The world hasn’t room enough for all who would be innocent. Would it shock you to learn he stole from us, lost all those jobs? Wants people to feel sorry for him with that insect business, but doesn’t realize how he gives himself away. It’s supposed to make him look pathetic, but I ask you: what’s an insect, finally? Something that’s not human. Simple as that. Under the shiny casing, those awful brittle segments, there’s a human heart. Human vanity, too. But the soul? Well, I can tell you where that went. He gave it to the Insect God. That’s who’s behind those diamond eyes.

Wants it both ways, yes. Wants the dreadful joy of giving up his human-ness, his responsibility, his duty, to be a human—go ahead, call me bourgeois, I’m not ashamed to use those words—wants all this, and still demands respect, the same respect as the millions who put up with the torment of their condition and refuse the devil’s offer of escape, the insect darkness.

Greedy for love, our little domestic tyrant is. But it’s insect greed, insatiable, devouring, fatal to its object. And Gregor knows that, yes he does. It’s his real anguish, this profane desire, he knows how repelling it is. But oh, how he clings, humanlike, to these pitiful illusions of his own purity, right down to the last crowd-pleasing fantasy, even as he gleefully plunges his Boy Scout knife into the parent’s heart, my heart: “And when I died, they weren’t even sorry—they were glad! And they forgot about me right away, isn’t that outrageous?”

This, of course, meant like all the rest he says to get people on his side, against me. I can’t put things as cleverly, you see. His minus sign is stronger than my plus, it forces me to tell my story on his terms, and by this means he’s fathered me.

Enough. What people think means more to him than me. They can judge me by his story or any way they please. In the end it’s nobody’s business but his and mine. May I just say this, though. Try as he
would to jump out of himself, the transformation wasn’t complete. His stubborn heart stayed human. And to the undigested kernel of light inside the deathwatch beetle that is you, my true and only son—to you I send the secret message of my love.