
The Hunger Artist By Franz Kafka: Symbolic Of Both A Lust For Life And A Spiritual Yearning

The story "A Hunger Artist" talks about a man who was a professional hunger artist and was really dedicated to his profession. He believed that fasting is not such a difficult task and decided to embark on a forty days fasting journey to prove that to the world. The character according to the description of the writer would be in his late 40s to fifty and had a strong appetite for fasting. The character can be said to be a very determined person who is willing to go to greater lengths to achieve his intended goal.

Even with the distractions, suspicion of having food hidden in his cage and temptations from the guards; the character always gets the motivation to go on with his act from the visitors who lurk around in the morning till day break. This made him stand firm and sailed through his forty days of fasting which was the limit by his Impresario. But even after the forty days fasting, he exhibited a behavior trait of discontent and asked himself questions like "Why stop fasting at this particular moment, after forty days of it?" "Why stop now, when he was in his best fasting form, or rather, not yet quite in his best fasting form?"(Kafka 641). He was so much interested in reviving people's interest in professional fasting. Feeling he has failed in his mission to revive the interest of the people and the world at large, he was driven into a state of dilemma with questions like "What comfort could he possibly need?" "What more could he possibly wish for?" (Kafka 641) . This led to the manifestation of anger on those who felt pity for him and tried to console him.

Furthermore, the thought that he could do more to gain the attention needed made him join a circus so that once again he can prove to the people that he can break his own record by going beyond what is known to be the possible limit. He requested that his cage be situated beside the animals so that when people come to see the animals, they will turn to spend a little time looking at him. He was an optimist and a desperate one. His optimism leads him to a cognitive state of self-deception that people will come his way and watches him. "People grew familiar with the strange idea that they could be expected, in times like these, to take an interest in a hunger artist, and with this familiarity the verdict went out against him"(Kafka 644). As time went on, the interest of people who by chance come to watch him in his cage dwindled and shifted to other acts and performances leaving the hunger artist deserted. Regardless of this, he didn't stop but push on until he couldn't anymore and fell.