

Kafka's The Castle

Shad Gregory

1

When K. arrived, it was late in the night,
The village was covered under deep snow,
And the castle hill was nowhere in sight.
Fog and darkness enveloped him and though
The sky's faintest glow of light could not show
The outline of the great castle, K. stood
On the wooden bridge, the darkness below,
The seeming emptiness was understood
To offer our hero the start of something good.

2

And then, a decisive intake of air,
K. descended to the village below
Hoping to find lodgings anywhere there.
In the inn, peasants still stirred to and fro
In spite of the hour. There were no rooms, though
The Innkeeper offered a sack of straw,
And K.'s weariness had brought him so low
That he eagerly accepted as fair
The innkeeper's offer to sleep on the floor there.

3

But soon then K. was roused from his slumber
By a young man with a thespian's face.
The peasants were still there too in number
And many had turned from their beer in case
An entertaining spectacle took place.
The young man was dressed in fancy city
Clothes; his eyes were narrowed; it seemed the case
The young man was the son of a pretty
Big deal, and he was not trying to be witty!

4

A big deal indeed, the son of the Castle
Steward stood over K., his eyebrows strong,
He was polite but ready to hassle
Our poor K. over his excursion along
The village's outskirts lurking among
The shadows and darkness of the late hour.
You have entered the village was his song,
And the right to stay in any bower
Or hut, resided only in Count Westwest's power.

5

Half sitting up and straightening his hair
K. nonchalantly glanced up at the crowd;
The innkeeper, the peasants in their chairs,
The young man asking if K. should be allow'd,
all waiting there for K. to speak out loud
His intentions on such a snowy night.
"Where am I?" K. asked as if he were proud
of his ignorance, "I'm lost in the night."
He cried, "Castle you say? But there was not one in sight."

6

The young man was astonished by K.'s act,
"Why indeed, the castle of Count Westwest!"
"And you need permission," asked K. "in fact
for a weary traveller to simply rest
overnight?" at last upon being press'd
By the expecting crowd. Was it a dream
That gave to him the notion that a guest
Could be cruelly turned out? Truly it seem'd
To beggar belief. Such cruelty K. could not gleam.

7

"You must have permission!" was the reply.
And with that, the dramatic young man turn'd
To his audience, and said with a sigh,
"Or maybe it's not required to have earn'd
The Count's blessings!" And now having so learn'd
The conditions of discretely dwelling
overnight, grasping that which so concern'd
the crowd, K. yawned, and perhaps overselling
his nonchalance, announced his plans without yelling.

8

"Now, if it is permission that I need,"
Said K. "Then it is permission I seek."
And as if he were about to proceed,
Cast off his blanket with nary a peek
At the shocked crowd, barely able to speak.
"Permission from whom?" sputtered the young man,
"At this midnight hour?" he said with a shriek.
"It isn't possible?" and K. began
To yawn and stretch. "See, I like to sleep when I can!"

9

The young man was beside himself with rage,
"Why you're not but a low-down dirty bum!"
With a passion found only on the stage.
"The count demands respect! Not some sass from
A common tramp who's lower than pond scum!
You must depart the count's territory
At once!" At this, K. was able to drum
Up the peace of a saint in God's glory,
"Enough!" he said, and K. then began his story.

10

Does K. feel despair? Does he cry in the night?
Is he so fixated on his mission
That he no longer dreads the morning light?
Why has he come here without permission?
Travelled so far on this expedition
Without a companion to help him through
The snow and darkness with precision.
Where is his family? Are they so few
That K. was attracted to the castle in view?