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**ONCE UPON A LULLABY SCRIPT: LOVING KAFKA**

**RECORDING SCHEDULE: ARCHIVED**

**AUTHORISED RECIPIENTS: SK – DK - IK**

Feb26 OUaL -LK-IRPP-DJK

Show: Once Upon a Lullaby

Story: Loving Kafka

Running Time: 17 mins (Approx)

Sponsors Acknowledgement Advert – inserted up to a max of 4 times

(Sample Copy: (*Once Upon a Lullaby is brought to you by Mom and Dad's Pasta & Pizza Ristorante – 2026Main Street, Oldtown, USA – call 607 123 456 to reserve a table or check out our menu on: [www.menu.com](http://www.menu.com)*)

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(*OUAL Intro with theme song dropped in*)

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**INTRO**

**V.O.** Tonight's story is set in the early years of the twentieth century and tells of true love remembered from a time and place where love was bought and sold every night –We invite you to sit back and enjoy:

*“Loving Kafka”*

**Music Sample:** *SK Score as per recording*

**DK:** His training had prepared him

For what had gone before

A routine of developed thought

No less and little more

Just another carcass test

Lost to age departed

A child of ninety years or so

Back to where she started

In abstract oblivion

His training had prepared him

And on that he would rely

To diagnose her silence

And provide a reason why

So he asked the prescribed questions

Designed to penetrate

The mortal disposition

Of those who lie and wait

In abstract death

Nothing in response at first

Not a flicker not a sound

Breathing almost silent

To a grilling most profound

Until he asked if she had loved

At which she raised her head

To stare into a memory

Of the living and the dead

In abstract evocation

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**IK:** He asked for me - or rather he picked me from a group of us on display – all of us, I suspect, hoping this slim unthreatening young man would make such a choice - he was immediate and quite emphatic in asking for me – as if I alone met the expression of his vision of desire.

It was 1912, during the receding damp of early spring in a vibrant Berlin that constantly sought to change its tradition of justification for further depths of immorality and degenerate lust in manufactured vulgar palaces that offered opulent decoration and softer beds to synthetically scented rooms where men of many coats and status paid handsomely to access the harsh world of subjugation and fetish fantasy with children of a God of lesser status.

I was seventeen, he was twenty-eight - virile and soft in nature, hard and willing in application, occupied to distraction with pleasing - as if to please could be the only solution to his imagined sin of pain in pleasure.

He had paid for the night and all night he gave me pleasure – pleasure I had no knowledge of from those who had gone before. He spoke of madness with words that flowed. He touched me with lips exercised in lovemaking known only to a poet of appreciation. He entered me with gentle force – filling and fluid in friction to a heaven of completion. He told me of his writing and how he saw the world and how nothing could be considered pure except the moments of birth and death.

I fell in love, a love that surpassed infatuation, and believed a part of him did too. He had entered my body and my soul with a vibrant need for a full unexplained impression.

When he left, I returned to a wretched dormitory of snoring and dribbling whores - to silently cry myself to sleep - racked with a sense of loss I could not bear nor truly comprehend.

He came back again the following night and many times after that whenever his business took him to Berlin. He wrote between visits – long descriptive letters with words falling over themselves in a fluidity designed to fill, to spur me to self-administered friction and singular completion. He ended each of these missives of controlled mania with a strict instruction to burn once read.

In the summer of 1913, he sought permission and compensated me to travel to Prague where we spent a week of pretence in each other's understanding of bliss and togetherness. I came to know him and he came to know me. He read to me his idea of society and mystery from the untidy manuscripts that littered his rooms – providing considered explanation cultured to a single audience of teenage naivety in rampant attentiveness.

And so it continued for two decadent years - years where I learned to survive the regularity of the stink borne by the heaving and groaning of so many boars of our species that paid to do what such men do – all forgotten in any detail before and after the intermittent respite provided by him and only him.

Then war changed everything with its immediacy and distraction of and to duty. I did not see him again until the war had ended and only then, through happenstance.

My situation evolved during the Christmas holiday of 1918 in the delivered redemption of an American Major who enjoyed me and fell for my professional abilities which, I later realised, assuaged his desperate need to relieve a shy loneliness through legal ownership and haughty achievement in attachment.

*(Countries and cities may fall in defeat but brothels survive unscathed through the need for the base universal needs of men – men who do not embrace a religious faith in full - or in part - striving to find the alleviation of whatever is humanly or spiritually devoid within them - such places as where I toiled provide for the coming moment or a longer entitlement to come)*

In truth my Nebraskan officer offered a solution to a routine misery and I accepted. He was, in his own way, besotted, I was efficient and prepared. We married in a ceremony where the pastor and a witness of good standing observed the formalities that ensured the issue of licence to travel and eventual citizenship to and in the land of the free - a contract where his currency was manufactured physical love, pride in attainment and, with it, adequate fulfilment – mine; escape, an acceptable, but equally manufactured, harmony that posed as a form of fulfilment.

He suggested we travel to Prague for a brief honeymoon before preparing to leave Germany. The city had not changed - though the people of its environs wore a cloak of distress and relief that pervaded all shell-shocked citizens of a broken Europe playing out a recovery with unconcealed gratitude among disturbed majestic cathedrals and citadels.

On the second morning of our visit, we took breakfast at Slavia – on the recommendation of the concierge of our hotel who considered it the best of all Prague cafes. We were seated at a picture window table that provided a vista of Prague Castle which we studied in a silence encouraged by my limited English and his complete lack of German.

I saw him first.

He was walking with a man of similar age – whom I later came to know as Max, (*dearest Max*). They were in deep conversation, unaware of the throng surrounding them or, as I found out later, even where they were going. He stopped when he saw me. My new husband did not observe any of this as he had become engaged with a waiter who happened to speak English and had a passion for America.

I smiled. He smiled.

Max noticed and looked at me – with a slow comprehension that satisfied recognition. He said something to his friend who immediately shook his head. Max laughed and walked to the door of the cafe. I became flustered and could only think of escape.

I asked the waiter speaking with my husband to direct me to the Toilettenanlagen. He watched through the window as I rose and walked to the rear of the cafe. I moved forward quickly and without looking back. When I eventually emerged from the closet, I was shocked to see Max sitting at the table with my husband, laughing and talking.

He was standing at the doorway to the men's closet. He tilted his head and reached out his hand. I didn't know what to do. It took a moment to notice he was proffering a folded piece of paper. I snatched it and walked back to the table without a second glance.

Max was rising as I drew near, shook my husband's hand, bid good day with a smile, noticed my return, bowed in courtesy and walked out of the cafe. I followed his departure with my eyes only to see him casually follow momentarily behind with just the merest of glances in my direction.

I enquired of my husband and he responded it was a case of mistaken identity for which the fellow humorously apologised and left. I held myself together and returned to a silent yet not so relaxed view of the ninth century home of Prince Borivoj.

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In the final months of 1919, my husband contracted tuberculosis from which he did not recover. I found myself widowed in a strange land with the potential of a financial windfall to ease such a burden. I craved to be back in Europe but held such an emotion within for several months while my late husband's estate was settled and the detrimental machinations of his immediate family negotiated and dealt with by an educated man of law who charged a relative fortune to gain me a relative fortune.

Berlin was not my destination of choice in the declining winter of 1920. I chose Prague and the right to reply to a note I had been given in Slavia the previous year.

It was awkward at first – as if a trust had been broken and distance in time and geography grudgingly used to excuse a strangeness of association. He had lost weight and seemed ill at ease. I had dispatched a messenger to his lodgings with an invitation to meet at Slavia. He was punctual while I had arrived half an hour early in fearful anticipation. I had asked for and received the same table as a year previously - which to my sense of fate seemed somehow appropriate.

In nervous garbled delivery I told him of my time since we last enjoyed each other. He listened but did not reciprocate in any way with regard to his station. I wondered if I had made a terrible mistake in thinking there was any form of compatibility. He excused himself and used the toilet. Upon his return I handed him the note. He barely glanced at it before words tumbled from him to express detail of his health and the truth of his engagement to another who, in his words, was of a low disposition but had stolen his heart in much the same manner as I had.

I asked if she was a prostituier, a hure, a woman for the use of men. He replied in the negative revealing she was a chambermaid who had cleaned his room and served his needs. It was upon receipt of this piece of information and the way in which it was delivered I began to see the flaws – the terror of deep insecurity bordering on self-loathing. He said they were to be married. I lost the ability to converse and sat there silent while he held my hand.

But whatever I knew or felt I knew could not remove the desperation consuming me. I asked if we could share one more night together with the belief that should he agree, I would be delivered the opportunity of winning him back. He agreed and we arranged to meet at my hotel. He excused himself saying he had some affairs of immediacy and we should rendezvous in my suite before supper.

He stayed for ten days and ten nights. We made love and spoke of gentle and terrible things. He wished death and life in equal measure and read long passages of stories from memory. He quizzed me about America, spoke endlessly of his father, admitted the conflict of his faith or lack thereof, died in climax and returned to life in muse. He stayed for ten days and I have those ten days to remember - as he told me I would.

And when he left, I discovered an emptiness borne of a need only he could fill – and never would again.

Four years later Max contacted me to say he had died. I asked to meet. It was only right to sit with Max at that table in the Slavia. I had returned to Berlin and found a property to house the only business I knew. My dead husband's money gave me the means to represent the most notable and opulent brothel in the city. But he never came.

I travelled back to Prague lost and alone.

Max told me the tuberculosis made eating too difficult and he starved to death - a death he eventually welcomed with weakened arms and a Jewish acceptance. We shared stories and told each other how we missed his presence. He said he had denied his last wish and felt no regret for the world had a right to read and try to understand.

I listened to dearest Max and wished I did not know the sadness was beyond the cure of time for both of us.

So yes, in answer to your question, I have loved and it was hopeless and fantastic and real and elemental and everything else he wrote about – for he lived what he wrote and I know this.

**DK:** She drew a long laborious breath

And the room lost all its air

His training did not prepare him

For the depth of such despair

There were no prescribed questions

To ask of all she said

No living course to navigate

When emotions have been bled

In notional belief

**MUSIC:**         *Plays to fad at Credits*

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**V.O.**   Loving Kafka was written by D.J. Kelly, read by Imogen Kelly & D. J. Kelly with score composed and performed by Stephen Kelly

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No AI was used in the making of this programme

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