

Audio file

[2024-11-12 KST Kafka 10 The Bridge v1.mp3](#)

Transcript

The bridge. I was rigid with cold; I was a bridge, lying suspended across a gully, here on this side were my toes, on the other my fingertips were drilled in. I had bitten myself fast in crumbling cement. The skirts of my coat were flapping around my sides. In the depths was the noise of the icy trout stream. No tourist ever wound up at this impassible height; the bridge was not yet marked in any map. So I lay and waited; I was bound to wait; short of falling, no bridge once built, can ever cease to be a bridge. Once towards evening, it may have been the first or the thousandth, I don't know, my thoughts were always in a tangle, and forever going round and round, towards evening in summertime the stream was rushing more darkly, I heard the footfall of a man. Now concentrate, concentrate. Stretch yourself, bridge, put yourself in order, unfenced struts, hold the one who has been entrusted to you, compensate discreetly for any uncertainties of his step, and then should he sway, make your presence felt and like a mountain god hurl him ashore. There he came, tapping me with the iron ferrule of his stick, then he flicked up the tails of my coat and brushed them straight over me, drove the point of his stick into my bushy hair and left it there, presumably while he looked away into the distance. Then – just as I was dreaming him over hill and dale – he suddenly jumped with both feet onto the middle of my body. I shuddered in wild pain, wholly at a loss. Who was this? A child? A gymnast? A daredevil? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer! And I turned round to catch the sight of him. A bridge turns round. I hadn't completely turned when I was already falling. I was falling, and already I was dashed to pieces and pierced on the pointed little rocks that had always gazed up at me so quietly from the rushing waters.