

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

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.