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**Franz Kafka**

# THE CASTLE

Read by **Allan Corduner**

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<b>1</b>	<b>The Castle by Franz Kafka – Chapter 1</b>	6:03
<b>2</b>	And now the telephone conversation began.	5:39
<b>3</b>	The landlord sat opposite K...	6:12
<b>4</b>	K. went on, his eyes fixed on the castle...	5:37
<b>5</b>	K.'s mind was elsewhere...	6:03
<b>6</b>	K. had probably looked at her...	5:43
<b>7</b>	Then, in the cottage to his left...	6:04
<b>8</b>	<b>Chapter 2</b>	7:45
<b>9</b>	Out of the receiver there came a buzzing sound...	4:10
<b>10</b>	The peasants behind him had by now edged up...	6:57
<b>11</b>	K. made his choice without any hesitation...	5:12
<b>12</b>	Feeling calmer, K. turned to speak to Barnabas.	6:49
<b>13</b>	They were walking along, but K. did not know...	6:28
<b>14</b>	K. was lost for words.	5:54
<b>15</b>	Outwardly the inn was very similar...	5:36
<b>16</b>	<b>Chapter 3</b>	4:36
<b>17</b>	K. was now alone with Frieda.	4:20
<b>18</b>	'I don't know what you're after,' she said...	4:11
<b>19</b>	In the silence which suddenly reigned...	4:15
<b>20</b>	Hours passed there, hours in which they breathed...	6:23

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<b>21</b>	<b>Chapter 4</b>	6:44
<b>22</b>	Frieda looked up, her eyes full of tears...	5:23
<b>23</b>	I was upset to hear that Frieda let you look...	5:32
<b>24</b>	'It's absolutely true,' said the landlady...	6:05
<b>25</b>	'You see,' the landlady exclaimed...	6:13
<b>26</b>	<b>Chapter 5</b>	6:17
<b>27</b>	In his innermost being...	6:45
<b>28</b>	'The assistants bother you then,' said the mayor...	5:45
<b>29</b>	'A long correspondence now ensued...'	5:50
<b>30</b>	'You always describe my case as being...'	6:51
<b>31</b>	'I'm only suggesting this as a possibility...'	6:41
<b>32</b>	'Fair enough,' said K.	7:30
<b>33</b>	<b>Chapter 6</b>	5:23
<b>34</b>	She drew a photograph out from under the pillow...	5:31
<b>35</b>	The landlady found K.'s attempt...	5:53
<b>36</b>	'That was not a rash thing to do...'	7:07
<b>37</b>	'What did we fail to do?' asked the landlady.	7:34
<b>38</b>	<b>Chapter 7</b>	7:16
<b>39</b>	When the teacher saw that he had now given...	7:41
<b>40</b>	Once he was in the room he hurried...	4:55

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41	'Yes!' K. exclaimed, laughing and clapping his hands.	3:42
42	<b>Chapter 8</b>	6:32
43	'The light doesn't have to be on,' said Pepi...	4:49
44	K. found it annoying to wait on him in this way...	5:08
45	He then turned around again to face the gentleman.	5:56
46	<b>Chapter 9</b>	6:12
47	'Since we're now all together...'	5:33
48	'If you do want to, I'll just draw your attention...'	5:08
49	'If that's the way it is madam,' said K....	7:04
50	<b>Chapter 10</b>	4:38
51	'Barnabas,' said K., feeling sad...	4:36
52	'Fine,' said K., watching Barnabas...	5:21
53	<b>Chapter 11</b>	5:55
54	Frieda, who had been listening intently...	3:50
55	When K. woke up in the night...	1:30
56	<b>Chapter 12</b>	4:32
57	Scarcely had he emerged into the room...	5:47
58	'I see,' said the teacher. 'You two were lying then?..'	4:53
59	<b>Chapter 13</b>	5:23
60	Even K., though, no longer had the determination...	5:21

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61	'Certainly, envoys from Klamm,' said Frieda.	5:39
62	After a bit they heard a slight knocking.	6:36
63	In the end K. grew tired...	6:18
64	K., wanting to put this idea to the test...	6:09
65	It was some time since K. had called Hans...	6:20
66	It was none too soon for Hans to have gone...	6:06
67	And at this point she told K....	4:46
68	'You envisage the discussion with Klamm...'	4:45
69	'Then, though, suddenly, I don't know how it happened...'	4:50
70	'The key point, Frieda,' said K....	6:03
71	<b>Chapter 14</b>	5:49
72	The only surprising thing...	6:19
73	If Olga had been here, she would have replied...	5:22
74	K., who was slightly annoyed by this...	4:42
75	<b>Chapter 15</b>	5:22
76	'That's a good observation,' said K....	6:54
77	'We do talk about Klamm sometimes...'	6:15
78	'Barnabas has enough time to observe all of this...'	6:31
79	'Everything you say to him is right too, though,' said K....	7:12
80	'What's more, I've still been basing all these comments...'	6:24

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81	'Judge for yourself,' said Olga...	5:31
82	'Three years have had that effect on him?' asked K....	6:45
83	'And what was in the letter?' asked K....	7:25
84	'No, Olga,' said K. 'I don't know why...'	6:40
85	'Maybe,' said K., 'but for me the main difference...'	6:43
86	'You're so scared,' said K.	7:09
87	'Finally he did begin to speak...'	7:09
88	'I don't want to talk about Sortini,' said Olga.	3:59
89	'And at this point, as I've already said...'	4:20
90	'And what use were these ideas, anyway...'	7:19
91	Father kept at it. He was still very strong...	7:00
92	'Just think how far things must have gone with father...'	7:33
93	'It was now a question of finding father...'	5:36
94	Every day we expect her life to end...	7:15
95	'I saw there was a chance like that for Barnabas...'	6:41
96	'However fruitless this whole period was...'	6:19
97	'If I have spoken disparagingly...'	7:54
98	<b>Chapter 16</b>	4:50
99	'You're still looking for me as if you were an employee...'	6:28
100	'These threats don't frighten me,' said Jeremias.	5:28

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<b>101</b>	<b>Chapter 17</b>	5:33
<b>102</b>	At this point the front door opened...	6:05
<b>103</b>	<b>Chapter 18</b>	6:49
<b>104</b>	'We won't talk about that any more,' said K....	7:00
<b>105</b>	'That's all sorted out, then,' K. continued.	6:57
<b>106</b>	'Come to your senses; pull yourself together...'	7:53
<b>107</b>	Now he felt he at least had the strength to face Erlanger.	4:24
<b>108</b>	'Where are you intending to go now, then?' asked Bürgel.	5:54
<b>109</b>	'You seem to have had some disappointments...'	5:36
<b>110</b>	'Even they are not really aware of these negative effects...'	6:25
<b>111</b>	'However, there is...' said Bürgel, looking up pensively...	6:50
<b>112</b>	'That's the position. And now, sir, consider...'	4:52
<b>113</b>	'And yet we're happy! How suicidal happiness can be!...'	5:43
<b>114</b>	<b>Chapter 19</b>	5:08
<b>115</b>	And the fact that now, at five o'clock...	4:26
<b>116</b>	Only then did the real difficulties begin.	6:41
<b>117</b>	And if that did not work...	5:54
<b>118</b>	Was the gentleman wanting to call for service...	6:42
<b>119</b>	Did he not watch as the files were being distributed?	4:28
<b>120</b>	While all this was being put to K....	6:12

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121	<b>Chapter 20</b>	5:35
122	And at the time Pepi had even had thoughts...	5:45
123	'But that's not the worst thing.'	6:10
124	'However, he didn't correct it...'	6:08
125	'He was nothing at all; it was depressing to contemplate...'	5:25
126	Of course, it was not difficult...	6:26
127	And then there was the misfortune...	6:22
128	K. was totally unaware of what Frieda was doing.	5:54
129	'What a wild imagination you have, Pepi,' said K.	5:38
130	'One certainly can't lay that charge at Klamm's door...'	7:04
131	'They probably won't be at all surprised...'	7:09
132	It was a small, overheated room.	7:13

**Total time: 13:04:46**



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# Franz Kafka

(1883–1924)

## THE CASTLE

Franz Kafka was born in Prague in 1883, the son of a Jewish merchant. Having studied at the university there, he worked for an insurance company until retiring in 1922 because of tuberculosis; two years later he died. Short and outwardly uneventful as his life was – he never married, and essentially stayed in his native city throughout his life – he did publish a few short stories. He had instructed his friend Max Brod to burn those works left unpublished when he died. Brod chose to ignore the request: three novels, *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *America* subsequently appeared, in 1925, 1926 and 1927 respectively.

There are evident similarities between *The Trial* and *The Castle* but there are also major differences in the way the two were intended to end. Although Kafka never completed *The Castle*, he did indicate to

Brod the ending he envisaged. In it, K., ‘the alleged land-surveyor’, receives at least partial satisfaction. He does not give up his struggle, but dies of exhaustion. The villagers gather round his death bed, and a decision finally comes down from the castle that while K. has no legal claim to reside in the village, he is, taking certain secondary factors into account, allowed to live and work there. It was no doubt in part this proposed ending that led Brod to see *The Trial* and *The Castle* as mutually complementary works, dealing with the themes of divine justice and grace respectively.

The narrative leading up to this ending of *The Castle* is clear in outline. A land-surveyor, known only as K., comes to a village, in the belief that the castle that dominates it has summoned him to work in the area. His many attempts to have

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his appointment confirmed and validated, notably by a senior official called Klamm, are repeatedly frustrated.

The pattern of this plot is echoed in the experience of other characters in the novel. Many of the people K. meets seem anxious to find favour with the castle. The father of Barnabas, the messenger appointed to serve K., is desperate to make his peace with the authorities after his daughter has evidently slighted one of its officials; the landlady of the Brückenhof Inn, having, over twenty years before, been Klamm's lover, would clearly still like the relationship to be revived; Pepi, a girl working at another inn in the village, is keen to remain its bar-maid, and needs to attract Klamm there. None is successful: Barnabas's father achieves nothing and is left a broken man; the landlady, instead of a relationship with Klamm, has a crumpled, faded photograph of the messenger he once sent to summon her; Pepi fails in her attempts, and is obliged to return to her life as a chambermaid.

Simple as this pattern of hopes dashed may seem, there are nonetheless many ways in which the novel is far from

straightforward, and much of what K., and we, encounter is unexpected or odd. K.'s former assistants, Artur and Jeremias (if they are his former assistants – they evidently know nothing about surveying) are so similar that K. decides to call them both Artur. Further aspects of the novel are reminiscent of Lewis Carroll: the road leading to the castle never seems to get any closer to it; the corridor along which many of the castle officials stay overnight has walls that do not reach to the ceiling; working conditions at the castle are curiously cramped; similarly, the landlady of the Herrenhof Inn has a large wardrobe which makes the room in which it stands very narrow. (She has three such wardrobes, all of them full of over-elaborate dresses.)

However, it is not just oddities that blur the apparently sharp outline of the novel. It contains many elements that are unclear, or not what they seem. Most important of these is the castle itself. It 'appears' in the novel's first paragraph as a structure hidden by fog and darkness. When he does see it the following day, K. is disappointed, for far from being an

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impressive edifice, as he had expected, it is in fact a 'pretty wretched little town', made up of modest, unimposing buildings. The administrative machine it represents is depicted in similarly contradictory fashion. Despite several claims made for the castle administration, we see instances of ludicrously inefficient bureaucracy: letters go astray, only to be answered years later; one official's office is characterised by the sound of columns of files continually crashing down; the distribution of dossiers to officials is shown to be hopelessly confused. For all the respect in which the castle is held by the villagers, its representatives seem completely unreliable: servants go wild once released from its immediate authority, while its functionaries cannot be trusted to attend official events. Presiding over all this there is the figure of the senior castle official Klamm. Klamm (if the figure we see is indeed Klamm – even Barnabas is not sure) is a womaniser, a man reluctant to hear or read what is reported to him, and clearly quite out of touch with K.'s problems.

In short there are doubts – not least

in the mind of the teacher who urges K. not to mention the castle's owner in front of his young pupils – about how positive a force the castle is. In spite of that, K. and several others are, as mentioned, anxious to find favour with it. So how is one to interpret it? Does it represent the source of divine grace, the means to K.'s salvation, as some critics have suggested, or rather, as others would have it, an obstacle to his spiritual striving?

K. too is in many ways an obscure figure. Where has he come from? Does he indeed have a wife and child, as he suggests early on? What are his motives for acting as he does, especially towards his fiancée Frieda? Does he love her? Or does he see her, and indeed many others, merely as a means to an end, that of having his position validated by the authorities? If that is his goal, is it a reasonable one? (The German equivalent of 'surveyor' is 'Vermesser', a word which, as Erich Heller has pointed out, has echoes of the noun 'Vermessenheit' or 'hubris'.)

The ambiguities of the novel emerge all the more clearly because of Kafka's style which is essentially straightforward

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(Kafka shunned the linguistic ostentation of fellow German writers in Prague), and allows the questions raised to emerge clearly. In translating the text I have very occasionally felt it desirable, bearing in mind the particular needs of someone listening to, rather than reading, the novel, to break up a sentence, replace a pronoun with a noun, make implied direct speech explicit or even, in one instance, to add a short (four word!) sentence as a 'signpost'. Otherwise I have tried throughout to render the text as faithfully as possible. *The Castle* is a richly rewarding work; I hope this translation shows that.

**Notes by David Whiting**



**Allan Corduner's** distinguished acting career spans more than 30 years. His film credits include *Defiance* with Daniel Craig. His theatre credits include *Two Thousand Years* at the National Theatre, *The Comedians* at the Acorn Theatre in New York, *F\*cking Games* at the Royal Court, and Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money* at the Royal Court, which later transferred to Broadway. His radio credits include *Insignificance*, *Dr Freud Will See You Now*, *The Irresistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (all for BBC Radio 4) and *The Night Listener* by Armistead Maupin. He has featured in *The Woman in White* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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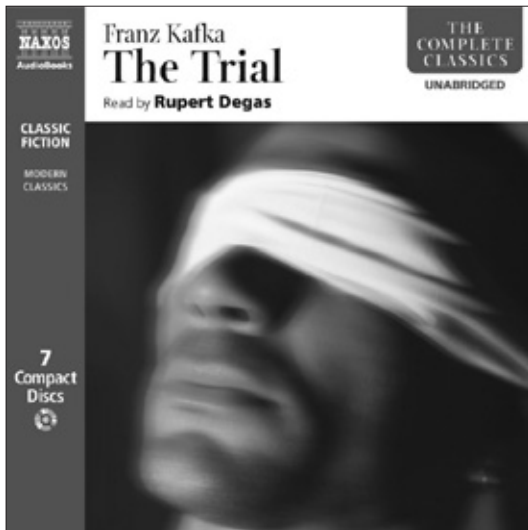
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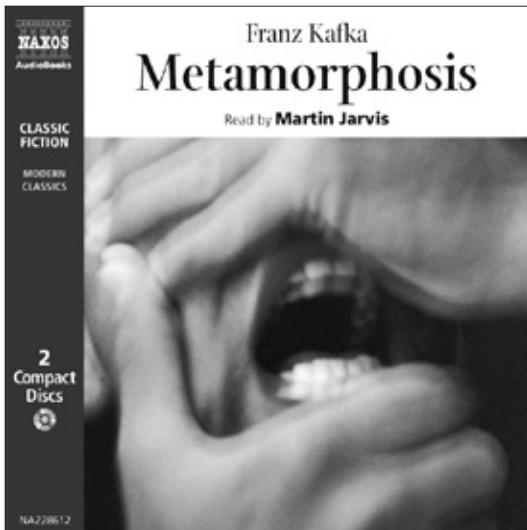
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**Franz Kafka**

# THE CASTLE

Read by **Allan Corduner**

A land-surveyor, known only as K., arrives at a small village permanently covered in snow and dominated by a castle to which access seems permanently denied. K.'s attempts to discover why he has been called constantly run up against the peasant villagers, who are in thrall to the absurd bureaucracy that keeps the castle shut, and the rigid hierarchy of power among the self-serving bureaucrats themselves. But in this strange wilderness, there is passion, tenderness and considerable humour.

Darkly bizarre, this complex book was the last novel by one of the 20th century's greatest and most influential writers.



**Allan Corduner's** theatre credits include Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money* at the Royal Court, which later transferred to Broadway. His radio credits include *The Irresistible Rise of Arturo Ui* for BBC Radio 4. He has featured in *The Woman in White* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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