

## Excerpt from 'Splendid Productions' The Trial' By Franz Kafka Adapted by Ben Hales

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### Scene 1

**Projection**      **INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR!**

**Clerk 1**      *(on microphone)* Scene one. Somebody must have made a false accusation against Josef K, because he was arrested one morning without having done anything wrong.

K is in bed. His alarm clock rings. He gets up. He is expecting to see his breakfast.

**K**              Where's my breakfast?

K rings an invisible bell.

**Clerk 2**      Ding a ling a ling!

Enter Franz.

**Franz**      Good morning.

**K**              Who are you?

**Franz**      You rang?

**K**              The maid is supposed to be bringing me my breakfast.

**Franz**      *(calling)* The maid is supposed to be bringing him his breakfast!  
*(Laughter from offstage)* I'm afraid that is impossible.

**K**              Very well, I will get my own!

**Franz**      I'm afraid that is impossible!

K wants to leave the room, but when he approaches the doorframe, it is wheeled to the other side of the stage by Clerk 3, laughing. This happens several times.

**Franz**      You are not allowed to leave. You are under arrest!

**K**              I'm under arrest? For what reason?

**Franz**      It's not my job to tell you that. You'll find out all you need in good time. You should just wait in your room, and please don't ask any more questions. I have already taken a risk by talking to you in such a friendly way.

**K**              Friendly!

**Franz**      Yes. I believe I have been very friendly, don't you agree?

**K**              Well –

**Franz**      *(silencing him)* Um.

**K**              I –

- Franz**            *(silencing him)* Ah.
- K**                    But –
- Franz**            *(silencing him)* No! *(Continuing regardless)* You were lucky to get me as a warder. If your luck continues, you have every reason to be confident!  
*(Crafty)* If you have a little money, I am prepared to fetch you a light breakfast from the café opposite.
- K**                    Now look here. I am a respectable man. Here are my identity papers.  
A sign appears from behind the curtain. It reads 'I am Josef K'.
- K**                    'Josef K', see? All in order. Now, show me your papers, and especially the warrant you have for my arrest.
- Franz**            That's not my department, I'm afraid. Now, I may be just a junior warder, and not some posh bank official in a fancy night-gown, but even I can see that the Higher Authorities would hardly order someone's arrest without a reason. *(He laughs, as if the notion is absurd.)*
- K**                    I admit, I have no experience of the law. But we live in a country which has a proper legal system. You will soon see that I am completely innocent.
- Franz**            *(gestic moment)* He admits he doesn't know the law, and yet he's certain he's innocent! *(End gestic moment)*
- Supervisor**    *(from outside)* The Supervisor is coming!
- Franz**            The Supervisor! The Supervisor is coming!
- Franz opens the door. Enter the Supervisor.
- Supervisor**    Josef K? You must be very surprised by this morning's events?
- K**                    Of course I am! Apparently I am accused of something, but I have done nothing whatsoever to justify the accusation. I can only imagine that someone has made a mistake.
- Supervisor**    It is you that is making the mistake! It is true, Franz and I are of minor importance to your case. I can't tell you what you're accused of, I only know that you're under arrest.
- Franz**            *(echoing the Supervisor)* Under arrest!
- Supervisor**    But my suggestion to you is not to make such an issue of your feeling of innocence. It detracts from the otherwise favourable impression you make.
- K**                    *(agitated)* But it's senseless! *(Berating the audience)* What are you looking at? What? Look away, this has nothing to do with you. Why are you even here?
- Supervisor**    Well, that's enough for today. I suppose you'll want to go to the bank now, Mr Bank Manager?
- K**                    I thought I was under arrest?
- Supervisor**    You are under arrest, but it shouldn't affect your normal way of life.
- K**                    *(disbelieving)* So being arrested isn't so bad?

**Supervisor** I never said it was.

**K** But then it hardly seems necessary for you to tell me I've been arrested.

**Supervisor** It was...

**Franz & Supervisor** *(together, hands on hearts)*... our duty.

**K** A stupid duty ! *(The Supervisor and Franz are shocked.)*  
Well, in my opinion it's best not to brood about whether what you've done is justified or not, but to bring the matter to a peaceful conclusion with a mutual handshake...

He holds out his hand.

**Supervisor** *(gestic moment)* How simple everything seems to him. 'Bring the matter to a peaceful conclusion with a mutual handshake'? *(End gestic moment)* I'm afraid that is impossible. But, saying that, I definitely don't mean to say you should despair, either. The proceedings will take their course. *(Checks his watch)* End of our shift. Come along Franz, I'll buy you schnitzel. Good day, Mr K.

Franz opens the door and follows the Supervisor out.

**Franz** Good day, Mr K.