just have a good time. A prejudice there's no particular reason to correct. But you, sir, have a better view of the situation than the rest of the staff, yes, let me tell you in confidence, a better view than the boss himself, who, being the owner, lets his judgment be easily swayed against one of his employees. And you know very well that a traveling salesman, who is almost never seen in the office all year long, can so easily fall victim to gossip and bad luck and unfair accusations he can't defend himself against because he generally knows nothing about them and only finds out when he comes back exhausted from one of his trips and then has to suffer the terrible consequences in some mysterious personal way. Sir, sir, don't go away without a word to me to show that you think me in the right at least to some extent!"

But at Gregor's very first words the chief clerk had already backed away and only stared at him with parted lips over one twitching shoulder. And while Gregor was speaking he did not stand still one moment but inched toward the door, yet without taking his eyes off Gregor, as if obeying some mysterious order not to leave the room. He was already in the hall, and to judge from the suddenness with which he took his last step out of the living room one could easily have thought he had burned the sole of his foot. Once in the hall he stretched his right arm before him toward the staircase as if some supernatural power were waiting there to deliver him.

Gregor realized that the chief clerk must on no account be allowed to go away in this frame of mind if his position in the firm were not to be endangered to the utmost. His parents did not understand this so well; they had convinced themselves in the course of years that Gregor was settled for life in this firm, and, besides, they were so preoccupied with their immediate troubles that all foresight had forsaken them. But Gregor had this foresight. The chief clerk must be detained, soothed, persuaded, and finally won over; the whole future of Gregor and his family depended on it! If only his sister were here! She was intelligent; she had begun to cry even while Gregor was still lying quietly on his back. And no doubt the chief clerk, so partial to ladies, would have been guided by her; she would have shut the door to the apartment and in the hall talked him out of his horror. But she was not there, and Gregor would have to handle the situation himself. And without remembering that he was still unaware what powers of movement he possessed, without even remembering that his words in all possibility, indeed in all likelihood, would again be unintelligible, he let go the wing of the door, pushed himself through the opening, and started to walk toward the chief clerk, who was already clinging ridiculously with both hands to the railing on the landing; but immediately, as he was feeling for a support, he fell down with a little cry upon all his numerous legs. Hardly was he down

when he experienced for the first time this morning a sense of physical well-being; his legs had firm ground under them; they were completely obedient, as he noted with joy; they even strove to carry him along in whatever direction he chose; and he was inclined to believe that a final relief from all his sufferings was at hand. But at the same moment as he found himself on the floor, not far from his mother, indeed just in front of her, rocking with pent-up eagerness to move, she, who had seemed so completely crushed, sprang all at once to her feet, her arms and fingers spread wide, cried: "Help, for God's sake, help!" bent her head down as if to see Gregor better, yet on the contrary kept backing senselessly away; had quite forgotten that the breakfast table stood behind her; sat down upon it abruptly and with a confused look on her face when she bumped into it; and seemed altogether unaware that the big coffeepot beside her had been tipped over and that coffee was gushing all over the carpet.

"Mother, Mother," said Gregor in a low voice, and looked up at her. The chief clerk had for the moment quite slipped from his mind; instead, he could not resist snapping his jaws together a couple of times at the sight of the streaming coffee. That made his mother scream again; she fled from the table and fell into the arms of his father, who rushed to catch her. But Gregor had no time now to spare for his parents; the chief clerk was already on the stairs; with his chin on the banister he was taking one last backward look. Gregor made a dash forward, to be as sure as possible of overtaking him; the chief clerk must have suspected what he was up to, for he leaped down several steps at once and vanished. "Aiee!" he yelled; it was the last sound heard from him, and it echoed through the whole stairwell.

Unfortunately, the flight of the chief clerk seemed completely to unhinge Gregor's father, who had remained relatively calm until now, for instead of running after the man himself, or at least not hindering Gregor in his pursuit, he seized in his right hand the walking stick that the chief clerk had left behind on a chair, together with his hat and overcoat, snatched in his left hand a large newspaper from the table, and began stamping his feet and flourishing the cane and the newspaper to drive Gregor back into his room. No entreaty of Gregor's was of any use, indeed no entreaty was even understood; no matter how humbly he inclined his head his father only stamped on the floor the more forcefully. Over there his mother had thrown open a window, despite the cold weather, and was leaning far out of it with her face in her hands. A powerful draft set in from the street to the staircase, the window curtains blew in, the newspapers on the table fluttered, stray pages sailed across the floor. Pitilessly Gregor's father drove him back, making hissing sounds like a savage. But Gregor had had no practice yet in walking backward, it really was a slow business. If only he had a chance to turn around he could get back to his room at once, but he was afraid of exasperating his father with such a time-consuming maneuver and at any moment the stick in his father's hand might strike him a fatal blow on the

back or the head. In the end, however nothing else was left for him to do since to his horror he realized that in moving backward he could not even control the direction he took; and so, keeping an anxious eye on his father all the time over his shoulder, he began to turn around as quickly as he could, which was in reality very slowly. Perhaps his father noticed his good intentions, for he did not interfere; instead, every now and then he even directed the maneuver like a conductor from a distance with the point of the stick. If only he would stop making that unbearable hissing noise! It drove Gregor out of his mind. By the time he managed to turn almost completely around, the hissing noise so distracted him that he even turned a little too far. But when he finally succeeded in getting his head right up in front of the doorway, it was clear that his body was too broad to fit easily through the opening. His father, of course, in his present mood was far from thinking of such a thing as opening the other half of the door, to let Gregor have enough space. The only thought in his head was that Gregor should get back into his room as quickly as possible. He would never have allowed Gregor to make the complicated preparations needed for standing upright again and perhaps slipping through the door that way. On the contrary, the father was now making more noise than ever in an effort to drive Gregor forward, as if there were no obstacle in the way at all; to Gregor, though, the noise at his rear no longer sounded like the voice of one single father; this was really no joke, and Gregor thrust himself—come what might—into the doorway. One side of his body rose up, he was tilted at an angle in the doorway, his flank was scraped raw; horrid blotches stained the white door, soon he was stuck fast and, left to himself, could not have moved at all; his little legs on one side fluttered trembling in the air, those on the other were crushed painfully to the floor—when from behind his father gave him a strong push which was literally a deliverance and he flew far into the room, bleeding violently. The door was slammed behind him with the stick, and then at last there was silence.

## II

Not until it was twilight did Gregor awake out of a deep sleep, more like a swoon than a sleep. He would certainly have awoken of his own accord not much later, for he felt himself sufficiently well rested, but it seemed to him as if a fleeting step and a cautious shutting of the door leading into the hall had aroused him. The electric lights in the street cast a pale sheen here and there on the ceiling and the upper surfaces of the furniture, but down below, where he lay, it was dark. Slowly, awkwardly trying out his feelers, which he now first learned to appreciate, he pushed his way to the door to see what had been happening there. His left side felt like one single long, unpleasantly tense scar, and he had actually to limp on his two rows of legs. One little leg, moreover, had been severely damaged in the course of that

morning's events—it was almost a miracle that only one had been damaged—and trailed uselessly behind him.

He had reached the door before he discovered what had really drawn him to it: the smell of food. For there stood a bowl filled with fresh milk in which floated little slices of white bread. He could almost have laughed with joy, since he was now far hungrier than in the morning, and he dipped his head almost up to his eyes in the milk. But soon in disappointment he withdrew it again; not only did he find it difficult to eat because of his tender left side—and he could only eat with the cooperation of his whole snorting body—he did not like the milk either, although milk had been his favorite drink and that was certainly why his sister had set it there for him; indeed it was almost with repulsion that he turned away from the bowl and crawled back to the middle of the room.

He could see through the crack of the door that the gas was turned on in the living room, but while usually at this time his father made a habit of reading the afternoon newspaper in a loud voice to his mother and occasionally to his sister as well, not a sound was now to be heard. Well, perhaps his father had recently given up this habit of reading aloud, which his sister had mentioned so often in conversation and in her letters. But there was the same silence all around, although the apartment was certainly not empty of occupants. "What a quiet life our family leads," said Gregor to himself, and as he sat there motionless staring into the darkness he felt great pride in the fact that he had been able to provide such a life for his parents and sister in such a fine apartment. But what if all the quiet, the comfort, the contentment were now to end in horror? To keep himself from being lost in such thoughts Gregor took refuge in movement and crawled back and forth in the room.

Once during the long evening one of the side doors was opened a little and quickly shut again, later the other side door too; someone had apparently wanted to come in and then thought better of it. Gregor now stationed himself immediately before the living room door, determined to persuade any hesitating visitor to come in or at least to discover who it might be; but the door was not opened again and he waited in vain. In the early morning, when the doors were locked, they had all wanted to come in, now that he had opened one door and the others had apparently been opened during the day, no one came in and even the keys were on the other side of the doors.

It was late at night before the gaslights were extinguished in the living room, and Gregor could easily tell that his parents and his sister had all stayed awake until then, for he could clearly hear the three of them stealing away on tiptoe. No one was likely to visit him, not until the morning, that was certain; so he had plenty of time to meditate at his leisure on how he was to rearrange his life. But the lofty, empty room in which he had to lie flat on the floor filled him with an apprehension he could not account for,

since it had been his very own room for the past five years—and half-unconsciously, not without a slight feeling of shame, he turned from the door and scuttled under the sofa, where he felt comfortable at once, although his back was a little cramped and he could not lift his head up, and his only regret was that his body was too broad to get all of it under the sofa.

He stayed there all night, spending the time partly in a light slumber, from which his hunger kept waking him up with a start, and partly in worrying and sketching vague hopes, which all led to the same conclusion, that he must lie low for the present and, by exercising patience and the utmost consideration, help the family to bear the inconvenience he was bound to cause them in his present condition.

Very early in the morning—it was still almost night—Gregor had the chance to test the strength of his new resolutions, for his sister, nearly fully dressed, opened the door from the hall and peered in apprehensively. She did not see him at once, yet when she caught sight of him under the sofa—well, he had to be somewhere, he couldn't have flown away, could he?—she was so startled that without being able to help it she slammed the door shut again. But as if regretting her behavior she opened the door again immediately and came in on tiptoe, as if she were visiting an invalid or even a stranger. Gregor had pushed his head forward to the very edge of the sofa and watched her. Would she notice that he had left the milk standing, and not for lack of hunger, and would she bring in some other kind of food more to his taste? If she did not do it of her own accord, he would rather starve than draw her attention to the fact, although he felt a wild impulse to dart out from under the sofa, throw himself at her feet, and beg her for something to eat. But his sister at once noticed, with surprise, that the bowl was still full, except for a little milk that had been spilled all around it, she lifted it immediately, not with her bare hands, true, but with a cloth and carried it away. Gregor was extremely curious to know what she would bring instead, and imagined all sorts of possibilities. Yet what she actually did next, in the goodness of her heart, he could never have guessed. To find out what he liked she brought him a whole selection of food, all set out on an old newspaper. There were old, half decayed vegetables, bones from last night's supper covered with a white sauce that had congealed, some raisins and almonds; a piece of cheese that Gregor would have pronounced inedible two days ago; a plain piece of bread, a buttered piece, and a piece both buttered and salted. Besides all that, she set down again the same bowl, into which she had poured some water, and which was apparently to be reserved for his exclusive use. And with great tact, knowing that Gregor would not eat in her presence, she withdrew quickly and even turned the key, to let him understand that he could make himself as comfortable as he liked. Gregor's little legs all whirred in his rush to get to the food. His wounds must have healed completely, moreover, for he no longer felt incapacitated, which amazed him and made him reflect how more than a month ago he had cut one finger a little with a knife and

was still suffering from the wound only the day before yesterday. Might it be that I am less sensitive now? he thought, and sucked greedily at the cheese, which more than any of the other delicacies attracted him at once, and strongly. One after another, and with tears of satisfaction in his eyes, he quickly devoured the cheese, the vegetables, and the sauce; the fresh food, on the other hand, had no charm for him, he could not even stand the smell of it and actually dragged away to some little distance the things he wanted to eat. He had long since finished his meal and was only lying lazily on the same spot when his sister turned the key slowly as a sign for him to retreat. That roused him at once, although he was nearly asleep, and he hurried under the sofa again. But it took considerable self-control for him to stay under the sofa, even for the short time his sister was in the room, since the large meal had swollen his body somewhat and he was so cramped he could hardly breathe. Slight attacks of breathlessness afflicted him and his eyes were bulging a little from their sockets as he watched his unsuspecting sister sweeping together with a broom not only the remains of what he had eaten but even the things he had not touched, as if these were now of no use to anyone, and hastily shoveling it all into a bucket, which she covered with a wooden lid and carried away. Hardly had she turned her back when Gregor came from under the sofa and stretched and puffed himself out.

In this manner Gregor was fed, once in the early morning while his parents and the maid were still asleep, and a second time after they had all had their midday meal, for then his parents took a short nap and the girl could be sent out on some errand or other by his sister. Not that they would have wanted him to starve, of course, but perhaps they could not have endured learning more about his feeding than from hearsay; perhaps too his sister wanted to spare them such little anxieties wherever possible, since they had quite enough to bear as it was.

Under what pretext the doctor and the locksmith had been gotten rid of on that first morning Gregor could not discover, for since what he said was not understood by the others it never occurred to any of them, not even his sister, that he could understand what they said, and so whenever his sister came into his room he had to content himself with hearing her utter only a sigh now and then and an occasional appeal to the saints. Later on, when she had gotten a little used to the situation—of course she could never get completely used to it—Gregor would occasionally catch a remark which was kindly meant or could be so interpreted. "Well, he liked his dinner today," she would say when Gregor had gobbled down all of his food; and when he had not eaten, which gradually happened more and more often, she would say almost sadly: "Everything's been left untouched again."

But although Gregor could get no news directly, he overheard a lot from the neighboring rooms, and as soon as voices were audible, he would run to the door of whichever room it was and press his whole body against it. In the first few days especially there was no conversation that did not

concern him somehow, even if only indirectly. For two whole days there were family consultations at every mealtime about what should be done; but also between meals the same subject was discussed, for there were always at least two members of the family at home, since no one wanted to be alone in the apartment and to leave it altogether empty was unthinkable. And on the very first of these days the cook—it was not quite clear what and how much she knew of the situation—fell on her knees before his mother and begged permission to leave, and when she departed a quarter of an hour later gave thanks for her release with tears in her eyes as if this were the greatest blessing that could ever be conferred on her, and without any prompting swore a solemn oath that she would never say a single word to anyone about what had happened.

Now Gregor's sister had to do the cooking too with her mother's help; true, this did not amount to much, for they ate scarcely anything. Gregor was always hearing one of the family vainly urging another to eat and getting no answer but "Thanks, I've had all I want," or something similar. Nor did they seem to be drinking anything either. Time and again his sister kept asking his father if he wouldn't like some beer and kindly offered to go and fetch it herself, and when he didn't answer suggested that she could ask the concierge to fetch it, so that he need feel no sense of obligation, but then a loud "No" came from his father and no more was said about it.

In the course of that very first day Gregor's father explained the family's financial position and prospects to both his mother and his sister. Now and then he rose from the table to get some document or notebook out of the small safe he had rescued from the collapse of his business five years earlier. One could hear him opening the complicated lock and taking papers out and shutting it again. These explanations were the first cheerful information Gregor had heard since his imprisonment. He had been of the opinion that nothing at all was left over from his father's business, at least his father had never said anything to the contrary, and of course he had not asked him directly. At that time Gregor's sole desire was to do his utmost to help the family to forget as soon as possible the catastrophe that had overwhelmed the business and thrown them all into a state of complete despair. And so he had set to work with unusual ardor and almost overnight had become a traveling salesman instead of a little clerk, with of course much greater chances of earning money, and his success was immediately transformed into hard cash which he could lay on the table before his amazed and happy family. These had been fine times, and they had never recurred, at least not with the same sense of glory, although later on Gregor had earned so much money that he was able to meet the expenses of the whole household and did so. They had simply gotten used to it, both the family and Gregor; the money was gratefully accepted and gladly given, but there was no special outpouring of warm feeling. With his sister alone had he remained intimate, and it was a secret plan of his that she, who, unlike

himself, loved music and could play the violin movingly, should be sent next year to study at the Conservatory, despite the great expense that would entail and which would have to be made up in some other way. During his brief visits home the Conservatory was often mentioned in the talks he had with his sister, but always merely as a beautiful dream which could never come true, and his parents discouraged even these innocent references to it; yet Gregor had made up his mind firmly about it and meant to announce the fact with due solemnity on Christmas Day.

Such were the thoughts, completely futile in his present condition, that went through his head as he stood glued upright to the door and listening. Sometimes out of sheer weariness he could no longer pay attention and accidentally let his head fall against the door, but he always pulled himself together again at once, for even the slight sound his head made was audible next door and brought all conversation to a stop. "What can he be doing now?" his father would say after a while, obviously turning toward the door, and only then would the interrupted conversation gradually start up again.

Gregor was now informed as amply as he could wish—for his father tended to repeat himself in his explanations, partly because it was a long time since he had dealt with such matters and partly because his mother could not always grasp things at once—that a certain amount of money, not all that much really, had survived the wreck of their fortunes and had even increased a little because the dividends had not been touched meanwhile. And besides that, the money Gregor brought home every month—he had kept only a few thalers for himself—had never been quite used up and now amounted to a substantial sum. Behind the door Gregor nodded his head eagerly, delighted by this evidence of unexpected thrift and foresight. True, he could really have paid off some more of his father's debts to the head of his firm with this extra money, and thus brought much nearer the day on which he could quit his job, but doubtless it was better the way his father had arranged it.

Yet this capital was by no means sufficient to let the family live on the interest from it; for one year, perhaps, or at the most two, they could live on the principal, that was all. It was simply a sum that ought not to be touched and should be kept for a rainy day; money for living expenses would have to be earned. Now his father was still healthy enough but an old man, and he had done no work for the past five years and could not be expected to exert himself; during these five years, the first years of leisure in his laborious though unsuccessful life, he had put on a lot of weight and become sluggish. And Gregor's old mother, how was she to earn a living with her asthma, which troubled her even when she walked through the apartment and kept her lying on a sofa every other day panting for breath beside an open window? And was his sister to earn her bread, she who was still a child of seventeen and whose life hitherto had been so pleasant,

consisting as it did in dressing herself nicely, sleeping long, helping with the housework, going out to a few modest entertainments, and above all playing the violin? At first whenever the need for earning money was mentioned Gregor let go of the door and threw himself down on the cool leather sofa beside it, he felt so hot with shame and grief.

Often he just lay there the long nights through without sleeping at all, scrabbling for hours on the leather. Or he worked himself up to the great effort of pushing an armchair to the window, then crawled up over the windowsill and, braced against the chair, leaned against the windowpanes obviously in some recollection of the sense of freedom that looking out of a window always used to give him. For, in reality, day-by-day things that were only a little distance away were growing dimmer to his sight; the hospital across the street, which he used to curse for being all too often before his eyes, was now quite beyond his range of vision, and if he had not known that he lived on Charlotte Street, a quiet street but still a city street, he might have believed that his window looked out on a desert waste where gray sky and gray land blended indistinguishably into each other. His quick-witted sister only needed to observe twice that the armchair stood by the window; after that whenever she had tidied the room she always pushed the chair back to the same place at the window and even left the inner casements open.

If he could have spoken to her and thanked her for all she had to do for him, he could have endured her ministrations better; as it was, they pained him. She certainly tried to make as light as possible of whatever was disagreeable in her task, and as time went on she succeeded, of course, more and more, but time also allowed Gregor to see through things better too. The very way she came in distressed him. Hardly was she in the room when she rushed straight to the window, without even taking time to shut the door, careful as she was usually to shield the sight of Gregor's room from the others, and as if she were about to suffocate tore the windows open with impatient hands, standing then in the open draft for a while even in the bitterest cold and drawing deep breaths. This rushing around and banging of hers upset Gregor twice a day; he would crouch trembling under the sofa all the while, knowing quite well that she would certainly have spared him such a disturbance had she found it at all possible to stay in his presence without opening the window.

On one occasion, about a month after Gregor's metamorphosis, when there was surely no reason for her to be still startled at his appearance, she came a little earlier than usual and found him gazing out of the window, quite motionless, and thus the perfect figure of terror. Gregor would not have been surprised had she not come in at all, for she could not immediately open the window while he was there, but not only did she retreat, she jumped back as if in alarm and slammed the door shut; a stranger might well have thought that he had been lying in wait for her there, planning to bite

her. Of course he hid himself under the sofa at once, but he had to wait until midday before she came again, and she seemed more ill at ease than usual. This made him realize how repulsive the sight of him still was to her, and that it was bound to go on being repulsive, and what an effort it must cost her not to run away even from the sight of the small portion of his body that stuck out from under the sofa. In order to spare her that, therefore, one day he carried a sheet on his back to the sofa—it cost him four hours' labor—and arranged it there in such a way as to hide himself completely, so that even if she were to bend down she could not see him. Had she considered the sheet unnecessary, she would certainly have stripped it off the sofa again, for it was clear enough that this total confinement of himself had not been undertaken just for his own pleasure, but she left it where it was, and Gregor even imagined that he caught a grateful look in her eye when he lifted the sheet carefully a very little with his head to see how she was taking the new arrangement.

For the first two weeks his parents could not bring themselves to enter his room, and he often heard them expressing their appreciation of his sister's activities, whereas formerly they had frequently been annoyed with her for being as they thought a somewhat useless girl. But now both of them often waited outside the door, his father and his mother, while his sister tidied his room, and as soon as she came out she had to tell them exactly how things were in the room, what Gregor had eaten, how he had conducted himself this time, and whether there was not perhaps some slight improvement in his condition. His mother, moreover, began relatively soon to want to visit him, but his father and sister dissuaded her at first with arguments which Gregor listened to very attentively and altogether approved. Later, however, she had to be held back by force, and when she cried out, "Let me in to see Gregor, he is my unfortunate son! Can't you understand that I must go to him?" Gregor thought that it might be well to have her come in, not every day, of course, but perhaps once a week; she understood things, after all, much better than his sister, who was only a child despite her courage and when all was said and done had perhaps taken on so difficult a task merely out of childish frivolity.

Gregor's desire to see his mother was soon fulfilled. During the daytime he did not want to show himself at the window, out of consideration for his parents, but he could not crawl very far around the few square yards of floor space he had, nor could he bear lying quietly at rest all during the night; in addition he was fast losing any interest he had ever taken in food, so for mere recreation he had formed the habit of crawling crisscross over the walls and ceiling. He especially enjoyed hanging suspended from the ceiling; it was altogether different from lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; one's body swung and rocked lightly; and in the almost blissful absorption induced by this suspension it could happen, to his own surprise, that he let go and fell plop onto the floor. Yet he now had his

body much better under control than formerly and even such a big fall did him no harm. His sister noticed at once the new distraction Gregor had found for himself—he left behind traces of the sticky stuff from his pads wherever he crawled—and she got the idea in her head of giving him as wide a field as possible to crawl around in and of removing the pieces of furniture that hindered him, above all the chest of drawers and the writing desk. But that was more than she could manage all by herself; she did not dare ask her father to help her; and as for the maid, a girl of sixteen who had had the courage to stay on after the cook's departure, she could not be asked to help, for she had begged as a special favor that she might keep the kitchen door locked and open it only on a definite summons; so there was nothing left but to turn to her mother one day when her father was out. And the mother did come, with exclamations of excitement and joy, which, however, died away at the door of Gregor's room. Gregor's sister, of course, went in first to see that everything was in order before letting his mother enter. In great haste Gregor had pulled the sheet lower than usual and arranged it more in folds so that it really looked as if it had been thrown casually over the sofa. And this time he did not peer out from under it; he denied himself the pleasure of seeing his mother on this first occasion and was only glad that she had come at all. "Come in, he's out of sight," said his sister, obviously leading her mother in by the hand. Gregor could now hear the two frail women struggling to shift the heavy old chest from its place, and his sister insisting on doing the greater part of the work herself without listening to the admonitions of her mother, who feared she might overstrain herself. It took a long time. After at least a quarter of an hour's tugging his mother said that the chest had better be left right where they had found it, for in the first place it was too heavy and could never be removed before his father came home, and with the chest halfway in the middle of the room like this it would only hamper Gregor's movements, while in the second place it was not at all certain that removing the furniture would be doing Gregor a favor. She was inclined to think the contrary; the sight of the naked wall made her own heart heavy, and why shouldn't Gregor have the same feeling, considering that he had been used to his furniture for so long and might feel forlorn without it. "And doesn't it look," his mother concluded in a low voice—in fact she had been almost whispering all the time as if to avoid letting Gregor, whose exact whereabouts she did not know, hear even the sounds of her voice, for she was convinced that he could not understand her words—"doesn't it look as if we were showing him, by taking away his furniture, that we have given up hope of his ever getting better and are just thoughtlessly leaving him to himself? I think it would be best to keep his room exactly as it has always been, so that when he comes back to us he will find everything unchanged and be able to forget all the more easily what has happened in the meantime."

On hearing these words from his mother Gregor realized that the lack of all direct human communication for the past two months together with the monotony of family life must have confused his mind, otherwise he could not account for the fact that he had seriously looked forward to having his room emptied of its furnishings. Did he really want his cozy room, so comfortably fitted with old family furniture, to be turned into a cave in which he would certainly be able to crawl unhampered in all directions but at the price of shedding instantly and totally all recollection of his human past? He had indeed been close to the brink of forgetfulness and only the voice of his mother, which he had not heard for so long, had drawn him back from it. Nothing should be taken out of his room; everything must stay as it was; he could not dispense with the beneficial effects of the furniture on his state of mind; and even if the furniture did hamper him in his senseless crawling around and around, that was no drawback but a great advantage.

Unfortunately his sister was of the contrary opinion; she had grown accustomed, and not without reason, to consider herself an expert in Gregor's affairs as against her parents, and so her mother's advice was now enough to make her determined on the removal not only of the chest and the desk, which had been her first intention, but of all the furniture except the indispensable sofa. This determination was not, of course, merely the outcome of childish recalcitrance and of the self-confidence she had recently developed so unexpectedly and at such cost; she had in fact perceived that Gregor needed a lot of space to crawl around in, while on the other hand he never used the furniture at all, so far as could be seen. Another factor might also have been the enthusiastic temperament of girls her age, which seeks to indulge itself at every opportunity and which now tempted Grete to exaggerate the horror of her brother's circumstances in order that she might do all the more for him. In a room where Gregor lorded it all alone over empty walls no one except herself was likely ever to set foot.

And so she was not to be moved from her resolve by her mother, who seemed, moreover, to be ill at ease in Gregor's room and therefore unsure of herself, was soon reduced to silence and helped her daughter as best she could to push the chest outside. Now, Gregor could do without the chest if need be, but the desk had to stay. As soon as the two women had gotten the chest out of his room, groaning as they pushed it, Gregor stuck his head out from under the sofa to see how he might intervene as considerately and cautiously as possible. But as bad luck would have it, his mother was the first to return, leaving Grete grappling with the chest in the room next door where she was trying to shift it all by herself, without of course moving it from the spot. His mother however was not accustomed to the sight of him, it might sicken her, and so in alarm Gregor backed quickly to the other end of the sofa, yet could not prevent the sheet from swaying a little in front.

That was enough to put her on the alert. She paused, stood still for a moment, and then went back to Grete.

Although Gregor kept reassuring himself that nothing out of the ordinary was happening, that only a few bits of furniture were being rearranged, he soon had to admit that all this trotting to and fro of the two women, their little shouts to each other, and the scraping of furniture along the floor had the effect on him of some vast disturbance coming from all sides at once, and however much he tucked in his head and legs and pressed his body to the floor, he had to confess that he would not be able to stand it much longer. They were clearing his room out, taking away everything he loved; the chest in which he kept his jigsaw and other tools was already dragged off; they were now loosening the desk which had almost sunk into the floor, the desk at which he had done all his homework when he was at the commercial academy, at the secondary school before that, and, yes, even at the primary school—he had no more time to waste in weighing the good intentions of the two women, whose existence he had by now almost forgotten, for they were so exhausted that they were laboring in silence and nothing could be heard but the heavy scuffling of their feet.

And so he broke out—the women were just leaning against the desk in the next room to give themselves a breather—and four times changed his direction, since he really did not know what to rescue first, then on the wall opposite, which was already all but empty, he was struck by the picture of the lady muffled in so much fur and quickly crawled up to it and pressed himself to the glass, which was a good surface to adhere to and soothed his hot belly. This picture at least, now entirely hidden beneath him, was going to be removed by nobody. He turned his head toward the door of the living room so as to observe the women when they came back.

They had not allowed themselves much of a rest and were already returning; Grete had twined her arm around her mother and was almost supporting her. "Well, what shall we take now?" said Grete, looking around. Her eyes met Gregor's from the wall. She kept her composure, presumably because of her mother, bent her head down to her mother, to keep her from looking up, and said, although in a trembling and unconvincing tone of voice: "Come, hadn't we better go back to the living room for a moment?" Her intentions were clear enough to Gregor, she wanted to get her mother to safety and then drive him down from the wall. Well, just let her try it! He clung to his picture and would not give it up. He would rather fly in Grete's face.

But Grete's words had succeeded in upsetting her mother, who took a step to one side, caught sight of the huge brown mass on the flowered wallpaper, and before she was really aware that what she saw was Gregor, screamed in a loud, hoarse voice, "Oh God, oh God!" fell with outspread arms over the sofa as if giving up, and did not move. "Gregor!" cried his sister, shaking her fist and glaring at him. This was the first time she had directly

addressed him since his metamorphosis. She ran into the next room for some smelling salts with which to rouse her mother from her fainting fit. Gregor wanted to help too—there was time to rescue the picture later—but he was stuck fast to the glass and had to tear himself loose; he then ran after his sister into the next room as if he could still advise her the way he used to; but all he could do was stand helplessly behind her; she meanwhile searched among various small bottles and when she turned around started in alarm at the sight of him; one bottle fell on the floor and broke; a splinter of glass cut Gregor's face and some kind of corrosive medicine splashed him; without pausing a moment longer Grete gathered up all the bottles she could carry and ran to her mother with them; she banged the door shut with her foot. Gregor was now cut off from his mother, who was perhaps about to die because of him; he dared not open the door for fear of frightening away his sister, who had to stay with her mother; there was nothing he could do but wait; and tormented by self-reproach and worry he began now to crawl to and fro, over everything, walls, furniture, and ceiling, and finally in his despair, when the whole room seemed to be reeling around him, fell down onto the middle of the big table.

A little while elapsed, Gregor was still lying there feebly and all around him was quiet; perhaps that was a good omen. Then the doorbell rang. The maid was of course locked in her kitchen, and Grete had to go and open the door. It was his father. "What's happened?" were his first words; the look on Grete's face must have told him everything. Grete answered in a muffled voice, apparently hiding her head on his chest: "Mother fainted, but she's better now. Gregor's broken loose." "Just what I expected," said his father, "just what I've been telling you would happen, but you women would never listen." It was clear to Gregor that his father had taken the worst interpretation of Grete's all too brief statement and was assuming that Gregor had been guilty of some violent act. Therefore Gregor must now try to calm his father down, since he had neither time nor means for an explanation. And so he ran to the door of his own room and crouched against it, to let his father see as soon as he came in from the hall that his son had the good intention of getting back into his room immediately and that it was not necessary to drive him there, but that if only the door were opened for him he would disappear at once.

Yet his father was not in the mood to perceive such fine distinctions. "Aha!" he cried as soon as he appeared, in a tone that sounded at once angry and exultant. Gregor drew his head back from the door and lifted it to look at his father. Truly, this was not the father he had imagined to himself; admittedly he had been too absorbed of late in his new recreation of crawling over the ceiling to take the same interest as before in what was happening elsewhere in the apartment, and he really should have been prepared for some changes. And yet, and yet, could that be his father? The man who used to lie wearily sunk in bed whenever Gregor set out on a

business trip; who on the evenings of his return welcomed him back lying in an easy chair in his bathrobe; who could not really rise to his feet but only lifted his arms in greeting, and who on the rare occasions when he did go out with his family, on one or two Sundays a year and on the most important holidays, walked between Gregor and his mother, who were slow walkers themselves, even more slowly than they did, muffled in his old overcoat, shuffling laboriously forward with the help of his crook-handled cane, which he set down most cautiously at every step and, whenever he wanted to say anything, nearly always came to a full stop and gathered his escort around him? Now he was standing there straight as a stick, dressed in a smart blue uniform with gold buttons, such as bank attendants wear; his strong double chin bulged over the stiff high collar of his jacket; from under his bushy eyebrows his black eyes darted fresh and penetrating glances; his formerly tangled white hair had been combed flat on either side of a shining and carefully exact parting. He pitched his cap, which bore a gold monogram, probably the badge of some bank, in a wide arc across the whole room onto a sofa and with the tail ends of his jacket thrown back, his hands in his trouser pockets, advanced with a grim visage toward Gregor. Likely enough he did not himself know what he meant to do; at any rate, he lifted his feet unusually high off the floor, and Gregor was dumbfounded at the enormous size of his shoe soles. But Gregor could not risk standing up to him, aware, as he had been from the very first day of his new life, that his father believed only the severest measures suitable for dealing with him. And so he ran before his father, stopping when he stopped and scuttling forward again when his father made any kind of move. In this way they circled the room several times without anything decisive happening, indeed the whole operation did not even look like a pursuit because it was carried out so slowly. And so Gregor confined himself to the floor, for he feared that his father might interpret any recourse to the walls or the ceiling as especially wicked behavior. All the same, he could not keep this race up much longer, for while his father took a single step he had to carry out a whole series of movements. He was already beginning to feel breathless, just as in his former life his lungs had not been very dependable. As he was staggering along, trying to concentrate his energy on running, hardly keeping his eyes open, in his dazed state never even thinking of any other escape than simply going forward, and having almost forgotten that the walls were free to him, which in this room, to be sure, were obstructed by finely carved pieces of furniture full of sharp points and jagged edges—suddenly something lightly flung landed close beside him and rolled in front of him. It was an apple; a second apple followed immediately; Gregor came to a stop in alarm; there was no point in running away now, for his father was determined to bombard him. He had filled his pockets with fruit from the dish on the sideboard and was now throwing apple after apple, without taking particularly good aim for the moment. The small red apples rolled about the floor as if magnetized and

bumped into each other. An apple thrown without much force grazed Gregor's back and glanced off harmlessly. But another, following immediately, landed right on his back and got stuck in it; Gregor wanted to drag himself forward, as if this startling, incredible pain would disappear if he moved to a different spot; but he felt as if he were nailed to the floor, and stretched himself out in the complete derangement of all his senses. With his last conscious look he saw the door of his room being torn open and his mother rushing out ahead of his screaming sister, in her underbodice, for her daughter had loosened her clothing to let her breathe more freely and recover from her swoon; he saw his mother rushing toward his father, leaving her loosened petticoats, one after another, behind her on the floor, stumbling over them straight to his father and embracing him, in complete union with him—but by now Gregor's sight was already failing—with her hands clasped around his father's neck as she begged for Gregor's life.

### III

The serious injury done to Gregor, which disabled him for more than a month—the apple remained stuck in his body as a visible reminder, since no one dared to remove it—seemed to have made even his father recollect that Gregor was a member of the family, despite his present unfortunate and repulsive shape, and ought not to be treated as an enemy, that, on the contrary family duty required them to swallow their disgust and to practice patience, nothing but patience.

And although his injury had impaired, probably forever, his powers of movement, and for the time being it took him long, long minutes to creep across his room like an old invalid—there was no question now of crawling up the wall—yet in his own opinion he was sufficiently compensated for this worsening of his condition by the fact that toward evening the living room door, which he used to watch intently for an hour or two beforehand, was now always opened, so that lying in the darkness of his room, invisible to the family, he was permitted to see them all at the lamp-lit table and listen to their talk by general consent, as it were, very different from his earlier eavesdropping.

True, their conversation lacked the lively character of former times, which he had always called to mind with a certain wistfulness in the small hotel bedrooms where he so often used to throw himself down, tired out, on the damp bedding. They were now mostly very silent. Soon after supper his father would fall asleep in his armchair; his mother and sister would admonish each other to be silent; his mother, bending low under the lamp, would sew delicate undergarments for a fashionable shop; his sister, who had taken a job as a salesgirl, was learning shorthand and French in the evenings in the hopes of getting a better position some day. Sometimes his father woke up, and as if quite unaware that he had been sleeping said to his mother:

"What a lot of sewing you're doing today!" and at once fell asleep again, while the two women exchanged a tired smile.

With a kind of mulishness his father persisted in keeping his uniform on even in the house; his robe hung uselessly on its peg and he slept fully dressed where he sat, as if he were ready for service at any moment and even here only awaiting the call of his superior. As a result, his uniform, which was not brand-new to start with, began to look dirty, despite all the loving care of the mother and sister to keep it clean, and Gregor often spent whole evenings gazing at the many greasy spots on the garment, gleaming with gold buttons always in a high state of polish, in which the old man sat sleeping in extreme discomfort and yet quite peacefully.

As soon as the clock struck ten his mother tried to rouse his father with gentle words and to persuade him after that to get into bed, for sitting there he could not have a proper sleep and that was what he needed most, since he had to go on duty at six. But with the mulishness he displayed since becoming a bank attendant he always insisted on staying longer at the table, although he regularly fell asleep again and finally only with the greatest trouble could be persuaded to relinquish his armchair and go to bed. However insistently Gregor's mother and sister kept urging him with gentle reminders, he would go on slowly shaking his head for a quarter of an hour, keeping his eyes shut, and refuse to get to his feet. The mother plucked at his sleeve, whispering endearments in his ear, the sister left her lessons to come to her mother's help, but it all made little impression on Gregor's father. He would only sink down deeper in his chair. Not until the two women hoisted him up by the armpits did he open his eyes and look at them both, one after the other, usually with the remark, "What a life. So this is the peace and quiet of my old age." And leaning on the two of them he would heave himself up, with difficulty, as if he were his own greatest burden, permit them to lead him as far as the door, and then wave them away and go on alone, while the mother threw down her needlework and the sister her pen in order to run after him and be of further assistance.

Who could find time in this overworked and tired-out family to bother about Gregor more than was absolutely necessary? The household was reduced more and more; the maid was now let go; a gigantic bony cleaning woman with white hair flying around her head came in mornings and evenings to do the rough work; Gregor's mother did all the rest, as well as all her sewing. Even various pieces of family jewelry, which his mother and sister had loved to wear at parties and celebrations, had to be sold, as Gregor discovered one evening from hearing them discuss the prices obtained. But what they lamented most was the fact that they could not leave the apartment, which was much too big for their present circumstances, because they could not think of any way to transfer Gregor. Yet Gregor saw well enough that consideration for him was not the main difficulty preventing the move, for they could easily have carried him in some suitable box with a

few air holes in it; what really kept them from moving into another apartment was rather their own complete hopelessness and the belief that they had been singled out for a misfortune such as had never happened to any of their relations or acquaintances. They fulfilled to the utmost all that the world demands of poor people: the father fetched breakfast for the minor clerks in the bank, the mother devoted her energy to making underwear for strangers, the sister trotted back and forth behind the counter at the demand of her customers, but more than this they had not the strength to do. And the wound in Gregor's back began to hurt him afresh when his mother and sister, after getting his father into bed, came back again, left their work lying, drew close to each other, and sat cheek by cheek—when his mother, pointing toward his room, said, "Shut that door now, Grete," and he was left again in darkness, while next door the women mingled their tears or perhaps sat dry-eyed, staring at the table.

Gregor hardly slept at all now, night or day. He was often haunted by the idea that the next time the door opened he would take the family's affairs in hand again just as he used to do; once again after this long interval, there appeared in his thoughts the figures of the boss and the chief clerk, the salesmen and the apprentices, the messenger boy who was so dull-witted, two or three friends in other firms, a chambermaid in one of the rural hotels, a sweet and fleeting memory, a cashier in a milliner's shop, whom he had courted earnestly but too slowly—they all appeared, together with strangers or people he had quite forgotten, but instead of helping him and his family they were all inaccessible and he was glad when they vanished. At other times he would not be in the mood to bother about his family, he was only filled with rage at the way they were neglecting him, and although he could not imagine what he might like to eat he would make plans for getting into the pantry to take the food that, after all, was due him, hungry or not. His sister no longer gave a second thought now to what might especially please him, but in the morning and at noon before she went to work hurriedly pushed into his room with her foot any food that was available, and in the evening cleared it out again with one sweep of the broom, heedless of whether it had been nibbled at, or—as most frequently happened—left completely untouched. The cleaning of his room, which she now always did in the evenings, could not have been done more hastily. Streaks of dirt were smeared along the walls, here and there lay balls of dust and filth. At first Gregor used to station himself in some particularly filthy corner when his sister arrived in order to reproach her with it, so to speak. But he could have sat there for weeks without getting her to make any improvement; she could see the dirt as well as he did, but she had simply made up her mind to leave it alone. And yet, with a touchiness that was new to her, and which seemed, moreover, to have infected the whole family, she jealously guarded her claim to be the sole caretaker of Gregor's room. His mother once subjected his room to a thorough cleaning, which was achieved only by means of several buckets

of water—all this dampness of course upset Gregor too and he lay stretched out, sulky and motionless on the sofa—but she was well punished for it. Hardly had his sister noticed the changed aspect of his room that evening than she rushed mortally offended into the living room and, despite the imploringly raised hands of her mother, burst into a storm of weeping, while her parents—her father had of course been startled out of his chair—looked on at first in helpless amazement; then they too began to go into action; the father reproached the mother on his right for not having left the cleaning of Gregor's room to his sister; shrieked at the sister on his left that never again would she be allowed to clean Gregor's room; while the mother tried to drag the father into his bedroom since he was beside himself with agitation; the sister, shaken with sobs, then beat upon the table with her small fists; and Gregor hissed loudly with rage because not one of them thought of shutting the door to spare him such a spectacle and so much noise.

Still, even if the sister, exhausted by her daily work, had grown tired of looking after Gregor as she formerly did, there was no need at all for his mother's intervention or for Gregor's being neglected. The cleaning woman was there. This old widow, whose strong and bony frame had enabled her to survive the worst a long life could offer, had no particular aversion to Gregor. Without being in the least inquisitive she had once by chance opened the door to his room and at the sight of Gregor, who, taken by surprise, began to rush to and fro although no one was chasing him, merely stood there in amazement with her arms folded. From that time on she never failed to open his door a little for a moment, morning and evening, to have a look at him. At first she even used to call him to her, with words which apparently she meant to be friendly, such as: "Come on over here, you old dung beetle!" or "Will you look at that old dung beetle!" To such forms of address Gregor made no answer, but stayed motionless where he was, as if the door had never been opened. Instead of being allowed to disturb him so senselessly whenever the whim took her, that servant should have been ordered instead to clean out his room daily. Once, early in the morning— heavy rain was lashing at the windowpanes, perhaps a sign that spring was on its way—Gregor was so exasperated when she began addressing him again that he turned and went toward her as if to attack her, although slowly and feebly enough. But the cleaning woman, instead of being afraid, merely picked up a chair that happened to be beside the door, held it high, and as she stood there with her mouth wide open it was clear that she meant to shut it only after she brought the chair down on Gregor's back. "Not coming any closer, then?" she asked, as Gregor turned away again, and quietly put the chair back into the corner.

Gregor was now eating hardly anything. Only when he happened to pass the food laid out for him did he take a bit of something in his mouth as a kind of game, kept it there for hours at a time, and usually spat it out again. At first he thought it was chagrin over the state of his room that prevented

him from eating, yet in fact he very quickly got used to the various changes in his room. It had become a habit in the family to put things into his room for which there was no space elsewhere, and there were plenty of these things now, since one of the rooms had been rented to three boarders. These serious gentlemen—all three of them with full beards, as Gregor once observed through a crack in the door—had a passion for order, not only in their own room but, since they were now members of the household, in all its arrangements, especially in the kitchen. They could not endure useless, let alone dirty, clutter. Besides, they had brought with them most of the furnishings they needed. For this reason many things could be dispensed with that it was no use trying to sell but that should not be thrown away either. All of them found their way into Gregor's room. The ash can likewise and the kitchen garbage can. Anything that was not needed for the moment was simply flung into Gregor's room by the cleaning woman, who did everything in a hurry; fortunately Gregor usually saw only the object, whatever it was, and the hand that held it. Perhaps she intended to take the things away again as time and opportunity offered, or to collect them until she could throw them all out in a heap, but in fact they just lay wherever she happened to throw them, except when Gregor pushed his way through the junk heap and arranged it somewhat, at first out of necessity because he had no room to crawl around in, but later with increasing enjoyment, although after such excursions, being sad and weary to death, he would lie motionless for hours.

Since the boarders often ate their supper at home in the common living room, the living room door stayed shut many an evening, yet Gregor reconciled himself quite easily to the shutting of the door, for often enough on evenings when it was opened he had disregarded it entirely and lain in the darkest corner of his room, quite unnoticed by the family. On one occasion the cleaning woman had left the door open a little and it stayed ajar even when the lodgers came in for supper and the lamp was lit. They sat down at the upper end of the table where formerly Gregor and his father and mother had eaten their meals, unfolded their napkins and took knife and fork in hand. At once his mother appeared in the doorway with a platter of meat and close behind her his sister with a bowl of potatoes piled high. The food steamed with a thick vapor. The boarders bent over the food set before them as if to scrutinize it before eating; in fact, the man in the middle, who seemed to pass for an authority with the other two, cut a piece of meat as it lay on the platter, obviously to determine if it was tender enough or should be sent back to the kitchen. He was satisfied, and Gregor's mother and sister, who had been watching anxiously, breathed a sigh of relief and began to smile.

The family itself took its meals in the kitchen. Nonetheless, Gregor's father came into the living room before going to the kitchen and with one prolonged bow, cap in hand, made a round of the table. The boarders all

stood up and muttered something in their beards. When they were alone again they ate their food in almost complete silence. It seemed remarkable to Gregor that among the various noises coming from the table he could always distinguish the sound of their chewing teeth, as if this were a sign to Gregor that one needed teeth in order to eat, and that even with the finest of toothless jaws one could do nothing. "I'm certainly hungry," said Gregor sadly to himself, "but not for that kind of food. How these boarders are stuffing themselves, and here am I dying of starvation!"

On that very evening—during all this time Gregor could not remember ever having heard the violin—the sound of violin playing came from the kitchen. The boarders had already finished their supper, the one in the middle had brought out a newspaper and given the other two a page apiece, and now they were leaning back at ease reading and smoking. When the violin began to play they pricked up their ears, got to their feet, and went on tiptoe to the hall door where they stood huddled together. Their movements must have been heard in the kitchen, for Gregor's father called out: "Is the violin playing disturbing you, gentlemen? It can be stopped at once." "On the contrary," said the middle boarder, "wouldn't the young lady like to join us here and play where it is much more pleasant and comfortable?" "Oh certainly," cried Gregor's father, as if he were the violin player. The boarders returned to the living room and waited. Soon Gregor's father arrived with the music stand, his mother carrying the music and his sister with the violin. His sister calmly made everything ready to start playing; his parents, who had never let rooms before and so had an exaggerated idea of the courtesy due to boarders, did not venture to sit down on their own chairs; his father leaned against the door, his right hand thrust between two buttons of his uniform jacket, which was formally buttoned up; but his mother was offered a chair by one of the boarders and, since she left the chair just where he had happened to put it, sat down in a corner off to one side.

Gregor's sister began to play; the father and mother, from either side, intently watched the movements of her hands. Gregor, attracted by the playing, ventured to move forward a little until his head was actually inside the living room. He felt hardly any surprise at his growing lack of consideration for the others; there had been a time when he prided himself on being considerate. Yet on this occasion he had more reason than ever to hide himself, since owing to the amount of dust that lay thick in his room and rose into the air at the slightest movement, he too was covered with dust; fluff and hair and remnants of food trailed with him, caught on his back and along his sides; his indifference to everything was much too great for him to turn on his back and scrape himself clean on the carpet, as once he had done several times a day. And in spite of his condition, no shame deterred him from advancing a little over the spotless floor of the living room.

To be sure, no one paid any attention to him. The family was entirely absorbed in the violin playing; the boarders however, who at first had stationed themselves, hands in pockets, much too close behind the music stand so that they could all have read the music, something which must have bothered his sister, had soon retreated to the window, half whispering with bowed heads, and stayed there while his father turned an anxious eye on them. Indeed, they were making it more than obvious that they had been disappointed in their expectation of hearing good or even entertaining violin playing, that they had had more than enough of the performance, and that they were putting up with this disturbance of their peace only out of courtesy. From the way they all kept blowing the smoke of their cigars high in the air through nose and mouth one could divine their irritation. And yet Gregor's sister was playing so beautifully. Her face tilted to one side, intently and sadly her eyes followed the notes of music. Gregor crawled a little farther forward and lowered his head to the ground so that it might be possible for his eyes to meet hers. Was he an animal, since music so moved him? He felt as if the way were opening before him to the unknown nourishment he craved. He was determined to push forward until he reached his sister, to pull at her skirt and so let her know that she should come into his room with her violin, for no one here appreciated her playing as he would appreciate it. He would never let her out of his room, at least not so long as he lived; his frightful appearance would become, for the first time, useful to him; he would watch over all the doors of his room at once and hiss like a dragon at any intruders; but his sister would not be forced to stay, she would stay with him of her own free will; she would sit beside him on the sofa, bend down her ear to him, and hear him confide that he had had the firm intention of sending her to the Conservatory and that, but for his mishap last Christmas—surely Christmas was long past?—he would have announced it to everybody without allowing a single objection. After this declaration his sister would be so touched that she would burst into tears, and Gregor would then raise himself to her shoulder and kiss her on the neck, which, now that she was a young working woman, she kept free of any ribbon or collar.

"Mr. Samsa!" cried the middle boarder to Gregor's father, and pointed, without wasting any more words, at Gregor, now working himself slowly forward. The violin fell silent, the middle boarder first smiled to his friends with a shake of the head and then looked at Gregor again. Instead of driving Gregor out, his father seemed to think it more important to begin by soothing down the boarders, although they were not at all agitated and apparently found Gregor more entertaining than the violin playing. He hurried toward them and, spreading out his arms, tried to urge them back into their own room and at the same time to block their view of Gregor. They now began to be really a little angry, one could not tell whether because of the old man's behavior or because it had just dawned on them that

without knowing it they had such a neighbor as Gregor in the next room. They demanded explanations of his father, they waved their arms like him, tugged uneasily at their beards, and only with reluctance backed toward their room. Meanwhile Gregor's sister, who stood there as if lost when her playing was so abruptly broken off, came to life again, pulled herself together all at once after standing for a while holding violin and bow in her slack and drooping hands and staring at her music, pushed her violin into the lap of her mother, who was still sitting in her chair fighting asthmatically for breath, and ran into the boarders' room, to which they were now being shepherded by her father rather more quickly than before. One could see the pillows and blankets on the beds flying about under her practiced fingers and being laid in order. Even before the boarders had actually reached their room she had finished making the beds and slipped out.

The father seemed once more to be so possessed by his mulish self-assertiveness that he was forgetting all the respect he owed his boarders. He kept driving them on and driving them on until, at the very door of the bedroom, the middle boarder stamped his foot loudly on the floor and so brought him to a halt. "I herewith declare," said the boarder, lifting one hand and looking also at Gregor's mother and sister, "that because of the disgusting conditions prevailing in this household and family"—here he spat on the floor with emphatic brevity—"I give you notice on the spot. Naturally I won't pay you a penny for the days I have lived here, on the contrary I shall consider suing you for damages, based on claims—believe me—that will be easily substantiated." He ceased and stared straight ahead, as if he were expecting something. In fact, his two friends at once rushed into the breach with these words: "And we too give notice on the spot." At that he seized the door handle and shut the door with a slam.

Gregor's father, groping with his hands, staggered forward and fell into his chair; it looked as if he were stretching himself out there for his usual evening nap, but the powerful and uncontrolled jerking of his head showed that he was far from asleep. Gregor had simply stayed quietly all the time on the spot where the boarders had caught sight of him. Disappointment at the failure of his plan, perhaps also the weakness arising from extreme hunger, made it impossible for him to move. He feared, with a fair degree of certainty, that at any moment the general tension would discharge itself in a combined attack upon him, and he lay there waiting. He did not react even to the noise made by the violin as it fell off his mother's lap from under her trembling fingers and gave out a resonant sound.

"My dear parents," said his sister, slapping her hand on the table by way of introduction "things can't go on like this. Perhaps you don't realize that, but I do. I won't utter my brother's name in the presence of this creature, and so all I say is: we must try to get rid of it. We've tried to look after it and to put up with it as far as is humanly possible, and I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest."

"She is absolutely right," said Gregor's father to himself. His mother, who was still choking for lack of breath, began to cough hollowly into her hand with a wild look in her eyes.

His sister rushed over to her and held her forehead. His father's thoughts seemed to have lost their vagueness at Grete's words, he sat more upright, fingering his service cap, which lay among the plates still on the table from the boarders' supper, and from time to time looked at the motionless form of Gregor.

"We must try to get rid of it," his sister now said explicitly to her father, since her mother was coughing too much to hear a word, "it will be the death of both of you, I can see that coming. When one has to work as hard as we do, all of us, one can't stand this continual torment at home on top of it. At least I can't stand it any longer." And she burst into such a fit of sobbing that her tears dropped onto her mother's face, from which she wiped them with mechanical flicks of her hand.

"My child," said the old man sympathetically and with evident understanding, "but what should we do?"

Gregor's sister merely shrugged her shoulders to indicate the feeling of helplessness that, in contrast to her former confidence, had overtaken her during her weeping fit.

"If only he could understand us," said her father, half questioningly; Grete, still sobbing, vehemently waved a hand to show how unthinkable that was.

"If he could understand us," repeated the old man, shutting his eyes to consider his daughter's conviction that understanding was impossible, "then perhaps we might come to some agreement with him. But as it is . . ."

"He must go," cried Gregor's sister, "that's the only solution, Father. You must just try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we've believed it for so long is the root of all our misfortune. But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature, and he'd have gone away of his own accord. We wouldn't have any brother then, but we'd be able to go on living and keep his memory in honor. As it is, this creature persecutes us, drives away our boarders, obviously wants the whole apartment to himself, and would have us all sleep in the gutter. Look, Father," she suddenly shrieked, "he's at it again!" And in a state of panic that was quite incomprehensible to Gregor she even left her mother's side, literally thrusting the chair from her as if she would rather sacrifice her mother than be anywhere near Gregor, and rushed behind her father, who also stood up, upset by her behavior, and half spread his arms out as if to protect her.

Yet Gregor hadn't the slightest intention of frightening anyone, least of all his sister. He had only begun to turn around in order to crawl back to his room, but it was certainly a startling operation to see, since because of his disabled condition he could not execute the difficult turning movements

except by lifting his head and then bracing it against the floor over and over again. He paused and looked around. His good intentions seemed to have been recognized; the alarm had only been momentary. Now they were all watching him in melancholy silence. His mother lay in her chair, her legs stiffly outstretched and pressed together, her eyes almost closing from sheer exhaustion; his father and his sister were sitting beside each other, his sister's arm around the father's neck.

Now perhaps they'll let me go on turning around, thought Gregor, and began his labors again. He could not stop himself from panting with the effort, and had to pause now and then to take a breath. Nor was anyone rushing him, he was left entirely to himself. When he had completed the turn, he began at once to crawl straight back. He was amazed at the distance separating him from his room and could not understand how in his weak state he had managed to accomplish the same journey so recently, almost without noticing it. Intent on crawling as fast as possible he hardly realized that not a single word, not one exclamation from his family, interfered with his progress. Only when he was already in the doorway did he turn his head around, not completely, for his neck muscles were getting stiff, but enough to see that nothing had changed behind him except that his sister had risen to her feet. His last glance fell on his mother, who was now sound asleep.

Hardly was he inside his room when the door was hastily pushed shut, bolted, and locked. The sudden noise behind him startled him so much that his little legs collapsed beneath him. It was his sister who had shown such haste. She had been standing ready, waiting, and had made a light spring forward, Gregor had not even heard her coming, and she cried "At last!" to her parents as she turned the key in the lock.

"And now?" Gregor asked himself, looking around in the darkness. Soon he made the discovery that he was now completely unable to move. This did not surprise him, rather it seemed unnatural that he should ever actually have been able to move at all on these feeble little legs. Otherwise he felt relatively comfortable. True, his whole body was aching, but it seemed that the pain was gradually growing less and would finally pass away. The rotting apple in his back and the inflamed area around it, all covered with soft dust, already hardly troubled him. He thought of his family with tenderness and love. The conviction that he must disappear was one that he held even more strongly than his sister, if that were possible. In this state of empty and peaceful meditation he remained until the tower clock struck three in the morning. The first broadening of light in the world outside the window just entered his consciousness. Then his head sank to the floor of its own accord and from his nostrils came the last faint flicker of his breath.

When the cleaning woman arrived early in the morning out of sheer strength and impatience she slammed all the doors so loudly, regardless of how often she had been begged not to do so, that no one in the whole apartment could enjoy any quiet sleep after her arrival—she noticed nothing

unusual as she took her customary peek into Gregor's room. She thought he was lying motionless on purpose, pretending to be in a sulk; she credited him with every kind of intelligence. Since she happened to have the long-handled broom in her hand she tried to tickle him with it from the doorway. When that too produced no reaction she felt provoked and poked at him a little harder, and only when she had pushed him along the floor without meeting any resistance was her attention aroused. Soon the truth of the matter dawned on her, her eyes widened, she let out a whistle, yet did not waste much time over it but tore open the door of the Samsas' bedroom and yelled into the darkness at the top of her voice: "Come look at this, it's dead; it's lying there, dead as a doornail!"

Mr. and Mrs. Samsa sat bolt upright in their double bed and had some difficulty getting over the shock before they realized the nature of the cleaning woman's announcement. But then they got out of bed quickly, one on either side, Mr. Samsa throwing a blanket over his shoulders, Mrs. Samsa in nothing but her nightgown; in this array they entered Gregor's room. Meanwhile the door of the living room opened, too, where Grete had been sleeping since the arrival of the boarders; she was completely dressed, as if she had not been to bed, which seemed to be confirmed also by the paleness of her face. "Dead?" said Mrs. Samsa, looking questioningly at the cleaning woman, although she could have investigated for herself, indeed the fact was obvious enough without investigation. "I should say so," said the cleaning woman, and to prove it she pushed Gregor's corpse a long way to one side with her broomstick; Mrs. Samsa made a movement as if to stop her, but checked herself. "Well," said Mr. Samsa, "now thanks be to God." He crossed himself, and the three women followed his example. Grete, whose eyes never left the corpse, said: "Just see how thin he was. It's such a long time since he ate anything at all. The food came out again just as it went in." Indeed, Gregor's body was completely flat and dry, as could only now be seen when it was no longer supported by the legs and nothing prevented one from looking closely at it.

"Come into our room, Grete, for a little while," said Mrs. Samsa with a tremulous smile, and Grete, not without looking back at the corpse, followed her parents into their bedroom. The cleaning woman shut the door and opened the window wide. Although it was still early in the morning a certain softness was perceptible in the fresh air. After all, it was already the end of March.

The three boarders emerged from their room and were surprised to see no breakfast; they had been forgotten. "Where's our breakfast?" said the middle boarder peevishly to the cleaning woman. But she put her finger to her lips and hastily, without a word, indicated by gestures that they should follow her into Gregor's room. They did so and stood, their hands in the pockets of their somewhat shabby coats around Gregor's corpse in the room where it was now fully light.

At that the door of the Samsas' bedroom opened and Mr. Samsa appeared in his uniform, his wife on one arm, his daughter on the other. They all looked a little as if they had been crying; from time to time Grete pressed her face against her father's arm.

"Leave my home at once!" said Mr. Samsa, and pointed to the door without disengaging himself from the women. "What do you mean by that?" said the middle boarder, taken somewhat aback, with a feeble smile. The two others put their hands behind their backs and kept rubbing them together, as if in gleeful expectation of a big fight in which they were bound to come out the winners. "I mean just what I say," answered Mr. Samsa, and advanced in a straight line with his two companions toward the boarder. He stood his ground quietly at first, looking at the floor as if his thoughts were forming a new pattern in his head. "Well, let's go then," he said, and looked up at Mr. Samsa as if in a sudden access of humility he were asking his approval even for this decision. Mr. Samsa merely nodded at him briefly once or twice with wide-open eyes. Thereupon the boarder actually did go with long strides into the front hall; his two friends had been listening and by now had stopped rubbing their hands together and went scuttling after him as if afraid that Mr. Samsa might get into the hall before them and cut them off from their leader. In the hall all three took their hats from the rack, their sticks from the umbrella stand, bowed in silence, and left the apartment. With a suspiciousness that proved quite unfounded Mr. Samsa and the two women followed them out to the landing; leaning over the banister they watched the three figures slowly but surely going down the long stairs, vanishing from sight at a certain turn of the staircase on every floor and coming into view again after a moment or so; the more they dwindled, the more the Samsa family's interest in them dwindled, and when a butcher's boy met them and passed them on the stairs coming up proudly with a tray on his head, Mr. Samsa and the two women soon left the landing and as if a burden had been lifted from them went back into their apartment.

They decided to spend this day in resting and going for a stroll; they had not only deserved such a respite from work, but absolutely needed it. And so they sat down at the table and wrote three notes of excuse, Mr. Samsa to his board of management, Mrs. Samsa to her employer, and Grete to the head of her firm. While they were writing, the cleaning woman came in to say that she was going now, since her morning's work was finished. At first they only nodded without looking up, but as she kept hovering there they eyed her irritably. "Well?" said Mr. Samsa. The cleaning woman stood grinning in the doorway as if she had good news to impart to the family but meant not to say a word unless properly questioned. The little ostrich feather standing upright on her hat, which had annoyed Mr. Samsa ever since she had been hired, was waving gaily in all directions. "Well, what is it then?" asked Mrs. Samsa, who obtained more respect from the cleaning woman than the others. "Oh," said the cleaning woman, so overcome by amiable laughter

that she could not continue right away, "just this: you don't need to worry about how to get rid of that thing in the next room. It's been taken care of already." Mrs. Samsa and Grete bent over their letters again, as if continuing to write; Mr. Samsa, who perceived that she was eager to begin describing it all in detail, stopped her with a decisive gesture of his outstretched hand. But since she was not allowed to tell her story, she remembered the great hurry she was in, obviously deeply insulted: "Bye, everybody," she said, whirling off violently, and departed with a frightful slamming of doors.

"She'll be given notice tonight," said Mr. Samsa, but neither from his wife nor his daughter did he get any answer, for the cleaning woman seemed to have shattered again the composure they had barely achieved. They rose, went to the window and stayed there, holding each other tight. Mr. Samsa turned in his chair to look at them and quietly observed them for a while. Then he called out: "Come over here, you two. Let bygones be bygones. And you might have a little consideration for me too." The two of them complied at once, ran over to him, caressed him, and then quickly finished their letters.

Then all three left the apartment together, which was more than they had done for months, and took the streetcar to the open country outside of town. The car, in which they were the only passengers, was filled with warm sunshine. Leaning comfortably back in their seats they talked over their prospects for the future, and it appeared on closer inspection that these were not at all bad, for the jobs they had, which so far they had never really discussed with each other, were all three quite promising and likely to lead to better things later on. The greatest immediate improvement in their situation would of course come from moving to another apartment; they wanted to take a smaller and cheaper but also better situated and more practical apartment than the one they had, which Gregor had selected. While they were thus conversing it struck both Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, almost at the same moment, as they became aware of their daughter's increasing vivacity, that in spite of all the sorrow of recent times, which had made her cheeks pale, she had bloomed into a pretty girl with a good figure. They grew quieter and half unconsciously exchanged glances of complete agreement, having both come to the conclusion that it would soon be time to find a good husband for her. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and excellent intentions that at the end of their ride their daughter sprang to her feet first and stretched her young body.