

“ _____ *”

Moon Bo Young

Translated from the Korean by Hedgie Choi

1

In Kafka's "The Trial" there's actually a sentence that goes " _____ *" The only person who has seen that sentence is me. I looked at the very last page for what the asterisks referred to, but there was no explanation for that footnote. So is " _____ *" Kafka's sentence, or did Kafka quote a sentence from his friend, or did Kafka quote a sentence that I wrote? As things stand now, with the sentence " _____ *" being visible to my eyes only, I wonder, who can help Kafka?

2

I found the answer to " _____ *" in Kafka's childhood in my head.
As a child Kafka
thought that people who were on the phone couldn't see.
His mom, on call,
did not chastise little Kafka
who had climbed up the refrigerator and was sitting like a cobra,
she didn't even pay attention to him,
didn't seem to think he was a human.
This was because a person
can only perceive of one space
at a time and that is where
all suffering begins.

3

The cobra on the refrigerator looks down at a branch far away.

4

" _____ *" is repeated later on in Kafka's life.
Last night I tossed and turned, Kafka complained. Kafka's lover replied, No. Someone is trying to kill

me, Kafka claimed. Those who were not Kafka replied, *No*, together. Spring, Summer, Fall, or Winter, today is one of those, opined Kafka, and the readers of the future all together said, *No*.

5

So in the end the account of how Kafka wrote “ _____*” is as follows:

6

I am sitting on a refrigerator in Kafka’s head. Beneath my feet,
when something scary like a quiet Kafka appears,

I repeat the following sentence:

*If Earth is a period when you look at it from far away, quick,
write the next sentence.*

The cobra that lives on top of the refrigerator is very silent. His eyes are blind.

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