

Audio file

[2024-11-12 KST Kafka 12 It Was One Summer v1.mp3](#)

Transcript

It was one summer. It was one summer, a warm day. On the way home with my sister, we happened to pass the gate of a manor-house. I don't know whether it was from pure mischievousness, or in a fit of absent mindedness that she struck the gate, or perhaps merely shook her fist at it and didn't strike it at all. A hundred paces further on down the left-bearing road, a village began. It wasn't one we knew, but people came out of the first house, waving to us in a friendly way, but warning us at the same time alarmed themselves, cringing with fear. They pointed to the manor-house we had passed, and referred us to the blow against the gate. The owners of the manor would bring charges against us, inquiries would begin straight away. I felt perfectly relaxed, and tried to calm my sister. She probably hadn't struck the gate at all, and even if she had, there was nowhere in the world where that would mean a trial. I tried to make the people around us see it that way and they heard me but didn't give an opinion. Later on, they said that not only my sister, but I too as her brother stood to be accused. I nodded and smiled. We were all of us looking back in the direction of the manor, the way you might look at a distant puff of smoke and wait for a flame to appear. And lo, before long we saw horsemen ride into the wide open gate, dust rise up, covering everything, and only the sharp points of lances flashing. No sooner had the troop disappeared into the courtyard than they seemed to have turned the horses and were on their way to us. I pushed my sister away. I would see that everything was cleared up. She refused to leave me. I told her she should at least change so to appear in front of the gentleman in a better dress. Finally she listened, and set off on the long way home. Already, the riders were upon us, down from their horses they asked for my sister. She wasn't there just then, came the timid reply, but she would be along later. The answer was received almost with indifference; what seemed to matter was that I had been found. It was principally two gentlemen, the judge, lively young fellow, and his silent assistant, whom he addressed as Assman. I was asked to step into the front parlour of the inn. Slowly, moving my head from side to side, playing with my braces, I set off under the sharp eyes of the gentlemen. I almost thought a word might be enough to release me, a city boy, free and almost honourable, from these farm people. But as soon as I crossed the threshold the judge, who had gone on ahead and was waiting for me, said: "I feel sorry for this man!" It was beyond doubt that he meant not my current state, but whatever lay in store for me. The parlour resembled a prison cell more than any rustic parlour. Large flagstones, dark grey

bare walls, somewhere set in them an iron ring, in the middle, something that looked half-palette, half operating-table.