



Sample Pages from
Franz Kafka Cancels His Cell Phone Plan

Welcome! This is copyrighted material for promotional purposes. It's intended to give you a taste of the script to see whether or not you want to use it in your classroom or perform it. You can't print this document or use this document for production purposes.

Royalty fees apply to all performances **whether or not admission is charged**. Any performance in front of an audience (e.g. an invited dress rehearsal) is considered a performance for royalty purposes.

Visit <https://folk.me/p473> to order a printable copy or for rights/royalty information and pricing.

DO NOT POST THIS SAMPLE ONLINE.
IT MAY BE DOWNLOADED ANY TIME FROM THE LINK ABOVE.

FRANZ KAFKA CANCELS HIS CELL PHONE PLAN

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Kirk Shimano



Franz Kafka Cancels His Cell Phone Plan
Copyright © 2023 Kirk Shimano

CAUTION: This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of Canada and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention and is subject to royalty. Changes to the script are expressly forbidden without written consent of the author. Rights to produce, film, or record, in whole or in part, in any medium or in any language, by any group amateur or professional, are fully reserved.

Interested persons are requested to apply for amateur rights to:

Theatrefolk

www.theatrefolk.com/licensing
help@theatrefolk.com

Those interested in professional rights may contact the author c/o the above address.

No part of this script covered by the copyrights hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means - graphic, electronic or mechanical - without the prior written permission of the author. Any request for photocopying, recording, or taping shall be directed in writing to the author at the address above.

Printed in the USA

Characters

5 Any Gender

FRANZ KAFKA: The hero of our story, an everyman just trying to accomplish a simple task.

GARDENA: Long-term employee at the cell phone store. Being helpful is against her religion.

BARNABUS: A more recent addition to the cell phone store. Happy to help where he can!

INSPECTOR: An inspector.

HULD: A prodigiously skilled elocutionist and arbitrator, but you've probably already heard of him by reputation.

Casting Notes

Productions are encouraged to cast all roles with no limitations on race, gender, or any other categorization. If an audience member can accept that a man can transform into a bug but has trouble accepting that a woman of colour can portray the role of Franz Kafka, then clearly the problem is with the individual, and not what is presented on stage.

LIGHTS UP on a cell phone store. The overall atmosphere is sparse and impersonal, but we do see a banner in which an overenthusiastic spokesmodel declares “My home is my CASTLE” while brandishing a Castle brand phone. On one side of the stage, there is a sales desk with two chairs. On the other side of the stage there is a sales counter. A single closet door is at the back of the stage.

GARDENA and BARNABUS wear matching uniforms. Both are employees, though neither is currently employed at anything particularly useful.

GARDENA is at the counter, bored. She stares at her phone but doesn’t seem particularly entertained by the content as she swipes by. BARNABUS reclines on a beach chair, wearing a backwards baseball cap and reading some book by Franz Kafka, though no one on stage will ever notice this coincidence.

FRANZ KAFKA enters, looking nervous. An automatic door chime heralds his entrance. His suit looks uncomfortable, the style at least from the last century, if not the one before. He walks up to the counter but GARDENA has no response.

FRANZ KAFKA clears his throat meaningfully.

FRANZ KAFKA: I would like to –

GARDENA: (*not looking up*) Welcome to the Castle, the area’s number one cell phone service. “My home is my Castle.” How can I help you today?

FRANZ KAFKA: Yes, thank you. I would like to –

GARDENA: I’m sorry but we are unable to do that.

FRANZ KAFKA: But I didn’t tell you what I want to do?

GARDENA finally puts down her phone.

GARDENA: Fine.

FRANZ KAFKA: Yes, thank you. I would like to cancel my cell phone plan.

GARDENA: I’m sorry but we are unable to do that.

FRANZ KAFKA: But my cell phone plan... it's provided by the Castle. I went to the website and printed this form but it told me I had to come into the store. (*fishes in his pockets*) It's all here on this paper.

FRANZ KAFKA finds the paper and hands it to GARDENA. GARDENA takes the paper. She doesn't look down at all but holds it for about the length of time it would take someone to read it. Then she hands it back.

GARDENA: Despite my most diligent efforts I just can't think of any way to possibly help you.

FRANZ KAFKA: I'm sorry, but I don't mean to imply anything...

GARDENA shrugs.

FRANZ KAFKA: Are you sure you have given my request the most effort that you are able?

GARDENA: Yes, I am certain that I have given your request the maximum effort that I am able.

FRANZ KAFKA: I promise you that I don't typically do this, but do you perhaps have a manager that could assist me?

GARDENA: That would be Mr. Klamm.

FRANZ KAFKA: Is he here?

GARDENA: No.

FRANZ KAFKA: And when will he be arriving?

GARDENA: Never.

FRANZ KAFKA: He never comes in here at all? Perhaps you can give him a call?

GARDENA: I'm sorry but I don't have a phone. (*resumes scrolling through her phone*)

FRANZ KAFKA: I must insist that I speak with Mr. Klamm.

GARDENA: That's nice. Unfortunately it's impossible. I haven't spoken to Mr. Klamm in months, myself.

FRANZ KAFKA: And you were trying to contact him?

GARDENA: No! I do everything I can to avoid speaking to Mr. Klamm.

FRANZ KAFKA: Would you –

GARDENA: I'm going on break now. Barnabus!

GARDENA turns away ever so slightly. BARNABUS moves behind the counter.

BARNABUS: *(with enthusiasm)* Welcome to the Castle, the area's number one cell phone service. "My home is my Castle." How can I help you today?

FRANZ KAFKA: Yes, thank you. I was just speaking to your colleague.

BARNABUS: That's great! Which one?

FRANZ KAFKA: The one who just went on break. Um, there.

BARNABUS: Ah, Gardena! She's always so friendly! And was Gardena able to help you?

FRANZ KAFKA: Um, well, no. That's why I'm still here.

BARNABUS: Bummer! What is it that you were hoping to do?

FRANZ KAFKA: I would like to cancel my cell phone plan.

BARNABUS: Double bummer! Are you sure you want to do that? The Castle has the largest network across the entire country.

FRANZ KAFKA: Ah, that's not it. The coverage has been fine, I suppose.

BARNABUS: That's awesome! Then would you mind me asking why you are looking to cancel your plan?

FRANZ KAFKA: I'm a writer, you see.

BARNABUS: Neat!

FRANZ KAFKA: Yes, but, as of yet, not published.

BARNABUS: Bummer!

FRANZ KAFKA: Yes, it is quite stressful, actually. I have worlds within me to write – but what if they are too strange? What if I am the only one who feels trapped in circles within circles and others would be repulsed to join me? So while I have my dependable government job I feel the need to economize my expenses, in preparation. In case I should want to focus on my writing.

BARNABUS: I see. That is all very helpful information!

FRANZ KAFKA: So how do I cancel my cell phone plan?

BARNABUS: Oh that? I'm sorry but we are unable to do that.

FRANZ KAFKA: What if we were to ask Mr. Klamm?

BARNABUS: Great idea! But...

BARNABUS & FRANZ KAFKA: (*together*) ...he never comes in.

FRANZ KAFKA: And talking to him is...?

BARNABUS: Impossible. Even when I deliver messages to him he never talks to me.

FRANZ KAFKA: You deliver messages to him?

BARNABUS: Yes, I am a messenger, and that's exactly what a messenger does!

FRANZ KAFKA: (*excited*) Ah! Can you take him this form? I've signed it and everything and it just needs final approval in order to cancel my plan.

BARNABUS: Yes! Yes, I can take that form to Mr. Klamm!

FRANZ KAFKA: Can you go now?

BARNABUS: I can go now! I will take this to the Castle immediately!
(*slips the paper under his hat*)

FRANZ KAFKA: There is an actual castle? It's not just the name of the company?

BARNABUS: Yes, it is both a place and a company! The Castle is...
(*suddenly turns very dark, as if in a trance*) ...it's a building on a hill eternally shrouded in fog and darkness. To look upon it is to feel that you will never be warmed by the sun's light again. (*back to normal*) You should really check it out some time! I'll see you when I see you!

BARNABUS leaves. Door chime sounds. GARDENA turns back towards the counter.

GARDENA: I'm back from break. Barnabus, where did you go?

FRANZ KAFKA: He left.

GARDENA: You're still here?

FRANZ KAFKA: I'm waiting for Barnabus to return.

GARDENA: You can't just stand here. What will all of the customers think?

FRANZ KAFKA: There are no other customers.

GARDENA: Probably because your loafing is making this place unpleasant.

FRANZ KAFKA: I'm not leaving until my issue has been resolved. If I can't stay out here you must have an employee lounge where I can wait?

GARDENA: Just that room there. (*gestures towards the door upstage*)

FRANZ KAFKA: Fine. Thank you.

No response from GARDENA. She is done talking. FRANZ KAFKA walks to the door, tests it, and is surprised to find it unlocked. He goes in.

FRANZ KAFKA: (*in closet*) It's rather dark in here. Is there a light?

GARDENA walks towards the door.

FRANZ KAFKA: (*in closet*) It's quite small.

GARDENA locks the door.

FRANZ KAFKA: (*in closet*) Hello? (*Tries the door. It doesn't open.*) It smells rather dank. Perhaps I can wait somewhere else?

GARDENA: (*to no one in particular*) Actually it turns out my break wasn't done, after all.

GARDENA leaves. Door chime sounds. We hear the faint thud thud thud of FRANZ KAFKA stumbling in the dark.

FRANZ KAFKA: (*in closet*) Nope, that was also not a light switch. This seems a bit less like an employee lounge and more like a closet. Has Barnabus returned yet? Oh well. At least the customer service has been better than I expected.

Door chime sounds. THE INSPECTOR enters. Each of THE INSPECTOR's movements is precise and purposeful. His outfit has been specifically calculated to be as unremarkable as possible.

FRANZ KAFKA: (*in closet*) Hello? Barnabus? Is that you?

*THE INSPECTOR walks to the door and unlocks it.
FRANZ KAFKA spills out onto the ground.*

FRANZ KAFKA: Oh! Excuse me! But thank you for letting me out of the... employee lounge. Have you seen Barnabus?

THE INSPECTOR: I have not.

FRANZ KAFKA: Okay. I see. You wouldn't happen to know Mr. Klamm, would you? Or perhaps be otherwise able to alter my cell phone contract?

THE INSPECTOR shakes his head slowly.

FRANZ KAFKA: Pity. I should go check for Barnabus.

FRANZ KAFKA goes to exit, but THE INSPECTOR interrupts.

THE INSPECTOR: It is recommended that you do not leave the premises while you are under arrest.

FRANZ KAFKA: Then it is a good thing that I am not under arrest!

THE INSPECTOR: You are mistaken.

FRANZ KAFKA: Mistaken? Do you mean to say that I am under arrest?

THE INSPECTOR: *(nods his head and sits at the desk)* You are under arrest.

FRANZ KAFKA: What is the crime?

THE INSPECTOR: It is not customary to discuss the details of the crime, but you may want to review your terms of service.

FRANZ KAFKA: The terms of service? For my cell phone plan?

THE INSPECTOR shrugs. FRANZ KAFKA takes a seat across from the INSPECTOR.

THE INSPECTOR: It is not customary for you to sit.

FRANZ KAFKA jumps up and begins to pace.

FRANZ KAFKA: This must be a mistake. I've paid all of my bills. Can you let me know which department this is originating from? *(no response from THE INSPECTOR)* I haven't used my phone for anything that can be considered illegal. Is that what I'm being accused of? *(no response)* Is there anything that you can tell me of this arrest? It is quite a surprise.

THE INSPECTOR: Only “quite” a surprise?

FRANZ KAFKA: Yes I am quite surprised. But perhaps not greatly surprised.

THE INSPECTOR: Not greatly surprised?

FRANZ KAFKA: I mean to say...

FRANZ KAFKA moves to sit down, but THE INSPECTOR gives him a stern look and he stands up.

FRANZ KAFKA: I am always preoccupied with the worst case scenario. And while I would prefer not to be under arrest, I stand here before you, limbs intact, reasonably free to move about. And because I do not know what the charge is, it seems logical that it cannot be too serious. If it was, wouldn't they send someone in an official uniform?

THE INSPECTOR: The seriousness of the charge does not scale with the properness of my uniform.

FRANZ KAFKA: Will I get an agent of the court to speak for me?

Door chime. HULD enters.

HULD: Yes, salutations! I am an agent of the court.

HULD is, in a word, fancy-pants. He might even have one of those powdered wigs like you'd see in an oil painting. His every word is a pronouncement.

FRANZ KAFKA: Are you here to take my case?

HULD: I'm certainly not here to sign up for an “infinite” data plan! You may not know this, my boy, but those are a scam. Any intellectual knows that the world is uncompromisingly finite.

FRANZ KAFKA: How did you hear about me?

HULD: I'm a lawyer, after all! I move in legal circles. Legal squares, even! There is no shape of the law which I do not inhabit and a case like yours is particularly striking.

FRANZ KAFKA: Can you tell me about the charges?

HULD: I understand we are in a cell phone store but I know nothing of your billing inquiries.

FRANZ KAFKA: What? No, not cell phone charges. The charges in the crime. In the case. Against me.

HULD: Right. (*turns to the INSPECTOR*) Inspector... I didn't get your name.

THE INSPECTOR: No you did not.

HULD: Of course, Inspector. I realize this would be highly irregular to ask –

THE INSPECTOR: Then don't ask.

HULD: Ah! Too humorous! So correct. And yet I must at least inquire! If you could provide a list of the charges against my client, I would be –

THE INSPECTOR: No.

HULD turns to FRANZ KAFKA, suddenly boiling with rage.

HULD: What have you done?

FRANZ KAFKA: If I knew I would have told you already.

HULD: I can only assume that this... this void is an indication of nothing short of true moral depravity and the worst of crimes.

FRANZ KAFKA: I promise you I...

HULD: Is your true purpose here to put a stain on my illustrious career? Were you sent here by my enemies?

FRANZ KAFKA: No, I'm innocent. I mean, I think. I –

HULD: YOU WILL NOT BRING ME DOWN!

FRANZ KAFKA: I'm so sorry! I've never been so desperate for help! Please, I will do whatever you want!

HULD: (*returns to his previous gregarious self*) Superb! That is an attitude that I can work with. Do not despair! I have seen far worse than your case – far worse! And every time I have triumphed. That is the beauty of the law!

FRANZ KAFKA: I am ready to work for my case! Can I go to gather evidence in my defence?

HULD: Yes!

THE INSPECTOR: No.

HULD: No.

FRANZ KAFKA: Perhaps I will return home to ensure all of my personal affairs are in order?

HULD: Yes!

THE INSPECTOR: No.

HULD: No.

FRANZ KAFKA: Then perhaps I shall return to that room? (*the closet*) It is very dark but also rather quiet and would be an ideal location for me to gather my thoughts.

HULD looks to the INSPECTOR, who gives a slight nod of his head.

HULD: That is a magnificent idea! It is exactly what I was about to suggest. You must go collect your thoughts. I look forward to you returning as a changed man! (*pushes FRANZ KAFKA into the closet and closes the door*) Inspector, as an agent of the court, I pledge to ensure that Mr. Kafka will remain on the premises. Your duties here are complete.

THE INSPECTOR: I will be back.

Just as THE INSPECTOR is about to leave, BARNABUS returns. Door chime. They almost run into each other.

BARNABUS: Pardon me, sir!

THE INSPECTOR grunts and leaves. Door chime. BARNABUS approaches HULD.

BARNABUS: Do you know if Mr. Kafka is still here?

HULD: He's in there.

BARNABUS: Ah! Mr. Kafka! It's Barnabus! The messenger! I've just come back from the Castle! (*muffled sound from within the closet*) Awesome! No, not yet. (*muffled sounds*) Bummer! But I do have a new note! (*BARNABUS takes out a piece of paper and slides it under the door. More muffled sounds.*) Yes, I'll wait here until you're ready.

HULD: Young lad, did you mention that you take messages to the Castle?

BARNABUS: I do! I was just delivering a message to Mr. Klamm!

HULD: Ah, good show, and quite a coincidence! I recently defended an individual who was most grateful to be acquitted! And do you

know where he was employed? He laboured in the Castle, just like you!

BARNABUS: That's awesome! But actually – I mean, nothing. Never mind.

HULD: What is it, lad? You're among friends. You can share anything.

BARNABUS: Anything? Are you sure you won't think I'm...it's not quite a secret but I haven't told anyone.

HULD: I am an agent of the court! I have kept more secrets this week than you will hear in your entire lifetime.

BARNABUS: Wow. Okay. Here goes. So I have been to the Castle and taken many, many messages. But... in all that time... I have never actually been in the Castle. I must sound like such a loser.

HULD: I see. I see that you have nothing to be ashamed of, for that is barely a confession at all! You are young and, should you want it, I am sure you will be at the very centre of the Castle before you know it! But while we are on the topic, may I make a small confession to you?

BARNABUS: A confession? To me? Golly! Of course I won't tell anyone!

HULD: I thank you. The truth is, my client is technically not fully acquitted, as of yet.

BARNABUS: Bummer. But I'm sure that will change soon!

HULD: Perhaps you can tell me what you do know of the Castle, though. It may help me in my case.

BARNABUS: Of course! So when I go to the Castle, I go to the offices in front of the Castle. When I get there, there's this barrier in the office, and I can use my badge to get through. And then halfway into that office there is another barrier, which I also badge through, in order to get into the office behind the barrier behind the office behind the barrier. But there's another barrier behind that, and that one I can't badge through, so I can't get into the office behind that. And who knows how many more offices and barriers and offices there are before you are actually inside the Castle?

HULD: Yes, yes. This all sounds quite familiar. I did not totally mislead you for there was an acquittal – and what a glorious acquittal it was! But this was only an apparent acquittal, not an actual acquittal, so the files still remain in circulation. The court never

forgets. Another judge took a closer look at the file just last week and – sad to say! – found a reason to make another arrest. We are prepared to have another trial in a month, which perhaps will lead to another apparent acquittal, which will likely be considered in the trial that follows and so on...

BARNABUS: Bummer! Yeah, it all does sound sorta like a metaphor for the office behind the barrier behind the office behind the barrier behind the office behind the barrier. Or maybe the metaphor goes the other way around? Anyway, it is great that I have the responsibility to deliver messages to Mr. Klamm, except...

HULD: Except what? There are no hesitations here!

BARNABUS: Except how do I even know it is Mr. Klamm? He doesn't wear a badge like me. He tells me that he is Mr. Klamm but how do I know he is Mr. Klamm? What if, in just the way that I tell everyone that I go to the Castle but I do not quite actually go to the Castle, this man tells me he is Mr. Klamm but he is not actually quite Mr. Klamm?

HULD: You have no way of being sure, that is how the world works. Do you know what I tell my clients?

BARNABUS: Gosh, I'm sure you tell them all sorts of smart things.

HULD: Indeed I do! But the most important advice I impart is that you are never more free than when you are on trial. Because when you are not currently under arrest, it just means that you don't yet know when the next arrest is coming! Ponder on that.

*A PIECE OF PAPER slides out from under the door.
BARNABUS picks it up and reads it approvingly.*

BARNABUS: Yes, I think this will work! I'll return soon, Mr. Kafka!
(*tucks the note under his cap*) It's been so awesome to talk to you, sir!

BARNABUS tips his cap. The note slips out. He scrambles to pick it up, puts it back under his cap, then leaves. Door chime.

HULD is alone. He takes out a handkerchief and dusts off a chair before sitting down. He waits patiently, tents his fingers, looks at his watch. He thinks about knocking on the door, reconsiders, then finally goes to the closet.

HULD: Mr. Kafka! Mr. Kafka? I of course want you to claim as much time as you need to compose yourself, but I am out here and



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

Want to Read More?

Order a full script through the link above. You can get a **PDF file** (it's printable, licensed for one printout, and delivered instantly) or a **traditionally bound and printed book** (sent by mail).