Tom Stoppard

Albert’s Bridge

Summary

Albert, a bridge painter, cannot stand the chaos of everyday life, and seeks an escape into a more ordered existence. He finds his peace of mind high up among the geometrically ordered bridge girders, away from the human demands of his wife and child. Albert becomes entirely dependent on his job and eventually abandons his wife and child in favor of the bridge. His family life is ruined by his hankering for order.

Albert’s situation does not last though: The bridge finally collapses when 1,800 painters march on to it without breaking step. The authorities have called in the army of painters because in planning the most economical way to paint the bridge they have relied entirely on logic and forgotten common sense.¹

The radio play Albert’s Bridge was broadcasted in 1967.

Character List

Albert
Bob
Chairman
Charlie
Dad
Dave
Fraser
Fitch
George
Kate
Mother