
Franz Kafka, Fragments, *Grand Street* 117, 121-122 (Spring, 1996)(No. 56, Dreams) (trans. from German by Daniel Slager)

Fragment 1

“How did I get here,” I cried. It was a fairly large room, lit only by a soft electric light. I inspected the walls. There were actually several doors, but upon opening them, I discovered a dark, flat stone wall, which was set back by perhaps only the width of a hand from the doorway and extended straight up and to both sides into the infinite distance. There was no way out here. Only one door led into another room, and the prospect there was more hopeful, but no less unsettling than that of the other doors. I looked into a royal chamber, decorated in shades of red and gold. There were several wall-size mirrors and an enormous chandelier. But that was not all.

Fragment 2

I was granted permission to enter a strange garden. There were several difficulties to overcome at the entrance, but finally a man behind a table stood up and fixed a dark green piece of paper to my lapel with a pin. “That is, of course, a medal,” I said jokingly, but the man only patted me on the shoulder as if to reassure me—but why should I be reassured? I learned from his knowing glance that I could now enter. After a few steps, however, I remembered that I had not yet paid. I wanted to turn around, but just then I saw a tall woman in an overcoat made of a coarse, yellowish-gray material bending over the table, counting a number of tiny coins. “That is for you,” the man called out to me over the woman’s head, as she stooped very low. “For me?” I asked in disbelief, and looked behind me to see if indeed someone else had been intended. “Always the same pettiness,” said a gentleman who had come across the lawn, passed on the path directly in front of me, and then walked away again. “Yes, for you. For who else then? Here one pays for others.” I thanked him for this information, reluctantly as it had been provided, but also drew his attention to the fact that I had not paid for anyone. “And for whom should you then pay?” said the gentleman in parting. I wanted in any case to wait for the woman and come to some sort of an understanding with her, but she turned down another path, swishing off in her coat. A bluish veil streamed gracefully behind her majestic figure. “You admire Isabella,” a stroller beside me said as he likewise watched her. After a while he said, “That is Isabella.”