

**Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter:**

the visitor's voice: it is the office manager. Gregor is upset that someone at the level of manager has to come to his house because he is late to work.

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And more as a consequence of the excited state in which this idea put Gregor than as a result of an actual decision, he swung himself with all his might out of the bed. There was a loud thud, but not a real crash. The fall was absorbed somewhat by the carpet and, in addition, his back was more elastic than Gregor had thought. For that reason the dull noise was not quite so conspicuous. But he had not held his head up with sufficient care and had hit it. He turned his head, irritated and in pain, and rubbed it on the carpet.

"Something has fallen in there," said the manager in the next room on the left.

Gregor's sister whispers to him from the next room to let him know the manager is there. Then, Gregor's father explains that the manager is there and wants to speak to him. The office manager begins to speak to Gregor, but Gregor's mother starts telling the manager what a good and devoted worker Gregor is and that he is simply not feeling well. The manager says that businesspeople have to get past illness. Gregor's father begins to lose patience and knocks on the door again.

"So can Mr. Manager come in to see you now?" asked his father impatiently and knocked once again on the door. "No," said Gregor. In the neighboring room on the left a painful stillness descended. In the neighboring room on the right his sister began to sob.

The manager now raises his voice, and, shouting, asks Gregor what's wrong and why he is locking himself in his room and only answering with "yes" or "no."

"I am speaking here in the name of your parents and your employer, and I am requesting you in all seriousness for an immediate and clear explanation. I am amazed. I am amazed. I thought I knew you as a calm, reasonable person, and now you appear suddenly to want to start parading around in weird moods. The Chief indicated to me earlier this very day a possible explanation for your neglect—it concerned the collection of cash entrusted to you a short while ago—but in truth I almost gave him my word of honor that this explanation could not be correct. However, now I see here your unimaginable pigheadedness, and I am totally losing any desire to speak up for you in the slightest. And your position is not at all the most secure. Originally I intended to mention all this to you privately, but since you are letting me waste my time here uselessly, I don't know why the matter shouldn't come to the attention of your parents. Your productivity has also been very unsatisfactory recently."

Gregor says that he will open the door now and that he is suffering from a dizzy spell, which didn't allow him to get up. He asks the manager for patience and not to worry his parents, saying there is no basis for the criticisms the manager is making. He says that he is feeling better and that the manager should go because he will report to the office shortly.



But the manager can't understand what Gregor is saying and thinks he might be playing some kind of joke. Gregor's mother starts to cry and wonders if Gregor is very ill. She tells Grete to go and get the doctor. Gregor's father tells the servant to go get a locksmith, or person who can unlock the door.

**All right, people did not understand his words any more, although they seemed clear enough to him, clearer than previously, perhaps because his ears had gotten used to them. But at least people now thought that things were not all right with him and were prepared to help him.**

Gregor slowly moves toward the door. With a great effort, he is able to turn the key in the lock with his mouth. He opens the door, and the manager, seeing that Gregor is a giant insect, makes a shocked "Oh!" and backs away. Gregor's mother faints when she sees him, and Gregor's father at first clenches his fist, as if he would push Gregor back into his room. But he covers his eyes with his hands and cries.

Gregor remains calm and says that he will pack up his samples and head off to work. He tells the manager that he is not pigheaded and is happy to work. As the manager is leaving, Gregor makes a long speech.

**"Where are you going, Mr. Manager? To the office? Really? Will you report everything truthfully? ... Speak up on my behalf in the office! People don't like traveling salesmen. ... People think they earn pots of money and thus lead a fine life. ... You also know well enough that the traveling salesman who is outside the office almost the entire year can become so easily a victim of gossip, coincidences, and groundless complaints, against which it's impossible for him to defend himself. ..."**

Gregor wants to catch the manager and stop him from leaving so that he can calm him down and not lose his job. He pushes himself through the opening of the door and falls onto his many insect legs. Gregor realizes that this is the first time that morning that he has felt comfortable, and he is able to move as he wants. But at this moment, Mrs. Samsa stirs and springs up, saying "Help, for God's sake, help!" She then hurries away.

Meanwhile, the manager looks back one last time as he leaves. Gregor makes a movement to try to catch up to him. The manager senses this, so he leaps down over a few stairs and disappears. Mr. Samsa, who had been calm, is moved to action by seeing the manager running away. He grabs the manager's cane, which has been left behind.

**With his left hand, his father picked up a large newspaper from the table and, stamping his feet on the floor, he set out to drive Gregor back into his room by waving the cane and the newspaper. No request of Gregor's was of any use; no request would even be understood.**

Gregor has had no practice moving backward on his new legs, so it is slow going. He eventually turns himself around, but the doorway is too narrow for him and he gets stuck. Gregor's father keeps driving him forward, however, and with one big push forces him through the door and into the room.

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The tiny legs on one side hung twitching in the air above, the ones on the other side were pushed painfully into the floor. Then his father gave him one really strong liberating push from behind, and he scurried, bleeding severely, far into the interior of his room. The door was slammed shut with the cane, and finally it was quiet.

## II

As Part II opens, Gregor wakes in the evening from a deep sleep. He takes note of the injuries from the morning, and he sees that bread and milk have been left for him at the door. However, when he tries the milk, which had been his favorite drink, he doesn't like it. Through a crack in the door, Gregor sees the light on in the living room, but he doesn't hear any sounds. Gregor feels a sense of pride that he has been able to give his family this beautiful apartment. But he worries what will happen now if he can't provide for the family. At one point, he hears each door to his room open a tiny crack. Gregor waits for someone to enter, but no one does. The doors are locked from the outside. Gregor realizes that the family isn't going to come into his room until morning. The room that was so familiar to him now makes him anxious. He crawls under the couch, and there, he feels very comfortable.

There he remained the entire night, which he spent partly in a state of semi-sleep, out of which his hunger constantly woke him with a start, but partly in a state of worry and murky hopes, which all led to the conclusion that for the time being he would have to keep calm and with patience and the greatest consideration for his family tolerate the troubles which in his present condition he was now forced to cause them.

In the morning, Gregor's sister opens the door to his room and looks inside. Grete doesn't see him right away, and, when she notices him underneath the couch, she is shocked and slams the door closed. But she immediately opens the door again and walks in on her tiptoes. Gregor wonders if she'll notice that he hasn't had the milk. He's hungry, but he doesn't want to ask her for something else. Grete notices the milk and takes it away, returning with a variety of different foods for Gregor to try. She realizes that Gregor won't eat in front of her, so she leaves the room.

Before trying the foods, Gregor realizes that his injuries have already healed. He finds certain foods to his liking, such as old cheese, while the fresh food doesn't taste good to him. He finishes eating, and when his sister enters the room again, he crawls back under the couch.

In this way Gregor got his food every day, once in the morning, when his parents and the servant girl were still asleep, and a second time after the common noon meal, for his parents were, as before, asleep then for a little while, and the servant girl was sent off by his sister on some errand or other. Certainly they would not have wanted Gregor to starve to death, but perhaps they could not have endured finding out what he ate other than by hearsay. Perhaps his sister wanted to spare them what was possibly only a small grief, for they were really suffering quite enough already.

Gregor is able to get information by listening at the door, which he does often. He learns, for example, that on the first day of his metamorphosis (his change), the servant

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girl asked to quit her job. He also learns of the family's financial situation. His father has some money left from his business that had failed five years earlier. Gregor thinks back to that period. He had worked hard to earn money for the family to help them try to forget the bad luck of his father's failed business.

**At the time Gregor's only concern had been to devote everything he had in order to allow his family to forget as quickly as possible the business misfortune which had brought them all into a state of complete hopelessness. And so at that point he'd started to work with a special intensity and from an assistant had become, almost overnight, a traveling salesman, who naturally had entirely different possibilities for earning money and whose successes at work at once were converted into the form of cash commissions, which could be set out on the table at home in front of his astonished and delighted family. Those had been beautiful days. ...**

Gregor thinks about how those days did not come back, even though he eventually earned enough money to support the entire family. The family accepted the money with thanks, but he had lost his closeness with his parents. Only he and his sister had remained close. And he had a secret plan to send Grete to music school.

While listening at the door, Gregor learns that in addition to the small amount of money left over from Mr. Samsa's business, the family had been able to save some of the money that Gregor brought home every month. This news makes Gregor happy.

**But the money to live on must be earned. Now, his father was a healthy man, although he was old, who had not worked at all for five years now and thus could not be counted on for very much. He had in these five years, the first holidays of his trouble-filled and unsuccessful life, put on a good deal of fat and thus had become really heavy. And should his old mother now maybe work for money, a woman who suffered from asthma, for whom wandering through the apartment even now was a great strain and who spent every second day on the sofa by the open window laboring for breath? Should his sister earn money, a girl who was still a seventeen-year-old child, whose earlier life style had been so very delightful that it had consisted of dressing herself nicely, sleeping in late, helping around the house, taking part in a few modest enjoyments and, above all, playing the violin?**

**When it came to talking about this need to earn money, at first Gregor went away from the door and threw himself on the cool leather sofa beside the door, for he was quite hot from shame and sorrow.**

Gregor has trouble sleeping, and he moves a chair to the window so that he can look outside. But as time passes, he sees with less clarity. Grete, in her caring way, cleans his room and returns the chair to the window for Gregor, who wishes he could thank her for all her efforts. Grete tries to be considerate of Gregor, but he notices the effect he has on the household. His sister has to immediately open the window when she enters Gregor's room because of the odor. And his appearance causes Grete to be uncomfortable, so he drags a sheet to the couch, which allows him to hide himself when Grete is present.

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down onto the couch and lay there motionless. “Gregor, you ...,” cried out his sister with a raised fist and an urgent glare. Since his transformation those were the first words which she had directed right at him.

Grete leaves the room to get something to help her mother wake up from her fainting spell. Gregor, hoping to help, follows his sister. Once there, he doesn’t know how to help and just waits behind Grete. When she turns and sees him, she is surprised and drops the bottle she is holding. Grete gabs some more bottles and rushes to her mother, slamming the door shut behind her. Gregor feels terribly guilty because he thinks he is responsible for his mother’s condition, which might be near death. There is nothing for him to do but wait, and he crawls around everything in the room. In his sad condition, he gets dizzy and collapses onto a large table.

Gregor is still on the table when Mr. Samsa returns. Grete tells him that Mrs. Samsa has fainted and that Gregor has “broken loose.” Mr. Samsa misunderstands Grete and thinks that she means that Gregor has attacked Mrs. Samsa. Gregor realizes what’s happening and goes to the door of his room to show his father that he will go into his room immediately and that it isn’t necessary for Mr. Samsa to force him into the room. Mr. Samsa is angry, however, and Gregor notices a major change in him. He is no longer the weak and tired man of recent times.

**... He was standing up really straight, dressed in a tight fitting blue uniform with gold buttons, like the ones servants wear in a banking company.**

Mr. Samsa is about to attack Gregor, so Gregor runs away. Mr. Samsa chases and throws apples at him, one of which becomes stuck in Gregor’s back. Gregor notices that the door to his room is open, and Mrs. Samsa runs to Mr. Samsa and begs him to stop, which allows Gregor to escape.

Only with his final glance did he notice how the door of his room was pulled open and how, right in front of his sister (who was yelling), his mother ran out in her undergarments, for his sister had undressed her in order to give her some freedom to breathe in her fainting spell, and how his mother then ran up to his father, on the way her tied-up skirts one after the other slipped toward the floor, and how, tripping over her skirts, she hurled herself onto his father and, throwing her arms around him, in complete union with him—but at this moment Gregor’s powers of sight gave way—as her hands reached to the back of his father’s head and she begged him to spare Gregor’s life.

### III

As Part III opens, Gregor has suffered for more than a month from the serious wound in his back. No one has removed the apple. However, Mr. Samsa has accepted that Gregor is still a member of the family and should be endured. Gregor’s injury means that his ability to move is now very limited. The family feels badly about what has happened, so, each evening, they open the door to the living room so that Gregor can see the family and listen to their conversation.

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Mr. Samsa doesn't take off his bank employee uniform when he comes home from work—as if he needs to be ready at a moment's notice. This makes the uniform look dirty. He stays up late each night, sleeping in the chair at the table, and when Mrs. Samsa and Grete physically drag him to bed, he says in a voice that can barely be heard that his life has become sad.

Money concerns cause the family to fire the servant girl and hire an old cleaning woman in her place. The family is also forced to sell some pieces of family jewelry. But the family's biggest complaint is that they can't leave the current apartment, which is too big for their current financial situation, because they can't think of how Gregor might be moved.

But Gregor fully recognized that it was not just consideration for him which was preventing a move (for he could have been transported easily in a suitable box with a few air holes); the main thing holding the family back from a change in living quarters was far more their complete hopelessness and the idea that they had been struck by a misfortune like no one else in their entire circle of relatives and acquaintances.

Gregor has stopped sleeping and is filled with competing emotions: a desire to help his family and a sense of anger that they ignore him. Grete still feeds him but doesn't do it with concern or care for Gregor. And she doesn't clean his room very well anymore, leaving dust and garbage. Yet, when Mrs. Samsa cleans Gregor's room on one occasion, Grete starts crying because she feels that Gregor is her responsibility.

The cleaning woman discovers Gregor one day and doesn't react—she just stands and stares at him. After that, each morning and evening, she opens the door to look for Gregor and to speak to him in words that she must have thought were friendly, such as, "Come here for a bit, old dung beetle!" and "Hey, look at the old dung beetle!" But Gregor doesn't like the way she addresses him, so he doesn't respond. One day, when the cleaning woman starts up her usual conversation, Gregor is not in the mood and turns toward her, as if to attack.

But instead of being afraid of him, the cleaning woman merely lifted up a chair standing close by the door and, as she stood there with her mouth wide open, her intention was clear: She would close her mouth only when the chair in her hand had been thrown down on Gregor's back. "This goes no further, all right?" she asked, as Gregor turned himself around again, and she placed the chair calmly back in the corner.



To earn extra money, the family has taken in three lodgers, or people who rent rooms. Gregor's room becomes a kind of storage room. Sometimes Gregor moves the objects to give himself room to crawl around or for a sense of fun. But the effort exhausts him.

One night, the cleaning lady accidentally leaves the door to the living room slightly open. Gregor can see that the three lodgers eat there while the family eats in the kitchen. Grete and Mrs. Samsa serve the three men, who inspect the food before accepting it. After the lodgers finish eating, a violin is heard in the kitchen, and the lodgers move closer to hear it. Mr. Samsa asks if the playing bothers them, and they respond that they would enjoy hearing the music in the living room. Grete begins playing, and Gregor pokes his head into the living room and isn't noticed. The lodgers lose interest in the performance, but Gregor is delighted and creeps forward. He wants to get Grete's attention to let her know that she could come to his room with her violin, where her playing would be appreciated. He would then tell her about the plan the family had to send her to music school. Then, one of the lodgers notices him.

“Mr. Samsa,” called out the middle lodger to the father, and pointed his index finger, without uttering a further word, at Gregor as he was moving slowly forward. The violin fell silent. The middle lodger smiled, first shaking his head once at his friends, and then looked down at Gregor once more.

Mr. Samsa tries to lead the lodgers back to their room and to block their view of Gregor. They seem bothered, though it is unclear if it is Mr. Samsa's pushy behavior or the thought of Gregor that really bothers them. One lodger says that he is canceling his room and will not pay for the time he has lived there, and the other two lodgers then also give notice that they are leaving.

After the lodgers go back to their room, bang the door shut, and lock it, Grete is the first to speak.

“My dear parents,” said the sister banging her hand on the table by way of an introduction, “things cannot go on any longer in this way. Maybe if you don’t understand that, well, I do. I will not utter my brother’s name in front of this monster, and thus I say only that we must try to get rid of it. We have tried what is humanly possible to take care of it and to be patient. I believe that no one can criticize us in the slightest.”

Mr. Samsa says to himself that Grete is right. Mrs. Samsa has trouble breathing properly and begins coughing. Grete hurries over to her and supports her. Grete's words cause Mr. Samsa to reflect, and he seems lost in thought, occasionally looking at Gregor, who has not moved. Grete again says that they must get rid of Gregor.

“We must try to get rid of it,” the sister now said decisively to the father, for the mother, in her coughing fit, wasn’t listening to anything. “It is killing you both. I see it coming. When people have to work as hard as we all do, they cannot also tolerate this endless torment at home. I just can’t go on anymore.” And she broke out into such a crying fit that her tears flowed out down onto her mother’s face. She wiped them off her mother with mechanical motions of her hands.

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Then all three left the apartment together, something they had not done for months now, and took the electric tram into the open air outside the city. The car in which they were sitting by themselves was totally engulfed by the warm sun. They talked to each other, leaning back comfortably in their seats, about future prospects, and they discovered that on closer observation these were not at all bad, for all three had employment, about which they had not really questioned each other at all, which was extremely favorable and with especially promising prospects.

*The Metamorphosis*, translated by Ian Johnston. Used with permission of the translator.

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