

**joseph k.**

by

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**SET**

This is all, right now, variable, of course. Upstage center, a 12-foot hamster wheel, made of angle iron and mesh metal (for section on which one or two characters can walk and run). Upstage right, a mildly high platform--maybe four feet--on which sits Kafka's desk. (Desk can be part of a crow's nest, very high [20 ft.], downstage right.) Upstage left, wall which becomes K's bed. Higher walls, stage left and right, with windows (holes) in them, a la "Laugh In."

## SCENE 3

*(K and Kafka are walking in wheel. Lighting should indicate they are going into an older and darker neighborhood. Noisy street--dogs, crowd, etc.)*

K: I'm going from bad to worse.

KAFKA: From the frying pan into the fire, I'd say.

K: Look at these buildings!

KAFKA: The squalor . . . like dogs.

K: The filth . . . like . . .

KAFKA: The noise . . .

K: The squalor . . .

KAFKA: The noise . . .

K: You are kind to come with me. Does this mean . . .

KAFKA: No, I can't always be with you, K. There are some things you . . . well, you know what I mean.

*(Kafka exits wheel and crosses to his desk. Felice and Burstner [F and B below] disguised as young girls--teenaged--enter excitedly, playful, both sides of wheel.)*

K: As if I were waiting for some sign of life.

F: Where you going, Mister?

K: I'm looking for the Courts . . . well, no I'm not really . . .  
I'm going . . . you see, I'm going for a walk. No, I'm . . .

B: Why don't you come with us?

K: And where would you be going, Miss?

F: We're going to Titorelli's.

K: Titorell . . .

B: He's a painter.

F: He paints our picture. We know where he lives.

B: Want us to take you to him?

K: Why would I want that?

F: So he can paint *your* picture.

B: 'Cause you're cute. And we entertain him.

K: I guess entertainment's in the eye of the entertainee.

B: You're stuffy, Mister.

*(B lifts her skirt briefly, and F and she crack up. They stop wheel and pull K from it.)*

F: Here we are, Mister.

B: Titorelli's!

*(Drab light up on Titorelli--Investigator disguised--who's surrounded by canvasses with versions of something like Klimt or Munvch. F and B leave K and surround Titorelli, who picks one up and, if possible, twirls her around his head. He speaks in a bad Italian accent.)*

F: Titorelli, there's a man to see you. We brought him so you could paint his picture.

TLLI: Well, will you look here!

K: They said you paint portraits--they're portraits, not pictures, girls--and so I . . . well, I came along . . . I don't know why. These are your paintings, I take it.

TLLI: This one I have entitled "Man Calling His Dog."

K: It looks very much like this one . . .

TLLI: That I call "Man Calling His Dog 2." *(Puts B down.)*  
Now you two get out of here. *(They exit.)*

K: And this one?

TLLI: "Man Calling His Dog 3." They're companion pieces.

K: Why . . . they're identical.

TLLI: No, no, no . . . different dogs.

K: I don't see any dogs.

TLLI: You needn't show interest in my work. You've been arrested. You've come for my help. I knew you'd be coming.

K: Everyone knows more about me than I.

TLLI: Is that such a bad thing?

K: It seems so for me, I must say.

TLLI: I didn't know you were interested in painting, K.

K: A hobby, I assure you . . . hey, how did you know my name?  
And how did you know I had been arrested?

TLLI: I work for the Court.

K: Work for . . . ?

TLLI: I am the Court's painter. That series? "Man Calling His Dog?"  
The subject is one of the highest judges. And my father, he painted that judge's father, who was also one of the highest judges.

K: Your father?

TLLI: He was the Court's painter before me. It is handed down. It's a tradition.

K: What exactly do you know about my case?

TLLI: Well, I hate to say it, but the word on the street is . . .

K: I'm finished?

TLLI: I wouldn't put too much stock in rumor. People can find themselves hanged for spreading rumors nowadays.

*(F and B can be heard scoffing and laughing off stage.)*

F: Titorelli, are you finished yet?

B: Is that man going to leave soon?

BOTH: We want to come in and play.

TLLI: *(Begins to work on a canvas.)* Dangers of the trade.

K: How exactly can you help me?

TLLI: Listen. There are three ways the Court can find: definite acquittal, ostensible acquittal and indefinite postponement.

K: I'd vote for definite acquittal myself.

TLLI: The Court never decides that way.

K: It never decides absolutely that anyone is absolutely innocent.

TLLI: You got it.

K: And ostensible acquittal?

TLLI: I will petition a number of judges I know--petition them on behalf of your innocence, which I will pledge . . .

F and B: *(Off.)* Titorelli, hurry up.

F: You know what we'll do to you if you don't let us in!

TLLI: And they in turn petition the judge trying your case, and if they all get along quite well . . . you're free. Well, provisionally free, since any time after that, the presiding judge--actually any of the judges--can reopen your trial.

K: At any time?

TLLI: Any time.

- K: This is all a bit much.
- TLLI: A bit much? Look, the indefinite postponement is the best for you. We keep misplacing your files and asking for a later date. They grow tired and simply forget . . .
- K: And my innocence?
- TLLI: I wouldn't worry about that right now, K. You're in some pretty big trouble, and as I said, the word on the street is . . .
- K: I'm finished.
- F and B: Make him go.
- K: Charming urchins.
- TLLI: The neighborhoods full of them. They have their good points.
- K: You know, Titorelli, I'd like to buy a painting from you.
- TLLI: You would, now, would you? Well, all of these have to go to the Judge, but I have a landscape you might like. (*Pulls one out.*) You like it?
- K: It has a certain . . .
- TLLI: (*Pulls out another.*) Then you'll want this one, too. They're companion pieces.
- K: They're exactly the same. Just like . . .
- TLLI: They're a series. Buy one, you have to buy them all. I only have two more. That makes four.
- K: (*Taking out wallet and giving Titorelli a wad of cash.*) I didn't really count on . . .
- TLLI: You didn't really have to buy these, K, so I'd help you.
- K: That's not why I'm . . .
- TLLI: The Court pays me to work for you.

*(F and B return. F frolicking with Titorelli. B trying to with K. Kafka down from desk, crosses to just outside of this circle.)*

K:           Are you trying to flirt with me?

B:           No!

*(She returns to Titorelli, who, if possible, carries them both off, the two girls carrying all of the paintings with them. K turns to Kafka.)*

KAFKA:     We've got one more stop.

End of Scene 3