

Metamorphosis

by Franz Kafka

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Scene 1

We see two rooms in an apartment in a small mittel-European city in what may be the early twentieth century. Gregor's room is a small bedroom. It is simply but adequately furnished. A bed. A desk. A chair. Some cloth samples on the chair. A bookcase. A sofa. On one wall a picture of a beautiful woman in a fur stole. For now this room is in semi-darkness. The living/dining room below is where the family eat. It is lined with books and has an effortful civility – lower middle class but fallen on tough times. Pictures, books. Lamp-lit eating table. A through door leads to the kitchen. Another door leads out to the building's landing.

Outside it is raining slightly. The sky outside the windows is grey and colourless.

Everybody wakes up. Nobody is going anywhere.

It's a normal morning, a morning of routines. Gregor's father is eating his breakfast, reading the paper. Grete, Gregor's sister is bringing in the coffee. Gregor's mother is fussing.

Just before the family breakfast begins the Father notices a pair of shoes. The father picks the shoes up.

Father Lucy? Come and see.

The mother approaches.

Mother What is it?

Father Gregor's shoes.

Mother What about them?

Father They're still here.

Beat. He shows them to her.

Mother But I don't understand. They can't be.

Father But they are.

Mother But he's left. He leaves at a quarter to five to catch his train.

Father Well his shoes have not left with him.

Grete	Go and check Mother
	<i>The mother turns to climb the stairs.</i>
] Mother	Gregor?
	<i>She walks up the stairs. Grete stands in the middle of the stairs, the Father stage left by the dining table. The anticipation is high.</i>
	<i>Mother tries to open, can't.</i>
Father	Well? Is he there?
	<i>She knocks.</i>
Mother	Gregor it's gone seven o'clock. Shouldn't you be at work by now?
	<i>Inside Gregor Samsa awakes from bad dreams and finds himself turned into a huge insect. Gregor is lying legs up in his single bed.</i>
	<i>Pause</i>
Mother	Gregor dear?
	<i>Down stairs – impatient shouting.</i>
Father	Tell him he's missed his train.
Mother	Gregor, are you awake?
Father	He's supposed to be in the office by quarter to seven.
Grete	He's tired.
Father	We're all tired.
Grete	He's been working so hard.
Father	He should be up by four, out of the house by quarter past five. What on earth is the matter with him?
	<i>Father bellows.</i>
	Gregor Samsa!
Gregor	What time is it?

Mother Is that you dear? You're terribly late you know.

Gregor I'm all right mother. I'm just getting up.

Father calls out from the living room

Father What's his excuse?

Mother (*whispering to the others*) I can't understand him. Are you sure you're all right Gregor? Can I bring you something?

Gregor I must have overslept. I had this terrible dream. It's all the travelling, all the train journeys and hotels. I don't sleep. I'm coming now.

Mother What did he say?

Grete I can't make it out. His voice is not normal.

Mother I can't understand a word he says. Gregor tell us what's wrong!

Father Is he dressed yet? Get a move on man!

Grete Open the door Gregor.

Gregor The next train leaves at half seven. I can still get that one. I'll have to hurry. Get me some food mother, I'm starving. If I go hell for leather, I can make it.

Mother Oh Hermann. I have no idea what he's saying. It's frightening me! Gregor I can't understand you!

Gregor I must have caught a chill. It's the hotel bedrooms, they're so draughty in the winter.

Father Gregor open this door!

Gregor I'm just getting up now.

Father This is your father speaking. Open this door immediately!

They start to pound against the door. Terrible noise. Interrupted by:

The front door bell rings. The family pause.

Father Who could that be?

Mother	Go and see Grete.
Grete	Yes mother. <i>(she looks through the window above the door)</i> It's a man in a suit.
Mother	Someone from his work!
Gregor	No don't. Don't open the door. Talk to him through the keyhole. Tell him I'm on my way.
Father	Gregor stop snorting and open this door. Don't open the front door!
	<i>Grete opens the front door</i>
Grete	Good morning. I apologise for my appearance.
Stietl	Good morning I'm wondering if employee Gregor Samsa is here?
Grete	He's still in bed.
	<i>Pause</i>
Stietl	In bed?
Gregor	Don't let him in!
Stietl	My name is Herr Stietl. I head up employee Samsa's department.
Grete	Would you like to come in?
Gregor	I told you not to let him in!
	<i>Gregor falls out of bed</i>
Stietl	What's that noise?
Grete	I'm afraid that's Gregor. Something's happened. Mother, Father this is Herr Stietl from Gregor's work.
Stietl	A pleasure to meet you Frau Samsa. I head up employee Samsa's department.
Mother	He's not himself Herr Stietl. He's not well. It's the long winter we've been having. You know Gregor - he never misses a train. Always prompt and well presented. He's never received the slightest complaint before. He works all

one's bringing in the millions this winter but there's low sales and there's no sales. You hear me Herr Samsa?

Gregor Herr Stietl I'm letting you in right now. I came over all light-headed. A dizziness.

Stietl What's he saying?

Gregor Last night I had a sense. Just a sense that something might happen. That I might be laid low. But I thought I'd get over it. And I tell you what Herr Stietl. I will get over it! The eight o'clock train has my name on it.

Stietl Is this some kind of joke?

Father Dear God what's happened to you boy?

Mother Grete go straight to the doctor. Tell him Gregor is ill. Bring him instantly.

Grete Yes mother.

Exit. Gregor struggles to reach the key

Gregor Those accusations of embezzlement you mentioned are absurd Herr Stietl. I refute them absolutely. I may need a locksmith to help me Grete. And as for the sales figures. You obviously haven't seen the latest batch of orders from my trip East. A bumper crop! An abundance!

Stietl Listen. I can hear something.

Gregor is reaching the key.

He's turning the key.

Long pause as he struggles with the key... The family lean in.. unbearable tension.

Gregor I didn't need a locksmith after all!

Pause. The door opens. Stietl enters. Stops dead.

Stietl Ohhh....

He staggers out of the room. Mother enters

Mother Aaaah!

She faints.

Father Lucy? (*he sees gregor*) Aaagggghhhh!

He collapses weeping.

Gregor I'll just get my samples. I need to find my coat and I can be on my way. It's so cold out. Where are you going Herr Stietl? Shall we travel together? I need you to explain to head office the cause for the delay – a minor affliction, now thankfully overcome.

Stietl Bet away from me!

Gregor has found his legs now and is scuttling out of his room towards Stietl

Gregor chases Stietl into the living room.

Gregor Herr Stietl I need your support at this time. I know what they think of us travelling salesmen. One late arrival and the gossip begins! "Samsa was late. Samsa's a glory boy. Samsa's not pulling his weight". Herr Stietl - give me your word that you will stand up for me!

Mother enters into the living room, sees Gregor. Screams

Mother Oh God Help! Help!

Gregor Mother? Are you all right?

Mother Get him away from me.

Gregor Mother please calm down. No Herr Stietl please don't go!

But Stietl escapes out of the front door, slamming it behind him. Father is awakened by the sound of the door slamming and enters the living room.

Mother Stop him. Stop him!

Father grabs Herr Stietl's cane as Gregor turns to see the cane.

Father Oh no you don't.

Gregor That's Herr Stietl's. He must have forgotten it.

Father brings the cane down hard on to the floor. Grabs newspaper and starts to drive Gregor back to his room like a animal back to its pen.

Gregor What are you doing?

Father Hssss! Hssss! Hssss!

Mother opens a window in the living room. The curtains flap, rain pours in, and wind blows papers over the room. She leans out and weeps.

Mother Oh God help us! We're good people.

Father Hssss!. Hsss! Hssss!

Gregor Father please. You're hurting me.

Mother Honest.

Father Hsssss! Whooooaraaaaaaagh!

Mother Decent.

Father Hsssss! Whooooaraaaaaaagh!

Mother We live quiet ordinary lives.

Father Hssss! Whooarrghh! Hsssss! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Mother Why us? Why us dear God?

Father GET Hsssss INTO Hsssss YOUR Hssss ROOM!

Father forces Gregor into his room kicking him as he is stuck between the door posts. Gregor rips his jacket as he is forced through the door. Father slams the door. He catches his breath leaning his body weight against the door. He walks downstairs, sits stiffly. Sees the coffee on the floor.

Mother I'll make some more.

Scene 2

Gregor is in shock in his room. He retreats into a corner, shaking and lies motionless, breathing quite heavily.

*Downstairs Grete comes back home with the DOCTOR!
Father, still in shock, sends the doctor away explaining that
it was all a big mistake. Doctor exits. Grete goes upstairs,
opens the door, looks in, screams, comes back down.
Father locks the door behind him; they all look at each
other. Father sits down in his chair. Mother gradually finds
her way into doing something normal; cleaning some of the
furniture etc.*

*We feel time passing. Father eventually falls asleep. Mother
also. Grete fetches some food and heads up the stairs.*

*The door opens. Light through the door. A figure, Grete,
enters. She is terrified.*

*Gregor slowly comes out from his hiding place. Grete sees
him, wretches and rushes behind the door.. Then gathers
herself, re-enters bravely.*

Grete Could you cover yourself please Gregor while I get used to
it.

Gregor hides under the bed.

Grete Wait.

She comes back to the bedroom.

Grete This is some old cheese we were about to throw away. And
here's some bread. I've put butter on this one. And butter
and salt on this one. Let's see what you prefer.

Gregor Thank you.

Grete Try something.

*Grete moves away, barely able to look, maybe even leaves
the room. Gregor comes out from his hiding place. He tries
the various foods. The cheese he loves.*

Grete You like the cheese.

Gregor Yes.

Grete But not the bread nor the nuts.

Gregor Not so much.

Grete And this is for your... personal use.

She slides him a larger tray.

Grete Mother and father are asleep. We've sent home the servants. We tidied the house ourselves. Mother cooked. But we didn't eat a morsel. No appetite.

Gregor tries to nudge a chair to get up to the window

You want to look out the window?

Gregor At the street.

Grete puts a chair by the window. Gregor climbs on to it, wincing.

Grete Are you hurt?

Gregor Father. Crushed me in the door.

Looks out.

Grete You've always loved looking out of the window. The trees along the avenue still don't have any leaves. It's so cold. This winter seems to last forever.

Gregor Why didn't you play the violin today?

Grete I can't understand you Gregor.

Gregor The violin. You play so beautifully. I want you to go the Conservatory to train. I was saving a little every week. I was hoping by Christmas to have enough. I know mother and father don't approve but they would have come round to our way of thinking in the end. How will I ever raise the money stuck in this room? How will I ever get you what you deserve?

Grete I don't understand you.

Gregor Try to understand!

Grete Sshhh please...

Gregor I said I want you to play the violin at the Conservatory.

Grete Ssshhh. Shhhh.

Grete is crying

Gregor The violin. The violin. The violin!

Grete Ssshhh. Shhhh.

pause

Grete It's all right Gregor. I'll look after you..

Scene 3

We are downstairs in the living room. Everything as if normal. Father reading the paper. The doorbell rings. Everyone ignores it. Grete moves around the room doing everything. Mother leaves the house, to do shopping, looking like a spy. Grete is up and down the stairs with food for Gregor, cleaning his room, changing the tray. Gregor moving from the floor to the wall.

All this framed by Father sitting reading the paper.

As he finishes we are suddenly at dinner. It's already at the table (has been prepared during previous sequence) but no one is eating. In the bedroom, Gregor is hanging upside down, listening. During the scene he heads up the wall to listen more.

Father *(reading in the living room)* It says here that due to the extended winter the Emperor's Gardens may not open this year

Grete Have some meat father.

Father I'm not hungry.

Grete Mother, you must eat something.

Mother I've had all I want.

Father *(reading)* The cold winter combined with recent February rain is endangering full budding of spring flora.

Grete You've barely touched it.

Mother You finish it.

Grete I don't want it.

Father *(reading)* Doubts remain over the survival rate of the Emperor's tulips, primula, daffodils, marigolds...

Mother	Hermann you have mine.
Father	I don't want any!
Mother	Well there you are then
	<i>Pause. Mother begins to cry.</i>
Grete	Oh Mother.
Mother	Sorry. Sorry I...
Father	Pull yourself together Lucy.
Mother	I just feel – it's something I've done. Something in me.
Father	Don't be so absurd.
	<i>pause</i>
Grete	What if we invited him to join us?
Father	What?
Mother	What did you say dear?
Grete	What if we asked him to come and eat with us?
Mother	But that's impossible.
Grete	He's not eating. We're not eating. Something must be done. Neither of you have so much as knocked on his door since it happened.
Mother	I've been busy in the kitchen. Your father has been looking into our affairs. And the stress of the whole thing
Grete	I know what he likes to eat. We could give him some mouldy cheese and few rank carrots. It might make it easier for us to eat our beef and potatoes.
Father	It's an absurd idea. To have... that... at the dinner table.
Grete	I don't see it as so absurd.
Father	With your mother's health? She might break down.
Grete	Father. If we don't invite Gregor to the table, what are we going to do?

This very innocently, no attack.

Father Well I mean to say.

Mother She's right. Bring him down Grete.

Grete leaves the living room.

Father You'll regret this. Mark my words. You're more fragile than you think.

Grete Gregor. Gregor!

She enters the room. Split-scene here.

Mother We have to try something. All I've been able to do this past fortnight is think about him stuck up there.

Grete We want you to come and have dinner with us.

Gregor I don't want to.

Father I'm only thinking of you.

Grete Please Gregor.

Gregor I will be an embarrassment to Mother.

Father The embarrassment!

Grete We all want you to come.

Pause. Gregor comes out of his hiding place. Grete contains her disgust but Gregor notices.

Gregor No I don't want to!

Grete It's fine! Come on.

He follows her out of the bedroom and into the living room

Grete Gregor's coming in now.

Father I want to state very clearly my objection to this.

Mother Hermann!

Gregor and Grete enter. Utter repulsion from parents.

Father Oh dear God!

Mother Oh! Ohhh!

Grete Mother! It's all right Gregor. Where would you like to eat?

Gregor goes into a corner.

Grete That's a good idea. Nice and safe there. I'll bring you some old cheese. Would you like some water?

Mother Stop staring at him Hermann. Have some stew.

Father You expect me to eat in this situation?

Mother At least make a show.

Grete returns with some cheese.

Grete There. Your favorite.

She sits. Everyone tries to eat. But can't.

Mother Well this is nice.

Pause

He's not touching his cheese. He's just staring at us.

Grete Sssh mother. Eat your stew.

Mother I can't while he just sits there!

Grete He's waiting for you.

Mother Well you try.

Grete tries. She can't.

Father This is a grotesque charade.

Mother What we need is a conversation.

Father What conversation?

Mother Winter's lasting forever this year. The buds are barely on the flowers and we're already March. Some say the severe frosts may have accounted for as much as three quarters of the blooms.

She is starting to cry. She tries to eat. Can't.

Gregor I want to go back.

Father What did he say?

He starts to go up the stairs

Grete Eat your food Gregor..

Gregor My company isn't pleasing you.

Father What is that awful noise he's making?

Mother Hermann! Eat your food.

Father I can't eat! I can't eat like this! It's degrading!

Gregor I agree with Father.

Father Oh stop that dreadful din! Get him out of here someone please!

Grete Stay where you are Gregor. Gregor is not leaving.

Father Well fine. Let him stay. I'm going about my business just the same.

He goes to the safe, takes out some papers

Father We don't have time for this mockery. We have to discuss our financial position.

Mother Oh yes let's talk about money, it will take my mind off everything.

Father Let's sit this way so we don't have him in our eyeline.

He sits looking away from Gregor

Father As you know the collapse of the family business five years ago left us with substantial debts. Ever since we have been living off of Gregor's earnings. His promotion from junior clerk to travelling salesman was in this sense most fortunate. He has been earning enough for the whole family to live on.

Mother But now?

Father	The situation is not as grave as might have been the case. I was able to hold on to some small investments after the collapse of the company.
Mother	Hermann, you never told us.
Father	I have also been able to put aside a proportion of Gregor's income for future needs.
Mother	That's wonderful. Isn't your father clever Grete?
Grete	Why didn't we use that money to pay off our debts? Then Gregor wouldn't have had to work such long hours.
Father	I chose an alternative strategy and one which is now bearing fruit. Gregor's condition places the onus on us to find alternative methods of income. This small pot will bide us over until such alternatives are discovered.
Mother	But it's not enough for us to live on?
Father	No. For that... We must find work.
Grete	Work?
Father	Yes work. Work will set us free.
	<i>Suddenly Gregor cries out.</i>
Gregor	But father! (<i>they all leap back in horror</i>) How can Mother work with her asthma? She has to lie down after the simplest of domestic tasks. How can little Grete sully her soft hands with hard labour? She should be playing the violin, not being treated like a slave!
Father	Get away from me!
Gregor	And you father – you haven't worked for five years. What work will you find at your age?
Mother	Stop him Grete. He'll knock over the stew.
Grete	It's always me. Coping with every situation. You haven't either of you looked at him since it all began.
Gregor	It's all my fault Grete. The shame is on my head.
Grete	Not so much as popped your heads round the door.

Father You're just taking it out on us because you now realise the absurdity of your idea. Bringing him down here! Taunting us with his presence! Stupid, naïve girl!

Grete How can you say that!

Mother Stop it. Stop it both of you!

Gregor Don't be upset mother. *(Mother screams)* It's all my fault. But I can solve it! I want to explain my ideas for what to do with the money. You must not work. The money can be wisely invested. I know some high-yield funds that I can get you in touch with. You'd be looking at eight, nine per cent growth plus a dividend...

Mother Aaaah! Get him away from me!

Father Get back! *(hitting him violently with the money-book)*

Gregor But I want to help!

Father We have to stop that racket! People will hear. Questions will be asked!

No one moves. Finally it is Grete who stands angrily

Grete I'm taking you up Gregor. I'm sorry. It hasn't worked.

Pause

Gregor Yes take me up please.

Grete You'll be safer in your room.

Gregor Yes please.

Grete I can bring you some food later. When you're hungry.

Gregor I would like that very much.

Mother My baby.

They head towards the bedroom. Downstairs the Mother continues to quietly wail.

Grete I'm going to lock the door. O.K.?

Gregor Yes please.

Mother My baby...

Grete takes the key from the inside of the room and locks it from the outside.

Mother

My poor baby...

The father suddenly erupts

Father

That is not your baby!

Grete walks down and Father and Mother watch as she puts the key around her neck. They all understand that Grete now is the guard to Gregor's room.

Father

I do not want to see *that* in my living room ever again.

And father storms out.

Scene 4

Sudden switch to upstairs. Gregor is finding great joy in exploring his room. He has embraced his insect-ness in full. Below Mother and Grete are discussing as Gregor flies around.

Grete

He's happier like this.

Mother

Let me at least go and see him.

Grete

It's not wise. It only upsets him.

Mother

He's my son. I should be looking after him.

Grete

He's fine. He's in his own world.

Mother

But it's been over a week!

Gregor

(calling out as he whizzes across the ceiling) She's right mother. It's quite wrong for you to enter this room.

Mother

I can't deny my natural instinct.

Grete

You heard what father said. It's better you have nothing to do with it.

Mother

I understand the rationale behind what you're saying but my maternal urges say something different.

Gregor Listen to what she's saying! It's not right!

Gregor swings round to intervene. But as he does so Gregor falls from ceiling to the floor in his excitement.

Mother What was that? Oh Gregor! Gregor!

Gregor I'm all right. Nothing to worry about.

Grete I'll check him.

Mother No I will. Give me the key. GIVE ME THE KEY!

Grete You heard what father said.

Mother My son may be hurt in there! Give it to me! Give it to me you hussy!

But Grete doesn't. A moment of real tension between them.

Grete We'll go together.

They climb the stairs. Pause. Grete takes out the key.

Grete Gregor cover yourself up. We're coming in.

Gregor covers himself up. They enter.

Mother Where is he?

Grete Behind the plant. Don't look.

Gregor Mother. Is that you? My eyesight – I don't know what's happened to it.

Mother Are you all right Gregor?

Grete He's fine mother. He's always jumping off things.

Mother This place is a tip.

Grete He prefers it like this.

Mother He may well do but in this house there are standards. What does he do all day?

Grete He likes to move around.

Mother There's not enough space. We should make some more room for him. Help me Grete. Help me move the furniture.

She starts to move the furniture out of the room

- Gregor But I like the furniture.
- Grete It's all right Gregor. We're just making some more space for you.
- Gregor But that's my food.
- Mother This can't be any use to him. It just gets in the way.
- Gregor Mother those are my samples. I need them for my work. And that's my chair. I did my homework on it from school.
- Grete Just stay there Gregor and stop that noise. Mother doesn't need to see you.
- Mother What he needs is space. Clarity.
- Gregor But I don't want you to move anything.
- Mother Poor boy – he doesn't understand what we're doing. We're only thinking of you Gregor.

The women, with calm but superhuman strength clear the room. Gregor watches helplessly.

- Gregor But those are my slippers. I need them in the winter.
- Grete We'll leave the tray so he can still use it.
- Mother Only the tray.
- Gregor Why are you doing this?
- Grete Gregor be quiet!
- Mother Everything else is going.

The room is empty except for the framed picture on the wall. Gregor goes up the wall and holds on it for dear life. The women re-enter. The mother sees where Gregor is. She freezes.

- Mother Give me the frame Gregor.
- Gregor No.
- Mother Give it to me.

Gregor You're not having it! No! No!

Mother Give your mother the frame. Give it to me. Give it to me!
GIVE IT TO ME!

Mother has a fit. Collapses.

Gregor Mother are you all right??

Grete is outside the door. Screams.

Grete Mother!

*She enters sees Gregor leaning over the Mother, screams,
runs out .*

*Father enters the room in a startling military-style uniform
– actually the uniform of a bank messenger. Father has
some bags of groceries in his hands. Grete runs down the
stairs.*

Father What the hell?

Grete Gregor tried to attack Mother! She had a fit.

Father Just what I predicted! You women never listen!

Mother screams out from upstairs.

Mother Don't hurt him Hermann!

Father You walked right into his trap. And he took full advantage!
Well - I'm going to teach you a lesson my boy.

*He climbs the stairs, takes out some of the groceries and
starts beating Gregor with it: Melon, meat, eggs, flower,
tomatoes, the painting, flowerpots, celery, milk, wine...etc.*

I'll teach you to show some RESPECT!

Gregor Aaaah!

*Stuff embeds itself into Gregor's skin, injuring him. He is
beaten and ends sunk on the floor.*

Father I'll teach you what respect means!

Mother suddenly grabs hold of the Father.

Father Did you hear that Lucy?

Grete It's French.

Father Is it now?

Grete Lucy est ma mere. Je suis la fille de Lucy.

Father Ha! She'll go far this one. Do another one. Go on.

Grete Je suis la soeur de...

pause

Mother What is it dear?

Grete Nothing..

Gregor gets drawn to the staircase by the discussion he hears about Grete. We hardly see him but feel his presence.

Mother sews. Father sits in the armchair and dozes. Gentle peace. Dad half-wakes.

Father Is this my life? Is this the peace and quiet of my old age?

Then back to sleep. Now mum starts to get sleepy. Upstairs, Gregor starts to scratch at the floor. Grete hears the scratching.

Mother Did you take him his food?

Grete Who? Oh - no I forgot. I'll do it in a minute.

Mother Do it now dear.

Grete It's such a bore.

Mother I know. I know...

Gregor bangs on the floor upstairs. Grete ignores for a while but then goes up..

Grete Gregor. Will you be quiet! Show some respect!.

Gregor covers himself up.

Gregor I'm a little hungry.

Grete Shhh!

Gregor I'm hungry. I think maybe you forgot...

Grete Really Gregor how do you expect me to understand?

Gregor You don't have much time for me now. I understand. You have to work so hard.

Grete Gregor will you be quiet! You'll wake father.

Gregor You shouldn't be working in a department store.

Grete What?

Gregor My sister should not be working in a department store.

Gregor says this vehemently. Angry. Grete is angry now

Grete Don't you start getting angry with me! I look after you. I feed you each day... I clear up after you.

Gregor Don't give up on the dream of the Conservatoire. You haven't played the violin for a month! All this talk of work breaks my heart.

Grete That's enough! Understand that your position in the house has changed. You no longer have the rights of an individual family member. You are unable to fulfil the responsibility.

Gregor That you, my sister, should even consider, on my account of giving up all those dreams forever. Because of me!

Grete I can't understand a word you say.

Gregor Try and understand! Please – keep trying!

Grete All I can hear is noise. NA NA NA NA NA NA.

Gregor It's not noise, I'm speaking quietly now.

Grete You're doing it again. NA NA NA NA. It's killing my ears.

Gregor But I'm scarcely speaking.

He is speaking so quietly now

Grete STOP THIS AWFUL NA NA NA NA NA NA. YOU'RE DRIVING ME INSANE!

This very loud and violent but she stops because Gregor shits

Oh my God. Disgusting.

Gregor I had no idea.

Grete Oh....

Gregor An accident.

Grete The smell. I can't stand it.

Mother *(in the living room still but overhearing, weeping)* This has got to end. This has got to end!

Gregor I'm not in control of my functions.

Grete I bring you a tray. Every day I bring you a tray! I clean your tray!

Gregor Don't... don't go Grete. Please don't leave me.

But she has gone, slamming the door behind her. Gregor weeps and bangs at the door but in vain.

Scene 6

Sudden new energy as the mother leaps up and starts preparations. Sister is changing, or making herself beautiful. Father also leaps up and fusses, clearing the living room and taking stuff out of the room.

Mother Imagine the difference it will make to us if he takes it. Thirty crowns a month.

Grete He won't take it unless it looks perfect. He has so many options.

Mother I can't wait to see him.

Grete Oh you'll like him mother. He's everything you'd want in a lodger. He's just been promoted from junior manager of the haberdashery division to assistant senior manager. He's only been there two years. The store has great hopes for him.

Mother I've been trying to picture him.

Downstairs Father enters in a panic

Hermann One of my buttons has fallen off.

Mother Oh Hermann how could you!

Gregor I feel faint.

Grete Shut up! Shut up!

Hermann I was trying to do it up. The damn thing wouldn't go in the hole!

Mother I told you to stop wearing it in the house.

The doorbell rings again.

Gregor Grete...

Grete I told you to be QUIET!!

And she grabs some curtain, ties him to it, gags him and closes and locks the door. Gregor is alone. Meanwhile...

Hermann Is there time to sew it on?

Mother Of course there isn't time!

Hermann What should I do?

Mother Leave it. We'll say that I'm polishing them one by one.

Grete runs down.

The doorbell rings. Upstairs Gregor raises his head from the floor.

Grete I'll go. No you go mother. It will be more appropriate.

Mother I can't go. I'm shaking from top to toe. Hermann!

Hermann Why me?

Grete Will one of you answer the door!

They both go to answer the door.

Hermann Let me!

Mother Well go on then!

Father opens the door.

Father Welcome!

Fischer Herr Samsa.

Father Hermann. Please call me Hermann. And you are Herr Fischer.

Fischer It is a pleasure to meet you sir.

Grete Let him in father.

Father Of course. This is my wife.

Fischer Of whom I have heard a great deal. May I say what a pleasure it is to meet you.

Mother Herr Fischer how delightful to meet you. May I take your coat.

Fischer Thank you.

Mother Such a soft material. Is it yak's wool?

Fischer I don't think so.

Mother No of course but it's so... so

She dances with the coat

Grete How was your journey Herr Fischer?

Fischer I caught the tram as you suggested. I had a slightly longer wait at the stop than anticipated.

Father I must apologise.

Fischer It's not your fault.

Father No but for such a personage... to wait at a tram-stop for what must have felt like hours...

Fischer It was barely seven minutes.

Father Seven minutes. Did you hear that Lucy? I once waited for a tram for something close to nine minutes. It was at Frühlingsplatz. A lady sitting next to me at the stop started

Mother But we forgot yesterday too.

Father Lucy at this moment we must focus on what is at hand. And what is at hand is Herr Fischer, a month's rent in advance and a potential...

Mother Hermann!

Father ... friendship with Grete. Nothing must poison the purity of that aspiration.

Mother How strong you are.

Enter Fischer and Grete

Fischer The room is most acceptable Herr Samsa.

Mother Do you think so?

Fischer I am able to pay a month in advance if that is satisfactory?

Father Most satisfactory!

Mother Oh Herr Fischer. I'll get cooking straight away!

Father Let us have some wine to celebrate!

She enters the kitchen

Fischer Herr Samsa. Let me give you the money.

Father Oh please don't concern yourself with trivial matters such as money now.

Fischer I would prefer to conclude our business.

He counts out the notes.

Father Well... that's extremely good of you Herr Fischer.

He hands the money to Hermann but is looking at Grete

Thank you. Thank you Herr Fischer. Thank you.

Fischer And now we can enjoy ourselves.

Grete The wine father.

Father Of course. In vino veritas!

Grete The food mother!

He beetles off to get the wine and she into the kitchen

Grete I'm glad you liked the room.

Fischer Its simplicity appeals to me. I hate pretension.

Grete It's not much of an apartment I know. I hope to move out
when the opportunity arises.

Beat

 I often look at you with the customers at the store. Always
so courteous, so professional.

Fischer I don't know how long I shall be there.

Grete Oh no?

Fischer I am considering joining the army.

Grete Oh Herr Fischer...

Fischer I believe there will be nothing more important in the
coming years than the defense of one's country. There are
wars on the horizon and every able-bodied young man must
do his duty. I don't come from a rich home...

Grete No...

Fischer But I believe I have the capacity to lead. To be an officer.

Grete Oh you do Herr Fischer.

Fischer I have been watching you Grete across the shop floor. You
have a quality I very much like. A devotion to duty.

They approach each other. Enter Father

Father The wine!

Fischer May I congratulate sir on the excellence of your home.
Never have I felt so comfortable, so welcome. A home
reflects the man who leads it.

Father Well I do what I can. Let us not pull our punches Harr
Fischer. Times have not always been easy.

Fischer No sir they have not. It takes stamina and resolve, to struggle through what arrows fate sends us. It takes guts. Your health sir!

Father Your health!

Fischer I look at this house and I see a family that is about to blossom. Like a flower not yet fully opened.

Father *(deeply moved)* That's exactly what we are. Isn't it Grete?

Fischer It has survived the harsh winter and when those petals open, when the thick aroma of its stamen is allowed to release, then, sir the world will swoon!

Father It's remarkable the way you understand us. We are poor of course... but we work hard...

Fischer In a nutshell Herr Samsa! Work! Energy! I rowed five miles of river this morning. Then I worked all day. Am I tired? No of course not. Energy is a moral quality. ... The decadence of our society stems from a lack of energy. When I watch your daughter on the shop floor, so limitless with her generosity, serving all comers! That's energy. Where others shrink from the challenge of service, she stands up and is counted!

Father That's my Grete.

The mother has entered

Mother The meal will be a few minutes.

Fischer The smells promise great riches.

Mother It's just a simple prime cut of beef... fresh today...

Fischer I prefer my beef unadorned. I hate fussiness in food. Or in anything for that matter. I see now where you get your beauty Grete.

Mother Oh Herr Fischer. You embarrass me.

Fischer Forgive me. I spoke without thinking.

Father And so you should. Everyone should be free to speak without thinking! We worry so much, we're penned in by our anxiety. My wife is beautiful! My daughter is beautiful!

Fischer Why be ashamed?

Father Precisely! There's something about you Herr Fischer. I feel free for the first time in ages... It's like a weight has been taken from my shoulders.

Mother Well how shall we pass the time before dinner?

Father I know! Grete. You must play for us! Do you like music Herr Fischer...

Fischer Um well...

Father Oh you must hear Grete. We're very keen for her to attend the Conservatoire. But recently she hasn't touched the instrument.

Grete I've been too busy. Anyway Herr Fischer doesn't want to hear me play...

Father Of course he does, don't you Herr Fischer?

Beat

Fischer Why not?

Father There you are!

Grete He's just being polite father.

Father Nonsense. Herr Fischer doesn't need to be polite here.

Fischer Not at all. Play Miss Samsa. It won't take long and then we can eat.

Grete All right.

She exits

Father That's my girl!

She prepares to play

Fischer Do you shoot Hermann?

Father I never have.

He sets himself to listen to the violin

Fischer I'll take you to the Lodge. Filled with only the finest men, young and old. Men together. I could nominate you.

Father	Me?
Fischer	We go out beyond the river. In high season there's no amount of excellent prey. I can teach you the techniques - the speed with which a man must move from readiness to the trigger. The elbow must be flexible but alert.
Father	Grete?
Fischer	And then the speed of the reflex!
	<i>He performs the cocking action in the room.</i>
Fischer	And in seconds your prey is dead on the ground. DA! DA! DA! He didn't see a thing!
	<i>Pause</i>
Father	Shall we listen to Grete now?
Fischer	What? Oh yes. Sure.
	<i>Grete starts to play. A sad slow liede. Her playing is hesitant but oddly beautiful. Immediately Gregor is up listening.</i>
Gregor	Grete?
	<i>Downstairs Fischer finishes his glass. He speaks over the music.</i>
Fischer	Psst. Chance of another glass old man?
Father	Of course.
	<i>He quietly pours.</i>
	<i>The playing continues, sad, sweet. Gregor is crying, fighting to get the curtain gag off him.</i>
Gregor	She's playing so quietly. I can't hear it. I can't hear it.
	<i>Gregor starts to scratch slowly at the floorboards/walls. He pulls up a floorboard. Then another. It makes a slight noise.</i>
Fischer	Did you hear something?
	<i>A pause in the playing.</i>

Fischer I thought I heard a noise. Like a scratching.

Father I didn't hear it.

Mother Play some more Grete dear.

Grete starts to play again. Gregor unpicks more floorboards. He is weeping, trying to get closer.

Gregor What's happened to my ears? I still can't hear it. I can't hear it!

More noise can be heard below.

Fischer There's definitely something going on up there.

Father Keep playing Grete. I don't think it's anything.

Fischer That's not nothing Herr Samsa!

Father Just rats maybe.

Fischer You have rats? Why haven't you exterminated them!

Father Not us. Next door.

Fischer But the noise is not coming from next door Samsa! It is coming from here!

Mother Lovely playing Grete. Play some more.

She plays on. Gregor rips more floorboards and then lies close to the floor. Fischer stands.

Fischer Damn it Samsa. There's something going on up there. I intend to investigate.

Father There is nothing going on.

Fischer Let me through Samsa.

Mother Please Herr Fischer sit down.

Fischer I do not appreciate being lied to.

Father There is nothing going on! There is nothing going on!
THERE IS NOTHING GOING ON!

*This with intense, murderous violence. Grete stops playing.
Beat. Mother – with a smile.*

Mother Sit down please everyone. The meal is ready!

They do so.

Mother Well this is nice.

*At which point Gregor smashes through the floor and hangs
from the light fitting above their heads.*

Chaos on stage. Screams.

Fischer What the hell is that?!

Pause

Gregor I will get you to the Conservatoire. I will get you there.

Mother Grete, take Herr Fischer to his room would you?

Grete Yes of course. This way Herr Fischer.

Fischer Not until you've told me what that is!

Father Just go to your room please Herr Fischer.

Fischer Herr Samsa! I have been invited into your house! I have
been lied to! I demand an explanation!

Father Just go to your room!

Father starts to force Herr Fischer out of the living room.

Fischer Herr Samsa. I must insist you stop pushing me.

Father Please Herr Fischer go to your room.

*He and Grete attempt to push Herr Fischer out of the room.
Fischer however performs some kind of martial art on them
and they are thrown to the floor. Mother collapses in an
asthmatic attack.*

Fischer Herr Samsa! This depraved and disgusting assault on my
sensibility is unforgivable. Unforgivable! I am handing in
my notice on the spot!

Grete But Herr Fischer.

Fischer

Pause. Samsa will not give it to him.

Silence

Mother

The father gives him the money. He goes to the door.

Fischer

He opens the door.

And he leaves. Silence.

Mother

She has a slight asthma attack. Grete rushes over, holds her.

Mother

Pause

Grete We have to get rid of it. We all have to remove from our minds any idea that this *thing* is Gregor.. How can it be Gregor? If it was, he would have realised long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature, and he would have left of his own will. But this.... this *organism* persecutes us... haunts our every move, drives away all hope of redemption. See what it has done to Herr Fischer! Our ticket out of here! Can't you see it wants to drag us to into the gutter, into the shit, yes into the shit beside it! Well I won't go! (*violently to Gregor*) I won't go, you scum! You cancer! (*to Mother, Father, calmly*) We have to exterminate it. Get it out.

Mother She's right.

Father Yes. She's right.

Gregor suddenly rises, turns to Grete

Grete Stop it father!

Father picks up a carving knife for the meat and brandishes it above Gregor. But Gregor just holds out his hands to Grete helplessly.

Mother No wait. It's going..

Gregor turns to leave

Gregor You're right Grete. You were always so clever. It's time for me to disappear.

Gregor turns and unbelievably slowly make his way back to his room, unlocks the door, enters and closes it behind him. In the room he slowly sinks, sinks into a motionless pile.

Until at last he is silent and still.

Downstairs Mother and Father both collapse into chairs. Grete stands like a sentry over the living room. Music here – Gregor's death.

Night turns to day. Now Grete starts to climb the stairs. She enters the room and sees Gregor dead.

