

his many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked. "what's happened to me?" he thought. it wasn't a dream. his room, a proper human room although a little too small, lay peacefully between its four familiar walls. first of all though, i've got to get up, my train leaves at five. " and he looked over at the alarm clock, ticking on the chest of drawers. "god in heaven! " he thought. it was half past six and the hands were quietly moving forwards, it was even later than half past, more like quarter to seven. had the alarm clock not rung? he could see from the bed that it had been set for four o'clock as it should have been; it certainly must have rung. " he felt a slight itch up on his belly; pushed himself slowly up on his back towards the headboard so that he could lift his head better; found where the itch was, and saw that it was covered with lots of little white spots which he didn't know what to make of; and when he tried to feel the place with one of his legs he drew it quickly back because as soon as he touched it he was overcome by a cold shudder. he slid back into his former position. and even if he did catch the train he would not avoid his boss's anger as the office assistant would have been there to see the five o'clock train go, he would have put in his report about gregor's not being there a long time ago. the office assistant was the boss's man, spineless, and with no understanding. what about if he reported sick? but that would be extremely strained and suspicious as in fifteen years of service gregor had never once yet been ill. his boss would certainly come round with the doctor from the medical insurance company, accuse his parents of having a lazy son, and accept the doctor's recommendation not to make any claim as the doctor believed that no-one was ever ill but that many were workshy. and what's more, would he have been entirely wrong in this case?