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It was a Sunday morning in the very height of spring. Georg Bendemann, a young merchant, was sitting in his own room on the first floor of one of a long row of small, ramshackle houses stretching beside the river which were scarcely distinguishable from each other in height and coloring. He had just finished a letter to an old friend of his who was now living abroad, had put it into its envelope in a slow and dreamy fashion, and with his elbows propped on the writing table was gazing out of the window at the river, the bridge, and the hills on the farther bank with their tender green.

He was thinking about his friend, who had actually run away to Russia some years before, being dissatisfied with his prospects at home. Now he was carrying on a business in St. Petersburg, which had flourished to begin with but had long been going downhill, as he always complained on his increasingly rare visits. So he was wearing himself out to no purpose in a foreign country, the unfamiliar full beard he wore did not quite conceal the face Georg had known so well since childhood, and his skin was growing so yellow as to indicate some latent disease. By his own account he had no regular connection with the colony of his fellow countrymen out there and almost no social intercourse with Russian families, so that he was resigning himself to becoming a permanent bachelor.

What could one write to such a man, who had obviously run off the rails, a man one could be sorry for but could not help. Should one advise him to come home, to transplant himself and take up his old friendships again—there was nothing to hinder him—and in general to rely on the help of his friends? But that was as good as telling him, and the more kindly the more offensively, that all his efforts hitherto had miscarried, that he should finally give up, come back home, and be gaped at by everyone as a returned prodigal, that only his friends knew what
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was what and that he himself was just a big child who should do what his successful and home-keeping friends prescribed. And was it certain, besides, that all the pain one would have to inflict on him would achieve its object? Perhaps it would not even be possible to get him to come home at all—he said himself that he was now out of touch with commerce in his native country—and then he would still be left an alien in a foreign land embittered by his friends’ advice and more than ever estranged from them. But if he did follow their advice and then didn’t fit in at home—not out of malice, of course, but through force of circumstances—couldn’t get on with his friends or without them, felt humiliated, couldn’t be said to have either friends or a country of his own any longer, wouldn’t it have been better for him to stay abroad just as he was? Taking all this into account, how could one be sure that he would make a success of life at home?

For such reasons, supposing one wanted to keep up correspondence with him, one could not send him any real news such as could frankly be told to the most distant acquaintance. It was more than three years since his last visit, and for this he offered the lame excuse that the political situation in Russia was too uncertain, which apparently would not permit even the briefest absence of a small businessman while it allowed hundreds of thousands of Russians to travel peacefully abroad. But during these three years Georg’s own position in life had changed a lot. Two years ago his mother had died, since when he and his father had shared the household together, and his friend had of course been informed of that and had expressed his sympathy in a letter phrased so dryly that the grief caused by such an event, one had to conclude, could not be realized in a distant country. Since that time, however, Georg had applied himself with greater determination to the business as well as to everything else.

Perhaps during his mother’s lifetime his father’s insistence on having everything his own way in the business had hindered him from developing any real activity of his own, perhaps since her death his father had become less aggressive, although he was still active in the business, perhaps it was mostly due to an accidental run of good fortune—which was very profound. But Georg’s friend had no inkling of this; earlier years, perhaps for the last time in dolence, he had tried to persuade Georg to return and had enlarged upon the prospects of Georg’s branch of trade. The figures quoted by comparison with the range of Georg’s present business were five times as great; no doubt progress lay just ahead.

But Georg’s friend had no inkling of this. And so it happened to Georg that three widely separated letters he had told his friend of an unimportant man to an equal number of correspondents of an unimportant man to an equal number of correspondents until indeed, quite contrary to his intentions, show some interest in this notable event.

Yet Georg preferred to write about this than to confess that he himself had got engaged to a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from Berlin. He often discussed this friend of his with his correspondent. “So he won’t be coming to see me, he would probably come, at least he would feel that his hand had been forced and without being able to do anything about it,” answered Georg. "I don’t want to trouble him," answered Georg. "I stand me, he would probably come, at least he would feel that his hand had been forced and without being able to do anything about it."

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run of good fortune—which was very probable indeed—but at
any rate during those two years the business had developed in a
most unexpected way, the staff had had to be doubled, the
turnover was five times as great; no doubt about it, further
progress lay just ahead.

But Georg's friend had no inkling of this improvement. In
earlier years, perhaps for the last time in that letter of con-
dolence, he had tried to persuade Georg to emigrate to Russia
and had enlarged upon the prospects of success for precisely
Georg's branch of trade. The figures quoted were microscopic
by comparison with the range of Georg's present operations. Yet
he shrank from letting his friend know about his business suc-
cess, and if he were to do it now retrospectively that certainly
would look peculiar.

So Georg confined himself to giving his friend unimportant
items of gossip such as rise at random in the memory when one is
idly thinking things over on a quiet Sunday. All he desired was
leaving undisturbed the idea of the home town which his friend
must have built up to his own content during the long interval.

And so it happened to Georg that three times in three fairly
widely separated letters he had told his friend about the engage-
ment of an unimportant man to an equally unimportant girl,
until indeed, quite contrary to his intentions, his friend began to
show some interest in this notable event.

Yet Georg preferred to write about things like these rather
than to confess that he himself had got engaged a month ago to
a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family.
He often discussed this friend of his with his fiancée and the
peculiar relationship that had developed between them in their
 correspondence. "So he won't be coming to our wedding," said
she, "and yet I have a right to get to know all your friends." "I
don't want to trouble him," answered Georg, "don't miscon-
derstand me, he would probably come, at least I think so, but he
would feel that his hand had been forced and he would be hurt,
perhaps he would envy me and certainly he'd be discontented
and without being able to do anything about his discontent he'd
have to go away again alone. Alone—do you know what that
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means?" "Yes, but may he not hear about our wedding in some other fashion?" "I can't prevent that, of course, but it's unlikely, considering the way he lives." "Since your friends are like that, Georg, you shouldn't ever have got engaged at all." "Well, we're both to blame for that; but I wouldn't have it any other way now." And when, breathing quickly under his kisses, she still brought out: "All the same, I do feel upset," he thought it could not really involve him in trouble were he to send the news to his friend. "That's the kind of man I am and he'll just have to take me as I am," he said to himself, "I can't cut myself to another pattern that might make a more suitable friend for him."

And in fact he did inform his friend, in the long letter he had been writing that Sunday morning, about his engagement, with these words: "I have saved my best news to the end. I have got engaged to a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family, who only came to live here a long time after you went away, so that you're hardly likely to know her. There will be time to tell you more about her later, for today let me just say that I am very happy and as between you and me the only difference in our relationship is that instead of a quite ordinary kind of friend you will now have in me a happy friend. Besides that, you will acquire in my fiancée, who sends her warm greetings and will soon write you herself, a genuine friend of the opposite sex, which is not without importance to a bachelor. I know that there are many reasons why you can't come to see us, but would not my wedding be precisely the right occasion for giving all obstacles the go-by? Still, however that may be, do just as seems good to you without regarding any interests but your own."

With this letter in his hand Georg had been sitting a long time at the writing table, his face turned toward the window. He had barely acknowledged, with an absent smile, a greeting waved to him from the street by a passing acquaintance.

At last he put the letter in his pocket and went out of his room across a small lobby into his father's room, which he had not entered for months. There was in fact no need for him to enter it, since he saw his father daily at business and they took their mid-

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day meal together at an eating house; in the evening each did as he pleased, yet even then, unless something happened—went out with friends or, more rarely, with his fiancée, they always sat for a while, each with his back to the window in their common sitting room.

It surprised Georg how dark his father's room was this sunny morning. So it was overshadowed by the high wall on the other side of the narrow corridor, and his father was sitting by the window in a corner, his eyes directed toward the window. As he held to one side before his eyes in an attempt to overcome his defect of vision. On the table stood the remains of his breakfast, which seemed to have been eaten.

"Ah, Georg," said his father, rising at once and heavy dressing gown swung open as he walked toward the window, where his face fluttered around him. "My father is still as handsome as ever, and has at least not much of which seemed to have been eaten."

"It's unbearably dark here," he said aloud.

"Yes, it's dark enough," answered his father.

"And you've shut the window, too?"

"I prefer it like that."

"Well, it's quite warm outside," said Georg, trying to bring his previous remark, and sat down.

His father cleared away the breakfast dishes, but not the remains of the eggs that had now been vacantly following the old man's moves.

"I really only wanted to tell you," went on Georg, "I've been sending the news of my engagement to some of my friends, and I now send it to you, who is the last person I thought of sending the news to."

"To St. Petersburg?" asked his father.

"To my friend there," said Georg, trying to convey the thought that his fiancée was the last person he had thought of sending the news to. "I mean, I can't help it, Father, I always have a sort of feeling that you would like to come with us."

"Oh yes. To your friend," said his father, evoking a sense of tolerance without further emphasis.

"Well, you know, Father, that I wanted no
day meal together at an eating house; in the evening, it was true, each did as he pleased, yet even then, unless Georg—as mostly happened—went out with friends or, more recently, visited his fiancée, they always sat for a while, each with his newspaper, in their common sitting room.

It surprised Georg how dark his father's room was even on this sunny morning. So it was overshadowed as much as that by the high wall on the other side of the narrow courtyard. His father was sitting by the window in a corner hung with various mementoes of Georg's dead mother, reading a newspaper which he held to one side before his eyes in an attempt to overcome a defect of vision. On the table stood the remains of his breakfast, not much of which seemed to have been eaten.

"Ah, Georg," said his father, rising at once to meet him. His heavy dressing gown swung open as he walked and the skirts of it fluttered around him.—"My father is still a giant of a man," said Georg to himself.

"It's unbearably dark here," he said aloud.

"Yes, it's dark enough," answered his father.

"And you've shut the window, too?"

"I prefer it like that."

"Well, it's quite warm outside," said Georg, as if continuing his previous remark, and sat down.

His father cleared away the breakfast dishes and set them on a chest.

"I really only wanted to tell you," went on Georg, who had been vacantly following the old man's movements, "that I am now sending the news of my engagement to St. Petersburg." He drew the letter a little way from his pocket and let it drop back again.

"To St. Petersburg?" asked his father.

"To my friend there," said Georg, trying to meet his father's eye.—In business hours he's quite different, he was thinking, how solidly he sits here with his arms crossed.

"Oh yes. To your friend," said his father, with peculiar emphasis.

"Well, you know, Father, that I wanted not to tell him about
my engagement at first. Out of consideration for him, that was the only reason. You know yourself he's a difficult man. I said to myself that someone else might tell him about my engagement, although he's such a solitary creature that that was hardly likely—I couldn't prevent that—but I wasn't ever going to tell him myself."

"And now you've changed your mind?" asked his father, laying his enormous newspaper on the window sill and on top of it his spectacles, which he covered with one hand.

"Yes, I've been thinking it over. If he's a good friend of mine, I said to myself, my being happily engaged should make him happy too. And so I wouldn't put off telling him any longer. But before I posted the letter I wanted to let you know."

"Georg," said his father, lengthening his toothless mouth, "listen to me! You've come to me about this business, to talk it over with me. No doubt that does you honor. But it's nothing, it's worse than nothing, if you don't tell me the whole truth. I don't want to stir up matters that shouldn't be mentioned here. Since the death of our dear mother certain things have been done that aren't right. Maybe the time will come for mentioning them, and maybe sooner than we think. There's many a thing in the business I'm not aware of, maybe it's not done behind my back—I'm not going to say that it's done behind my back—I'm not equal to things any longer, my memory's failing, I haven't an eye for so many things any longer. That's the course of nature in the first place, and in the second place the death of our dear mother hit me harder than it did you.—But since we're talking about it, about this letter, I beg you, Georg, don't deceive me. It's a trivial affair, it's hardly worth mentioning, so don't deceive me. Do you really have this friend in St. Petersburg?"

Georg rose in embarrassment. "Never mind my friends. A thousand friends wouldn't make up to me for my father. Do you know what I think? You're not taking enough care of yourself. But old age must be taken care of. I can't do without you in the business, you know that very well, but if the business is going to undermine your health, I'm ready to close it down tomorrow forever. And that won't do. We'll have to make a change in your way of living. But a radical change, you understand. You're dark, and in the sitting room you would have to sit by a closed window, and that's good for you. No, Father! I'll get the doctor, we'll follow his orders. We'll change your room at once, you can lie down in my bed for all that later, I'll put you to bed now for you need to rest. Come, I'll help you to talk. You'll see I can do it. Or if you would rather you have no friend in St. Petersburg. You're not a leg-puller and you haven't even shrunk from that story yourself once or twice since."
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your way of living. But a radical change. You sit here in the
dark, and in the sitting room you would have plenty of light.
You just take a bite of breakfast instead of properly keeping up
your strength. You sit by a closed window, and the air would be
so good for you. No, Father! I’ll get the doctor to come, and
we’ll follow his orders. We’ll change your room, you can move
into the front room and I’ll move in here. You won’t notice the
change, all your things will be moved with you. But there’s time
for all that later, I’ll put you to bed now for a little, I’m sure
you need to rest. Come, I’ll help you to take off your things,
you’ll see I can do it. Or if you would rather go into the front
room at once, you can lie down in my bed for the present. That
would be the most sensible thing.”

Georg stood close beside his father, who had let his head
with its unkempt white hair sink on his chest.

“Georg,” said his father in a low voice, without moving.

Georg knelt down at once beside his father, in the old man’s
weary face he saw the pupils, overlarge, fixedly looking at him
from the corners of the eyes.

“You have no friend in St. Petersburg. You’ve always been a
leg-puller and you haven’t even shrunk from pulling my leg.
How could you have a friend out there! I can’t believe it.”

“Just think back a bit, Father,” said Georg, lifting his father
from the chair and slipping off his dressing gown as he stood fee­
bly enough, “it’ll soon be three years since my friend came to see
us last. I remember that you used not to like him very much. At
least twice I kept you from seeing him, although he was actually
sitting with me in my room. I could quite well understand your
dislike of him, my friend has his peculiarities. But then, later, you
get on with him very well. I was proud because you listened to
him and nodded and asked him questions. If you think back
you’re bound to remember. He used to tell us the most incredi­
ble stories of the Russian Revolution. For instance, when he was
on a business trip to Kiev and ran into a riot, and ñaw a priest on
a balcony who cut a broad cross in blood on the palm of his
hand and held the hand up and appealed to the mob. You’ve told
that story yourself once or twice since.”
Meanwhile Georg had succeeded in lowering his father down again and carefully taking off the woolen drawers he wore over his linen underpants and his socks. The not particularly clean appearance of his underwear made him reproach himself for having been neglectful. It should have certainly been his duty to see that his father had clean changes of underwear. He had not yet explicitly discussed with his bride-to-be what arrangements should be made for his father in the future, for they had both of them silently taken it for granted that the old man would go on living alone in the old house. But now he made a quick, firm decision to take him into his own future establishment. It almost looked, on closer inspection, as if the care he meant to lavish there on his father might come too late.

He carried his father to bed in his arms. It gave him a dreadful feeling to notice that while he took the few steps toward the bed the old man on his breast was playing with his watch chain. He could not lay him down on the bed for a moment, so firmly did he hang on to the watch chain.

But as soon as he was laid in bed, all seemed well. He covered himself up and even drew the blankets farther than usual over his shoulders. He looked up at Georg with a not unfriendly eye.

"You begin to remember my friend, don't you?" asked Georg, giving him an encouraging nod.

"Am I well covered up now?" asked his father, as if he were not able to see whether his feet were properly tucked in or not.

"So you find it snug in bed already," said Georg, and tucked the blankets more closely around him.

"Am I well covered up?" asked the father once more, seeming to be strangely intent upon the answer.

"Don't worry, you're well covered up."

"No!" cried his father, cutting short the answer, threw the blankets off with a strength that sent them all flying in a moment and sprang erect in bed. Only one hand lightly touched the ceiling to steady him.

"You wanted to cover me up, I know, my young sprig, but I'm far from being covered up yet. And even if this is the last strength I have, it's enough for you, too much for you. Of course I know your friend. He would have torn my heart. That's why you've been playing years. Why else? Do you think I haven't b— And that's why you had to lock yourself up— Chief is busy, mustn't be disturbed—just so that you could set your bottom on him and sit on him move, then my fine son makes up his mind to go.

Georg stared at the bogey conjured up by his father, whom his father well, touched his imagination as never before. He saw him at the door of the warehouse he saw him. Among the wrecals the slashed remnants of his wares, the falling goods just standing up. Why did he have to go so far? "But attend to me!" cried his father, and pulled the blankets, ran toward the bed to take everything stop halfway.

"Because she lifted up her skirts," his father, "because she lifted her skirts like this, the mimicking her he lifted his shirt so high that scar on his thigh from his war wound, "because she lifted her skirts like this and this you made up to her, as free with her undisturbed you have disgraced memory, betrayed your friend, and stuck you that he can't move. But he can move, or can't he?"

And he stood up quite unsupported and His insight made him radiant.

Georg shrank into a corner, as far away possible. A long time ago he had firmly me watch closely every least movement so that his surprise by an indirect attack, a pounce from. At this moment he recalled this long-forgotten got it again, like a man drawing a thread of a needle.
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Georg stared at the bogey conjured up by his father. His friend in St. Petersburg, whom his father suddenly knew too well, touched his imagination as never before. Lost in the vast­ness of Russia he saw him. At the door of an empty, plundered warehouse he saw him. Among the wreckage of his showcases, the slashed remnants of his wares, the falling gas brackets, he was just standing up. Why did he have to go so far away!

“But attend to me!” cried his father, and Georg, almost distracted, ran toward the bed to take everything in, yet came to a stop halfway.

“Because she lifted up her skirts,” his father began to flute, “because she lifted her skirts like this, the nasty creature,” and mimicking her he lifted his shirt so high that one could see the scar on his thigh from his war wound, “because she lifted her skirts like this and this you made up to her, and in order to make free with her undisturbed you have disgraced your mother’s memory, betrayed your friend, and stuck your father into bed so that he can’t move. But he can move, or can’t he?”

And he stood up quite unsupported and kicked his legs out. His insight made him radiant.

Georg shrank into a corner, as far away from his father as possible. A long time ago he had firmly made up his mind to watch-closely every least movement so that he should not be surprised by any indirect attack, a pounce from behind or above.

At this moment he recalled this long-forgotten resolve and forgot it again, like a man drawing a short thread through the eye of a needle.
"But your friend hasn't been betrayed after all!" cried his father, emphasizing the point with stabs of his forefinger. "I've been representing him here on the spot."

"You comedian!" Georg could not resist the retort, realized at once the harm done and, his eyes starting in his head, bit his tongue back, only too late, till the pain made his knees give.

"Yes, of course I've been playing a comedy! A comedy! That's a good expression! What other comfort was left to a poor old widower? Tell me—and while you're answering me be you still my living son—what else was left to me, in my back room, plagued by a disloyal staff, old to the marrow of my bones? And my son strutting through the world, finishing off deals that I had prepared for him, bursting with triumphant glee, and stalking away from his father with the closed face of a respectable businessman! Do you think I didn't love you, I, from whom you are sprung?"

Now he'll lean forward, thought Georg, what if he topples and smashes himself! These words went hissing through his mind.

His father leaned forward but did not topple. Since Georg did not come any nearer, as he had expected, he straightened himself again.

"Stay where you are, I don't need you! You think you have strength enough to come over here and that you're only hanging back of your own accord. Don't be too sure! I am still much the stronger of us two. All by myself I might have had to give way, but your mother has given me so much of her strength that I've established a fine connection with your friend and I have your customers here in my pocket!"

"He has pockets even in his shirt!" said Georg to himself, and believed that with this remark he could make him an impossible figure for all the world. Only for a moment did he think so, since he kept on forgetting everything.

"Just take your bride on your arm and try getting in my way! I'll sweep her from your very side, you don't know how!"

Georg made a grimace of disbelief. His father only nodded, confirming the truth of his words, toward Georg's corner.
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“How you amused me today, coming to ask me if you should
tell your friend about your engagement. He knows it already,
you stupid boy, he knows it all! I've been writing to him, for
you forgot to take my writing things away from me. That's
why he hasn't been here for years, he knows everything a
hundred times better than you do yourself, in his left hand he crumples your letters unopened while in his right hand he holds
up my letters to read through!”

In his enthusiasm he waved his arm over his head. “He knows
everything a thousand times better!” he cried.

“Ten thousand times!” said Georg, to make fun of his father,
but in his very mouth the words turned into deadly earnest.

“For years I've been waiting for you to come with some such
question! Do you think I concern myself with anything else?
Do you think I read my newspapers? Look!” and he threw
Georg a newspaper sheet which he had somehow taken to bed
with him. An old newspaper, with a name entirely unknown
to Georg.

“How long a time you've taken to grow up! Your mother
had to die, she couldn't see the happy day, your friend is going
to pieces in Russia, even three years ago he was yellow enough
to be thrown away, and as for me, you see what condition I'm
in. You have eyes in your head for that!”

“So you've been lying in wait for me!” cried Georg.

His father said pityingly, in an offhand manner: “I suppose
you wanted to say that sooner. But now it doesn't matter.” And
in a louder voice: “So now you know what else there was in the
world besides yourself, till now you've known only about your­
self! An innocent child, yes, that you were, truly, but still more
truly have you been a devilish human being!—And therefore
take note: I sentence you now to death by drowning!”

Georg felt himself urged from the room, the crash with which
his father fell on the bed behind him was still in his ears as he
fled. On the staircase, which he rushed down as if its steps were
an inclined plane, he ran into his charwoman on her way up to do
the morning cleaning of the room. “Jesus!” she cried, and cov­
ered her face with her apron, but he was already gone. Out of
the front door he rushed, across the roadway, driven toward the water. Already he was grasping at the railings as a starving man clutches food. He swung himself over, like the distinguished gymnast he had once been in his youth, to his parents' pride. With weakening grip he was still holding on when he spied between the railings a motor-bus coming which would easily cover the noise of his fall, called in a low voice: “Dear parents, I have always loved you, all the same,” and let himself drop.

At this moment an unending stream of traffic was just going over the bridge.

Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from his bed into a was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plate, he lifted his head a little he could see his divided into stiff arched segments on top of could hardly keep in position and was completely. His numerous legs, which were pid to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before

What has happened to me? he thought. It room, a regular human bedroom, only rather between the four familiar walls. Above the collection of cloth samples was unpacked and was a commercial traveler—hung the pictur recently cut out of an illustrated magazine an gilt frame. It showed a lady, with a fur cap sitting upright and holding out to the spectra into which the whole of her forearm had vanis

Gregor's eyes turned next to the window sky—one could hear raindrops beating on th made him quite melancholy. What about sl and forgetting all this nonsense, he thought, done, for he was accustomed to sleep on his present condition he could not turn himself lently he forced himself toward his right side, to his back again. He tried it at least a hundred eyes to keep from seeing his struggling legs when he began to feel in his side a faint dull experienced before.

Oh God, he thought, what an exhausting Traveling about day in, day out. It's much a