The Eye Begins to See

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In a dark time, the eye begins to see.

"*In a Dark Time*" by Theodore Roethke

One

On the morning of the 28th of June in 1914, an eight-year-old boy stands on the balcony of his house in Vienna, looking at the sky with a telescope. He's slightly pudgy, tall for his age, with a thatch of dark hair and round, inquiring eyes. High above him a Zeppelin hovers over the skyline, a golden apparition in the early light. It's the first airship he's ever seen. It floats effortlessly through the air, as elegant as a cloud, poised weightlessly between heaven and earth. "*Ornis*," he whispers to himself. The word, he has just learned in his Greek lessons, means both omen and bird, and the Zeppelin is as thrilling and mysterious as both.

A light wind blows from the north, pushing the airship ever so slightly to the south, sunlight resting on it in glowing patches. He would think it was magical, a mythical figure from a fairytale, a flying beast from the ancient world, if he were inclined to think that way, but he is not. Like his father, he is resolutely scientific, and already his thoughts are turning towards measurement and determination. The ship, he estimates, by comparing it to the houses and streets below it, is over one hundred meters long, an oval shape with tapered ends, like one of his father's cigars. It is made of some kind of fabric—silk? cloth?—stretched tightly over a rigid framework. The fins at the back, he assumes, are for steering. As if in confirmation, they turn and the ship's direction changes from southeast to southwest. The front comes to a point like a nose. More like a fish then, than a bird, as if the air he breathes were the waters of an ocean, and the Zeppelin were a creature of the sea.

It is flying, he thinks, over five hundred meters high. What you could see from such a vantage point! He imagines himself inside it, looking down in all directions, from the dark waters of the Danube to the gleaming parks and winding streets of the city, bordered by orderly, polished houses. Here are the permanent, unshakable landmarks of his childhood: the Polyclinic where Father works; the university where Mother got her degree; the *Musikverein*, shaped like a Greek temple, where his parents attend concerts; the Opera House;

the Schloss Belvedere; and at the heart of it all, the palaces of the *Hofburg* where the emperor sits in all his glory, ruling the expansive lands of his glistening empire. In his imagination, the boy flies over all of them and then out of the city, floating over the thick, leafy canopy of the Vienna woods all the way to the town of Baden where his family has its summer home.

The fins move and the Zeppelin turns again, spinning lazily to the north.

He swivels his telescope, following it more closely. He notices a capsule attached to its belly, a kind of gondola. This, he realizes, is where the people are—not inside as he had originally thought. The ship comes closer, and by adjusting the lens of his telescope, he can make out the men inside, a half dozen or so, engaged in various tasks. They are soldiers of the Imperial German Navy. He recognizes their uniforms from his tin soldier collection, the dark blue color and gold insignia, so different from the Imperial Austrian Army with its red-trousered dragoons and lancers and hussars.

All at once it occurs to him that he has been so delighted by the Zeppelin, he has forgotten to ask himself why it is here. What is it doing? What if it's not as innocent as he has taken it to be? *Ornis*, yes, but what if it is an omen of something unwanted—something ominous? Already he feels the earth beneath his feet shifting, the world he has always known shaking and tumbling, giving way to something new. He steps back from his telescope, his hands turning cold like they always do when he is afraid.

He is just about to go back inside, to call for his mother to tell her what he has seen, when the door flies opens and Frau Kassel, the family's cook, rushes onto the balcony. Her body is trembling, her eyes wide, her face ashen. "Leopold!" she says. "Come quick. Your mother needs you *now*."

Two

Dr. Leo Alexander paces back and forth outside the office of Brigadier General Telford Taylor, trying to stay warm. The Palace of Justice is a miserable place, damn cold, an icy draft seeping through the windows, bringing with it the foul smells of the ruined city: woodsmoke, coal dust, soot, and ash. It's mid-November 1946, and the Germans have had a year and a half to rebuild since the war ended, but as far as he can tell, have hardly gotten started. Nuremberg is still hollowed out, torn apart to the core, a crumbling relic of derelict buildings in various states of disrepair. He has heard the Allied Military Tribunal chose it for their war crimes trials because of its symbolic value as home to some of Hitler's most memorable—and disturbing—rallies. He still shudders at the thought of those masses of Germans in Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda films, saluting their Führer with a kind of hypnotic hysteria. What better place to bring the Nazi henchmen to heel? But also because the Palace of Justice—a sprawling complex with administrative and courtroom space, along with a substantial prison—managed to survive the bombings that otherwise reduced the city to rubble. More or less. On a day like today, Alexander thinks sourly, as the heat in the building sputters and wind rattles the leaky windows, decidedly less than more. He'd happily meet the general in a cellar if only it were warm.

"Coffee? Tea?" The general's aide asks. Private Archibald Simms, according to his nametag. He sits at a desk by the general's door, guardian to the dragon's lair. A rather strange looking fellow with a full, florid face, red hair that rises to a point on the top of his head. Goatlick, as the Americans say, or is it cowlick? Either image, in Alexander's opinion, is equally disturbing.

"That will not be required," he says. *Necessary*, he thinks, just a moment too late. *That will not be necessary*. That's what he should have said. He frowns at his mistake. Even after a decade in America, his Viennese boyhood still dogs him. He can't stop missing his native German. English is so exasperating. It trips him up at the worst possible times.

Simms coughs politely, hiding a smile. "I'm sure the general will be with you shortly. He knows you're here."

"As well he should," Alexander says with an irritated glance at his watch, "given that I have arrived exactly on time."

He resumes his pacing, pulling now and then at his jacket, trying to arrange it in a more respectable fashion, even though he knows it's no use. The suit fits poorly, the sleeves are too short just as the pants are too long. He should have paid more attention to that when he bought it, but at the time it was the last thing on his mind. Clothes usually are. He fears he looks as disheveled as he feels. His shoes need polishing, and his glasses need a good cleaning. He rubs an ineffectual hand over his bald pate, smoothing down the remnants of his hair. Then he gives his pants a hoist. He's gained weight in recent months, and they no longer fit over his expanding middle.

Just then the door opens, and as Simms leaps to his feet, Taylor emerges, a crisp, energetic figure, striding forward, executing a sharp salute. "Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander. Welcome."

This Alexander ignores with a hurried wave of his hand, walking straight into the general's office, where he lowers himself heavily into the chair in front of his desk. He's hoping to get this meeting—to get all of it—over as soon as possible. No reason to start by wasting time.

He crosses his legs, his foot jiggling, while he waits for the general to catch up.

Taylor closes the door behind him, takes his seat, and rather needlessly straightens a pile of papers on his desk whose edges are already razor sharp. Alexander takes note. So—the general has an obsessive personality trait. It manifests itself in his office, which is maintained to the point of perfection, the desk with its matching chairs, a side table placed precisely against one wall, a window with pressed curtains on another, in the back an American flag draped on a stand. His uniform bears the marks of a fastidious man, the khaki shirt tucked neatly into khaki pants, the tie knotted tightly at his neck, the Army-blue jacket buttoned sharply at his midriff, silver stars marching in an orderly fashion across his shoulders. His shoes are polished to a mirror finish, and his hair is immaculately

groomed. It is also, Alexander notes with a pang of envy, thick and luxurious, even though he and the general appear to be about the same age, around forty.

Pinned to the general's breast are several ribbons indicating his decorations, none of which are for combat. Alexander has heard Taylor's service during the war was confined to army intelligence. What else was one to do with a Harvard lawyer? At war's end he stayed on overseas as assistant to Chief Justice Robert Jackson at the first war crimes trial. That process consumed close to a year, but at least concluded satisfactorily with a slew of executions among leading Nazi criminals, from Rosenberg to von Ribbentrop. Göring, slippery to the end, managed to escape the hangman's noose with a cyanide pill he'd kept hidden in his boot. When Jackson returned to the States, Taylor took over the remaining trials as chief counsel, beginning with this one, for doctors.

"I trust your journey went well," Taylor says.

"If you don't mind five days of traveling including fourteen hours strapped to the metal seat of a cargo plane and a day and a half in a jeep over ruined roads." Alexander scowls. He never could see the point of small talk.

"Well," Taylor says. He seems to be searching for something to say. "There was a war."

Alexander stares at him blankly. As far as he is concerned, this comment necessitates no response at all.

The general directs his attention to his desk, leafing through the stack of papers, apparently on the hunt for something. Add disorganization to obsessiveness? The two traits rarely go together and are hardly befitting to a man in the chain of command. Alexander takes advantage of the moment to direct his gaze outside the window, where a dreary rain falls over the nearby river, and the sky hangs leaden beneath a pall of smoke. Distantly a bell tinkles and a man appears, driving a donkey down the street with kindling strapped to its back. Back and forth trudges a depressing line of women pushing carts of debris. Where these women come from, where they go, Alexander has no idea, but there seems to be no end to them. He has heard they are called *Trümmerfrauen*, rubble women, and in Berlin

they have constructed an entire mountain in the outskirts of the city out of the ruins they have cleared from the center. Everywhere in Germany shelter, food, and heat are perilously scarce. The upcoming winter is bound to be utterly miserable. Alexander can only hope his work here is done before he has to see it.

"I understand you speak German?" the general says finally. He has found what he wanted, a file that he pulls out and opens.

This brings the hint of a dry smile to Alexander's lips. "If you don't mind the Viennese accent." He waves a hand at the file on the general's desk. "I go by Leo, by the way. I don't know what you have there, but I gave up Leopold after the *Anschluss*. I saw no honor in being named for an Austrian emperor after my compatriots gave their country up to Hitler without firing a single shot."

"I see," Taylor says. He breaks into a cough, then falls silent, apparently trying to rescue his dignity. "In any case, the German is welcome. That is to say, I consider it essential for our interrogations of the prisoners. Far too much is lost, I'm afraid, in translation."

"On that we will agree," Alexander says in an equally dignified manner. "You need have no fear with me." *No fear of that*, Alexander meant to say. The *with me* is somewhat misleading. But it's too late to recall it. "German is all too easy to hide behind—if you don't know where to look."

"So you understand what we're after here."

"Yes, I think so." Alexander settles back in his chair. The general has finally said something worth considering. "You intend to put a group of Nazi doctors on trial for the commission of medical war crimes. Beyond that what you are truly after—if I may use your expression—I can't be sure. I'm not a man of the law. I concern myself," he says, with a tap of his forefinger to the side of his head, "with matters of the mind."

"Yes," Taylor says, paging through the file. "I see you trained as a psychiatrist."

"And neurologist." Alexander makes a point of offering the correction. "I study the mind and the brain. Both, as far as I am concerned, are equally important."

"You were stationed in England during the war?"

"I treated shell-shocked pilots. I readied them to return to service. Often that meant returning them to their deaths. Whether or not what I did was morally defensible is something we could discuss at another time. But that is what the Army wanted of me, and that is what I did, to the best of my ability."

"And after the war—"

"I was sent to Germany to investigate medical war crimes. I began my mission in Dachau, with the experiments the Nazis performed on high altitude, seawater, and freezing. They were trying to find treatments for German flyers downed by British pilots in the North Sea. Or so they said. I have my own views on the matter—but again, I leave that for another time. Later my investigations grew to encompass atrocities at other concentrations camps and hospitals, including euthanasia on patients in German asylums." He nods towards the file. "But I expect you know all that."

"I've read your reports."

This brings another wave of Alexander's hand. "I doubt you would have asked me here if you hadn't."

Taylor clears his throat, stifling a cough.

"May I ask who you've managed to arrest?" Alexander asks.

"We've got twenty-three prisoners on the docket. All but three are doctors. The others are national health administrators, high up. One is a woman. They're all implicated one way or another in medical war crimes. The others we wanted—well, most of them committed suicide. A few escaped us. Pity that. Here's the list." Taylor lifts a piece of paper from the pile on his desk and hands it to the doctor.

The scowl returns as Alexander scans it. "You didn't get Mengele?"

"The Auschwitz doctor? We couldn't. We don't have jurisdiction over the Eastern sector. That would be up to the Russians."

"*Schade*," Alexander mutters. Then his eyebrows raise, and he jabs a finger at the page. "Now that's interesting."

"How so?"

"Beiglböck. I wouldn't have expected to see him here. Wilhelm and I went to medical school together. I can't say he much impressed me one way or the other at the time. As I recall, he was caught

cheating on one of his exams." He gives the general a small smile. "Still, I wouldn't have thought him the kind of person to get mixed up in all this." He grows philosophical. "I suppose we could say that about any number of them." He hands the list back.

His reaction seems to have disappointed the general. He frowns and shakes the paper as if he expects the criminals listed there to fall out of it. "We got Karl Brandt anyway. That was something." He gives Alexander an inquiring look. "Perhaps you've heard of him."

Alexander raises his hand as if to wave it dismissively again then lets it drop as if it isn't worth the bother. "Hitler's physician. The *escort* physician. At least he had genuine medical credentials. The other one—I never can remember his name—was a complete idiot. It's a mystery that anyone would listen to him, even the Führer."

"But Brandt," Taylor says. He seems to feel the need to insist on the point. "He was the head man. The most important physician in the Reich." He says this with an air of pride. "We were lucky to get him. There was a mix-up with the British initially, and he almost got away. He was in charge of all health matters during the war, military and civilian, the Reich's—"

"Yes, yes," Alexander says tiredly, the hand coming into play again. "I know. *Generalkommissar für das Sanitäts- und Gesundheitswesen*. General Commissioner for Health and Sanitation."

"If there's anyone worth prosecuting—anyone worth hanging—he's the one."

"I believe," Alexander says with a thin smile, "your own Justice Jackson said it was hardly worth bringing a man to trial if you weren't open to the possibility that he might be acquitted."

Alexander lifts himself heavily from his seat and walks to the window, turning his back on the general. "I was here once before the war. Nineteen twenty-seven it was, or twenty-eight. We came for *klettern* in the mountains." He turns around to see if the general has understood. "Climbing. Nuremberg had its own charm then, if you liked the Bavarian atmosphere. All those half-timbered houses and gabled roofs. The *Lebkuchen* was excellent, as I recall, as was the beer. They made it from wheat."

He gives a sad shake of his head. "You asked if I understood what you were—as you put it—after. I admit sometimes these odd English colloquialisms escape me. Nevertheless." He speaks more quickly now. "I expect by now you know who the men—and woman—on your list are. You know what they've done. The victims they've tortured, the ones they killed. You have read, as you say, my reports. No doubt you've conducted investigations of your own. What is less apparent are the motivations behind their crimes—what they were thinking. In war—as in peace—but especially in war, there are those who create policy, and those who give orders to fulfill those policies. Then there are the people who execute the orders, and the ones who assist the executioners. Some men—and sometimes women—participate in atrocities with full hearts and others are dragged in under threat. Some resist and some attempt to resist but fail. Some know everything and others know nothing—or so they say. Who is culpable and who is innocent? Who deserves to hang, who should be locked away, and who should be set free? The law, perhaps, is clear on these things." Again Alexander taps a finger to his head. "The mind less so."

He returns to his chair and leans forward, all but touching the general's desk. "I may not know exactly what you are after"—he jabs a finger towards the general's chest—"but I know what I am here for. You have assembled in your prison a group of physicians who either committed murder or were involved in it, to one extent or another. Who subjected human beings to the most gruesome kinds of experiments without their consent. How such a thing is possible—how healers become killers—that is what I would like to know. Is this a particular German failing, or a cautionary tale for us all? And what needs to be done to ensure it never happens again?"

Alexander grows silent, settling back in his chair. He has become philosophical again, speaking almost as if the general isn't there, interrogating himself. "Can I answer these questions? And if I can, what kind of influence will I have on the judgment of the Tribunal?" He returns his attention to the general, then raises his hands, palms up, a gesture signaling the unknown. "You have failed to ask me that."

"How do you mean?"

"You have brought me here because you want me to assist you in your trial, to act as your medical counsel. But you've yet to ask me the single most important question bearing on my suitability. It's the one, I expect, that may not appear in that file you have on me on your desk." He gives a small smile. "Although I expect plenty of other disqualifying things do."

"And what might that be?"

"You have failed to ask me if I am a Jew."

This brings on a prolonged attack of coughing. "What does that have to do with anything?" Taylor says at last.

"Everything—and perhaps nothing." Alexander shrugs. "I'm from Vienna, as I said. I was born and raised there, went to school there, including my medical studies. After that I worked in Germany with some of the very same doctors who later joined the Nazi war effort. They destroyed everything I once loved: my home, my country, my family, my career. Many of them profited handsomely when I, like so many others, was forced out of my job because I wasn't 'Aryan' enough. They drove me into exile and scattered my family to the four corners of the earth. Even now we search for one of my sisters. My father alone suffered . . ." His voice trailed off. "Surely you wonder if you want a man like me for your chief medical counsel—whether or not I can be trusted."

Taylor laughs lightly as if to hide a twinge of nervousness. "Are you telling me you're here for revenge?"

Alexander takes the question seriously. "I have asked myself that very thing. Can I remain detached enough, objective enough, *scientific* enough to perform my duties?" Again he raises his hands signaling the unknown. "I would be lying to you if I said I knew."

The general sits back and presses a hand to his eyes. Alexander can almost imagine the thoughts going through his mind. He's wondering what he's gotten himself into, whether or not he even wants to proceed.

All at once Taylor opens his eyes. "Let's be honest with one another, Dr. Alexander, shall we?" A change has come over him. He leans forward, looking at Alexander directly. For the first time

the doctor has a sense of what has made this man a general—that he is to be not just respected but also, when circumstances warrant, feared. "I know you're uniquely qualified for this job. It's not just your Viennese medical background, your clinical work in pre-war Germany, your war service, your post-war criminal investigations. It's also what people say about you." He points to the file. "They call you *brilliant*." He sinks back in his chair with a pained look on his face. "They also say you're *pushy* and *unfit for service*. There's more. Shall I go on?" He doesn't wait for a response. "Apparently you've managed to get yourself a reputation as a womanizer. I don't even want to know what that means."

Taylor closes the file. "All that is neither here nor there. But you're right. I've been worrying about you ever since I sent for you. I even considered finding someone else for the job. And the reason is just as you say—because you're Jewish."

The general's cough has returned. "It irritates me to no end," he says once it subsides, "to realize I am subject to old prejudices, especially in the wake of the war, when all of Europe has become a Jewish graveyard. I asked you here first of all to make a point to myself. But even more than that, for the sake of this trial. You haven't said so, but I expect you care deeply about its outcome. More, perhaps, than anyone else. And caring about the outcome is the one thing I need most from everyone who works for me."

The general's hesitations and indecisiveness—all of it, Alexander sees now, was just a feint, a clever means to gauge him, evaluate him, judge him. If it was a trap, Alexander has fallen right into it. And he, the psychiatrist, prides himself on his ability to see into other people's souls.

"In case you haven't noticed, I'm rather demanding. Some call me obsessive." Taylor shrugs. "Call it what you will. I call it getting good results. And I don't like to wait. So I'll need you to get started right away. The trial begins in a little over two weeks. I'll want reports from you daily. I'll need you to conduct interrogations of the defendants and offer your analysis of documents we've obtained as evidence. You'll be staying at the Grand Hotel. Not the best quarters, but under the circumstances, the best we can do. Simms will get you situated."

Alexander looks away. Then he smiles. He stands up and executes a smart salute. “General.”

Taylor grins in return. “I expect you and I will learn how to get along.” He raises his eyes to the ceiling. “God help us both.”

“I’d best get to it then, as you Americans say, or is it the British?” Alexander turns on his heel, pausing at the door as he sees himself out. “You might want to try whiskey and honey for that cough. I can’t promise anything for the honey, but in my experience, whiskey never hurts.”

Three

Not the best quarters. So the general said. It was, Alexander observes sourly, an understatement.

He follows Simms down one dimly-lit corridor of the Grand Hotel after another, up and down staircases, past stained carpeting and peeling paint to his room, which appears to be in some kind of annex. It's sparsely furnished with a bed, nightstand, desk, armoire. The air smells of dust and mildew as if no one has been there for a long time, but when he tries to open the window to air it out, he discovers it's stuck shut.

Simms puts down his bags and deposits a stack of file folders on the desk. "The general wants you to go through these." He shrugs in an apologetic way as if he, more than anyone else, knows what it is like to be subjected to the general's commands. "Just about everything people need in Nuremberg these days is in short supply, but I can get you a typewriter if you want."

"That won't be necessary," Alexander says. For once, he is relieved to see, he gets the word right. "I have brought my own."

"If there's nothing else then?"

"No, no, nothing," Alexander mutters. He is already tending to his bags, opening them, emptying them out, arranging his things in the armoire.

"Very well." The private executes a smart salute. "Sir!" He still seems to find Alexander amusing. A faint smile hovers at the edges of his lips as he backs out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Alexander stretches, straightening a crick in his back. Pushy. Unfit for service. The general's words have stung. *Womanizer*! He can't claim that one isn't justified. There have been occasions in his past when he perhaps. . . let us say . . .overstepped certain boundaries. . . to his eternal regret and—a small smile escapes his lips—pleasure.

He surveys the armoire which now holds his violin case along with all of his clothes: his second suit, underclothes, socks, sweater, coat. The typewriter sits on the desk. He didn't bring much with him to Nuremberg because he didn't know how long he would be

expected to stay. Even now he wonders. A few weeks? A month? The general said the trial began at the end of November. Surely by the holidays he would be back home. Meanwhile he has a feeling the workload will be considerable. He doesn't mind that. He's never happier than when engaged in a task. He doesn't even mind the nature of it, interviewing criminal Nazi doctors, revisiting their horrific war crimes. He knows very well from his previous investigations what that's like.

The question nagging him is what the trial means. What it means to Taylor, that is. Does he understand how essential their work here is? How historic? Is he up to it? Will he manage to pull it off? It will be no easy feat. German doctors, as Alexander knows better than most, can be wily and determined. Only *Gott im Himmel* knows what they have in store for their defense. Even more, he wonders what the trial means to him. He has come ostensibly to serve as Taylor's chief medical counsel. But what is he really here for? Taylor is right. Alexander doubts there is anyone here who cares more about the outcome of the trial than he does. But does he care in the right way?

Unbidden, the words of Goethe's *Faust* float into his mind, the epic poem about the medieval magician and alchemist who sells his soul to the devil for knowledge and power: "*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust/ die eine will sich von der andern trennen.*" How would it go in English? He mulls over a translation. Something like this, perhaps: "Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast, each seeks to rule without the other." Adequate, he supposes, although completely lacking in the power, grace, and musicality of the original.

Still, the question is genuine: justice or revenge? Which soul will rule in his breast? The answer remains to be seen.

The hotel room is cold but even when he adjusts the knob, the radiator gives out no heat. Meanwhile evening is coming, and it's getting dark. He finds the wall switch and turns on the electric light, which flickers, goes out, then goes on again and holds. At least he has his own bathroom. In the mirror his face looks beaten and bedraggled. He's badly in need of a shave. He feels exhausted but also agitated, over-stimulated, somewhat light-headed. In the looking glass his reflection shifts then blurs so that he sees multiple

images of himself, his eyes staring at him in a vaguely accusatory way as if there's something essential he has failed to do.

Of course. He has yet to write to his wife.

He sits down at the desk, shoves the general's folders aside, rolls a piece of paper into his typewriter and begins to write. *Dear Phyllis*. It ought to be the easiest thing in the world, to tell her he has arrived safely, to inquire about the children, to say he doesn't yet know how long he will be required to stay. She will have her hands full with Gustave, who is only nine, and with the younger ones, Cecily and Jonathan. But his mind won't cooperate, and the words won't come. Damn English. It makes him feel like someone else—someone that isn't him. He closes his eyes, and an image floats into his mind of Phyllis in the garden behind their house in Durham, golden hair alight in the North Carolina sun, watering a flowerbed. She is an inveterate gardener and could never understand how Leo could fail to distinguish one plant from another. The one time she set him to weeding, he pulled out all her begonias and left the thistle. She was furious with him—rightly so. But how could he make her understand that he has never been interested in things that can be so easily seen? It's what lurks hidden behind the veil that intrigues him.

He stands up. He will write to Phyllis later. It's been hours since he last ate, and he needs his dinner. He goes out and retraces his steps to the lobby of the hotel. He's about to ask the concierge to direct him to the dining room when the hotel salon unfurls before him, crowded with people, a bar at the back, beckoning. On second thought, dinner can wait. First he'll have a drink.

Four

The salon at the Grand Hotel is a massive chamber, big enough, Alexander thinks, for a bevy of children to play hide-and-seek in without being found. It's also poorly lit, fading at the edges into gloom. Otherwise it has a cheerful aspect, crowded with people who have gathered happily for alcohol-fueled socializing, some sitting in armchairs or at tables while others stand two-deep at the bar. Most are in civilian clothes, a few in uniform. The civilians, Alexander has heard, comprise most of the Tribunal's legal staff, while the Army provides logistical support: drivers, guards for the jail, escort, procurements, and so on. Some, like General Taylor, span both roles. The trial seems to have spawned its own ecosystem, a world within a world. Most are men but a few, Alexander is happy to see, are women. Some are even attractive. The evening might prove to be interesting after all.

He makes his way to the bar. The furniture in the salon, like everything else in the Grand Hotel, is overdone and overwrought, a reflection of the hotel's decorating style, which seems to rely on accumulation: a faded nineteenth-century elegance that has gone to seed. The floor is heavily carpeted, the ceiling ridiculously high, topped by a crystal chandelier that has somehow managed to survive the war with most of its prisms intact. Gilded wallpaper with a fleur-de-lis pattern climbs the walls. At the far end of the room French doors give out to what, under normal times, must be a lovely garden. But times are hardly normal, and the garden serves as a dumping ground for broken furniture and other building debris. Beyond it the city stretches into blackness, a few fires burning on the horizon.

Alexander finds an empty stool at the end of the bar and nods to the man sitting beside it. German or English? German, he'd bet his life on it. His suit has that shabby bourgeois European look.

"*Guten Abend*," he says.

"*Abend*."

Ah, right again. "*Darf ich . . .*?"

"*Bitte*."

As Alexander sits down, his neighbor smiles apologetically and lifts his hands, which are wet with condensation from his beer glass. "I would shake hands, but I'm afraid it would be rather unpleasant," he says, continuing the conversation in German. "I hope I've not offended you."

"Of course not," Alexander says with a smile. "Allow me to introduce myself. Alexander, Leo."

"Ah, Dr. Alexander." The man looks at Alexander with renewed interest.

"Have we met?"

"Not at all. But it's a pleasure. I've read your reports."

"And you are. . .?"

"Robert Servatius. Counsel for the defense." He smiles in a mocking way, as if something—apparent only to him—were highly amusing. "One of many, I'm afraid. I represent Karl Brandt."

"I expect that keeps you busy."

Servatius laughs in a light way and looks at Alexander with pleasure. "Yes, I believe it does."

The lawyer is a fine-looking fellow, in his early forties, Alexander judges, with even features, a mop of curly, sandy-colored hair, and intelligent, light-brown eyes behind tortoise-shell glasses. The mocking smile is rather off-putting, but he seems friendly enough, or maybe he is just lonely and in search of conversation—a description, Alexander reflects, that could apply equally well to him.

Behind the counter the barkeep hustles back and forth filling orders, a beefy man with a horsy face. He comes to a stop in front of Alexander, wringing a damp towel. "*Bitte schön*." Then, covering all his bases, he adds in English, "I can help you?"

"Yes," Alexander says with a smile, answering in English. "I believe you can. I will have a whiskey. Straight up."

"*Noch ein*." Servatius holds up his empty beer glass.

"*Jawohl*." The barkeep says, spinning around to complete their orders.

"I haven't seen you here before," Servatius says.

"I just arrived."

"Well, then, welcome to Nuremberg." As the barkeep puts down

their drinks, Servatius raises his glass in a silent toast. "You will find the city has its pleasures, despite all appearances to the contrary. I take it you're staying at the hotel?"

"Yes."

"I think you will find she has managed to retain some of her glory. The service is bearable, and the food is passable—depending on what they can get, of course." He shrugs. "I can't say the same for the hot water or electricity. They tend to come and go. And heat is definitely hit or miss. But the drinks are fine and plentiful and"—he raises his glass again—"you won't find better fellowship anywhere in town."

Alexander sips his whiskey and swivels in his chair. In the far corner of the room, a man sits at the piano, playing Cole Porter very badly while another, swaying drunkenly, sings along just as miserably. Just now a red-haired woman in a striking green dress is making her way across the room, greeting the men—uniformed or not—with an enigmatic smile.

"Ah," Servatius says, following Alexander's gaze. "You have excellent taste. That's Clara von Becken. Countess von Becken, if you keep track of that kind of thing. From one of Germany's oldest aristocratic families. She's come to cover the trial, one of three German journalists who are here, writing for the home press. The Americans seem to think we need to be educated in our atrocities so that we can be fully repentant." He turns back to the bar and takes another drink of his beer. "Apparently being bombed to smithereens wasn't punishment enough."

The countess seems to have caught sight of Alexander, and her eyes rest on him briefly before moving on. He turns away from her with regret and directs himself back to Servatius. "So it's a mix here at the hotel," he says, "Germans and Americans?"

"For the most part. Here we meet on equal terms. But don't be fooled. In the courtroom"—Servatius gives a playful growl—"it's dog eat dog." He laughs again. "You will soon learn to tell us apart. It's a game I play for my own amusement. Uniforms don't count, of course. But otherwise, I find it surprisingly easy. The Americans have an air of confidence about them, a pronounced swagger. Rather full of themselves, I would say, but I suppose they deserve it. After all,

they did win the war. The Germans are easy to pick out. Just look for the ones with the hang-dog look, all woe is me." He smiles. "Then there are the hangers on, the assistants, secretaries, clerks, translators, and the like. Legions of them. They have an alarming tendency to switch sides. Especially the women. It's all a question of who pays the most." He shrugs in a way that manages to convey disapproval and acceptance at the same time. "It's quite a business, hanging doctors."

On the far side of the room a man is holding court, doing an imitation of—could it be?—Harry Truman. Around him a group of men—Germans, mostly, if Alexander has it right—convulse in laughter. "Now that one," Servatius says, "is an American well worth getting to know. Danny Johnson. Assistant counsel to the prosecution. He managed to wrangle an entire villa for himself on the outskirts of town. Don't ask me how. But he gives fabulous parties. I've been to several. And he doesn't mind socializing with Germans. He's quite easy-going that way. Some Americans do mind, you know." He gives an eloquent shrug. "They are men of such high moral purpose, your Americans. They think Germans are evil and are best to be avoided. Fear of contagion and all that." He smiles again in his mocking way. "Or maybe it's just me."

Alexander raises his glass, signaling for another whiskey. "Another beer?"

The lawyer shakes his head sadly. "I'd better not. I have work to do in the morning and need to have my wits around me." He falls silent while the barkeep serves Alexander's drink. He seems to be considering something. "I wasn't one of them," he says finally. "I never joined the party, if that's what you're thinking."

"I wasn't thinking anything."

"They don't believe it, of course." He waves his hand at the crowd in the room. "They think I'm a Nazi. Even the Germans think I'm lying when I say I'm not. They can't imagine anyone would take the job of defending a man like Karl Brandt otherwise."

"Why would you?"

Servatius sighs. "I can't say I ever believed in the National Socialist program, but I never stopped believing in the law. And the law says every man deserves a defense." He smiles, more sadly this time. "Perhaps I will have that beer."

Servatius gives the bartender a nod, and in one smooth motion, he flicks the empty beer glass away and slides a full one into its place. "Is this your first time in Nuremberg, Dr. Alexander?"

"I was here once before the war."

"Then you remember what it was like. A pity." Servatius turns his glass, watching the foam swirl. "Your German is quite excellent by the way. Do I detect an Austrian accent?"

"Vienna."

"And what did you do before the war?"

"I worked at a clinic in Frankfurt. Until I had to leave, that is."

"And when was that?"

"Thirty-three."

"Ah." Servatius falls silent, thinking about it. "Many things have happened since you left Germany, Dr. Alexander. Much has changed. I'm not speaking just of the war. Thirteen years is a long time. I'm not one to speak of character, but the German national character—if there ever was such a thing—well, it's hard to know if it will ever return. If it will be what it once was—what it could have been. Now, with the division between East and West . . ." His voice trails off. Then he shakes his head. "All that war talk of greatness and glory, rebirth and revitalization. It was insane, of course, but at the time even I felt the appeal, although I managed not to succumb to it. I've read too many Greek tragedies, you see, and you know how those turn out. A man reaches for the stars . . ."

Alexander lifts his glass. "And ends up sitting in the ruins of an old hotel in a bombed-out city getting drunk."

"Exactly," Servatius says, smiling with genuine delight this time. "I must say, it's a pleasure to meet a man with such similar sympathies. I believe you and I will get along just fine."

Alexander leaves this remark alone. "So you're a survivor," he says.

"I've been called worse."

"How did you manage it?"

"It wasn't that difficult. You just keep your head down. Avoid invitations. One can always be feeling poorly, or one's wife can be ill. There's always another time."

"Right," Alexander says. The word comes out funny, and he

doesn't know himself what he meant by it. Maybe it is the whiskey, which has started to take effect, mixing with his exhaustion, making his body feel loose and warm. His head feels light again, and the room takes on a golden, diffuse glow.

Servatius gives him a sideways look. "You left in 1933 you said?"

"I did."

Servatius purses his lips. "The Jewish part—that was all so unnecessary. I thought so from the start. Unfortunate for them as well as for us."

Alexander doesn't answer. His glass is empty again, and he holds it out for the barkeep to refill.

"I understand you were there—at Dachau—at the liberation. You wrote about it in one of your reports."

"Yes." The barkeep puts the full glass down and Alexander grips it, hard enough that his fingers turn white.

"I'm sorry you had to see that. It must have been—"

Alexander cuts him off. "It was." He drains the glass. His hands are growing cold. He stands up and shoves them in his pockets.

Servatius swivels in his seat to look up at him. "They're not monsters, the doctors on trial here, despite what people say—despite what you might think."

Alexander flexes his fists. "I never said they were—although I often wished it."

"How so?"

"It would mean what they did wasn't human."

He thinks what he's said ought to be clear enough, but the lawyer seems to take it the wrong way. He stands up, his face flushed, speaking eagerly. "Yes, that's it, exactly. Under the right circumstances anyone—"

"Could commit murder? Is that your defense? It could have been any of us?" Alexander turns on him sharply. "I may be a man of sympathy, but I doubt it's the kind of sympathy you will ever understand." He takes a step back from the lawyer as if repelled. "Good night, Mr. Servatius. I hope we won't meet again, but given the circumstances, I expect we will."

Five

His hands are still cold when he returns to his room. He goes into the bathroom and turns on the faucet. Thank God the water is hot. He holds his hands under the faucet until they regain their feeling. Then he turns the water off.

The whiskey was a mistake. Or maybe it was the conversation with Servatius. It only heightened his exhaustion while increasing his agitation. He doubts he will sleep. And he never did get his dinner. Too late for that now. He has no desire to go back out.

Wind rattles the panes of the window. From deep in the darkness comes a thrumming sound. Some kind of machine at work? Then a cawing sound splits the night, rising and falling like the call of a peacock. Startled, he listens for it again, but it is gone. He removes his glasses, runs his fingers over his eyes. He must have imagined it.

He sits at the desk. He will write that letter to Phyllis. As he types, an image of Clara von Becken floats into his mind, crossing the salon in her green dress, greeting the men in the room, an alluring smile on her lips. Briefly her eyes had rested on him, too, with a question in them. He would have liked to know what it was.

He would like even more to know what his answer would be.

He finishes the letter to his wife, even though he finds it far from satisfactory. There's something more that he wants to tell her—needs to tell her—but he can't think of what it is. He often feels that way when he talks to his wife. Things get left out. Nevertheless. He folds the letter and puts it in an envelope. He will give it to Simms in the morning to mail. He sits down on the side of the bed, removes his shoes, and slowly undresses. Then he picks up the stack of file folders Simms left for him, carries them to the bed, pulls the blanket around his shoulders, and begins to read. At the top is the list of defendants Taylor showed him earlier. He takes his time, reading through it slowly. Some of the names he knows, others are unfamiliar. Several were involved in the high-altitude experiments at Dachau. They inserted prisoners in a low-pressure chamber and recorded their reactions—often to their deaths. The work was done on behalf

of the German Luftwaffe, which was trying to figure out how to rescue pilots forced to bail out during air battles with the British. Many of the pilots ended up in the North Sea and suffered from hypothermia before they could be picked up. The Luftwaffe wanted to know the most expeditious way to rewarm them. So the doctors at the camp conducted freezing experiments on prisoners, many who died as a result. All of this he knows from the investigations he conducted at Dachau at the end of the war. More than one thousand prisoners at the camp were infected deliberately with malaria in order to test immunizations. Others were forced to drink sea water as the Germans looked for ways to make it potable. Apparently his old school comrade Beiglböck was in charge of that effort. Of all things. None of the subjects gave their consent to participate in the experiments—if consent is even a concept that can be applied to prisoners incarcerated against their will.

At other camps the German army conducted experiments on mustard gas; sulfanilamide; epidemic jaundice; typhus; bone, muscle, and nerve regeneration; and bone transplantation. They experimented with poison bullets, and deliberately burned prisoners in order to test various salves for wounds incurred during the incendiary bomb attacks from the British and Americans. They spent a great deal of effort trying to figure out how to sterilize mass numbers of people in the hope of creating a cohort of workers who could supply the German Reich with labor without risk of reproducing their "inferior" genetic stock. Over one hundred Jews were deliberately killed so their skeletons could be assembled for an anatomical research project. Polish nationals with tuberculosis were murdered under the pretext of protecting Germans from infection. The list goes on.

Alexander puts the papers down, closes his eyes. There's a kind of insanity to it that he has trouble comprehending. Almost a worship of death. Perhaps it was simply the result of the pure exercise of absolute power: because I can, I will. But to have such criminal acts committed by doctors—all who had uttered the Hippocratic oath to dedicate themselves to the wellbeing of their patients? How could that possibly be explained? He would call their actions evil, if evil

weren't such a useless concept. It condemns without understanding, obscures rather than illuminates. He isn't interested in value judgments. Those, in any case, are obvious.

As a psychiatrist, he has a different job: to meet human beings wherever they are, even on the edge of the abyss.

He puts the list of names aside. Altogether, it's rather disappointing. So many of the key figures are missing: Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS; Leonardo Conti, the Reich Health Minister; Philip Bouhler, chief of Hitler's chancellery. The architects, one might say, of the Reich's medical crimes, the planners, or the visionaries, if you could use a word like that. But they were all suicides at the end of the war. Also missing is the Auschwitz group, Mengele and his crew. Not under the Americans' jurisdiction, according to Taylor. A shame. Alexander would have liked to see them all brought to account. More than that: he would have liked to have the chance to sit down with them, to learn what went on in their minds, what transformed them from ordinary men into killers.

But Taylor is right: they got Karl Brandt. That is something. Alexander digs through the files until he comes to the one with Brandt's name. He faces charges in all of the medical experiments except the ones on poison and incendiary bombs. Apparently nothing links him to the murdered Poles or the skeleton collection. He is charged in the euthanasia program, too. Alexander knows about that. Thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of German citizens, the aged, the insane, deformed and incurably ill children, deemed lebensunwertes Leben by the Nazis—life unworthy of life—were transported to killing centers and gassed in order to free up resources for "healthy" German *Volk*. He spent some time investigating the euthanasia program after the war. It operated as a kind of testing ground, a forerunner to the so-called Final Solution that resulted in the murder of millions of Jews and other political prisoners in the East. One of his reports is on it. But he never found anything linking it to Karl Brandt.

Much about Brandt's role in the war—like everything else about him—remains a mystery. Alexander never found anything incriminating him in the medical experiments. He vaguely recalls

hearing that Brandt paid an occasional visit to Dachau and some of the other camps, but he never heard that he participated in any of the experiments. He may very well have had nothing to do with them. Unless Taylor has uncovered more evidence against him, Brandt may very well go free.

Key to determining guilt or innocence is establishing chain of command. One of the documents in Brandt's file is an attempt to do just that, a hand-drawn sketch of a table of organization of the Nazi medical hierarchy. But nothing on it is clear. Brandt's name appears at the top, with lines drawn from him to other officials, including a few who are in the Nuremberg prison. Alexander traces the line from Brandt to a man named Viktor Brack. It's the first he's heard of him. Apparently Brack worked in the chancellery with Philip Bouhler. He also seems to have been connected to Brandt, or perhaps they were just in the same ministry. It's hard to tell. The sketch is like a tangled web with lines redirected or crossed out. Taylor's team must still be working on it. Alexander makes a note of that. It's the kind of thing he might be able to help with. Having a clear sense of the hierarchy would certainly be useful to the Tribunal, as the judges attempt to determine who is responsible for what.

Himmler, Alexander knows, bore ultimate responsibility for the camp experiments. His approval was needed every time prisoners were enlisted as subjects. Did Himmler direct the euthanasia program too? If so, Alexander has yet to hear of it. In any case Himmler, Alexander reminds himself, is gone, like so many others at the top of the Nazi medical pyramid. Why did Taylor charge Brandt, if he has so little evidence against him? Was it simply because he was the last man standing? And why didn't he commit suicide like the others? Servatius's face floats into Alexander's mind, his mocking smile and eyes. The lawyer looked awfully pleased for a man whose client faces multiple capital charges. Does he know something that Alexander does not?

Brandt was Hitler's *Begleitsarzt*: the escort physician. His role in the war was to accompany Hitler on his travels, to ensure that the leader would always have a physician on hand if he were to be injured or the subject of an assassination attempt. Brandt's background as

a surgeon made him the ideal candidate for the role. Somehow he parlayed his proximity to the Führer into a position as the Reich's chief health commissioner. He was in charge for a time early in the war with building clinics and later with arranging hospitalization for civilians injured in bombing raids. All quite innocent stuff. But nothing in the file links Brandt to anything criminal. He wrote no letters, issued no orders, made no commands. As an administrator, he was either entirely ineffectual or responsible for nothing. Alexander wonders again what kind of case Taylor proposes to build against him.

At the back of the file is a collection of photographs. Several appear to be of Brandt with his family, his wife Anni and a young son. Others show Brandt and Hitler together. Brandt is a good-looking man, tall enough to tower over the leader, with dark eyes, a pleasant mouth, and a cleft chin. Hollywood looks, as the Americans would say. The golden boy. He is well-groomed, with oiled black hair, and well-dressed, whether in a tailored suit or sharply pressed SS uniform. He has a way of appearing close to Hitler in the photographs—but not too close, often standing on the perimeter of the group, or in the background. His eyes always seem to be directed elsewhere, outside the frame. The invisible man, hiding in plain sight. What exactly was the relationship between them? It's hard to say. But in it could lie the essence of Brandt's guilt—or innocence. Hitler may not have occupied himself with the minutia of experimenting on concentration camp prisoners—that he would have gladly passed off to Himmler—but it is highly unlikely that a massive, national program murdering civilians would have taken place without his knowledge. Was Brandt the silent vehicle for that? And what did Brandt know about the systematic murder of millions of Jews?

Even more curious is the story of Brandt's capture. In the final days of the war, he was arrested by the Gestapo, imprisoned, and scheduled for execution. He escaped the Germans by the skin of his teeth—only to be picked up by the British, who passed him on to the Americans, once they figured out who he was. Something happened between Brandt and the other Nazis to make them sour on Hitler's golden boy. But what?

Alexander puts the folder aside. Soon it will be dawn, but he is still too agitated to sleep. He pulls out his violin, gives it a quick tuning, and loses himself in a composition by the German composer Adrian Leverkühn, who was all the rage in the pre-war era. He has no idea if anyone still plays Leverkühn now. He is onto the second movement when he becomes vaguely aware of a thumping on the wall, a muffled voice calling for quiet. With a sad smile he puts the violin away. Then he turns out the light, draws up the blankets, and closes his eyes.

Tomorrow he will ask Simms to arrange for him to meet with Karl Brandt. Brandt is a mystery—but then he could say the same about himself. Which Leo Alexander has come back to Nuremberg to pursue the Nazi doctors? Is it the Leopold who spent hours as a child on the balcony of his house in Vienna, studying the skies with his telescope; the young doctor training at Karl Kleist's clinic in Frankfurt; the psychiatrist with an American wife and three children; or someone else entirely, the outlines of whom he hasn't even begun to perceive?

He wonders what Countess von Becken might make of that.

He is just drifting off to sleep when he hears that strange noise emanating again from the darkness, a rise and fall, like the call of a peacock. Just like the birds that drove his mother to distraction in their summer home in Baden when he was just a boy. He shakes his head, chasing the sound from his mind.

He lied, of course, to general Taylor when he said he came to Nuremberg with revenge on his mind. The truth is far more complicated. The Nazis didn't destroy his past the way he said they did. The First Great War did that. But they destroyed his future. And what happens to a man who has no future and no past? Robert Servatius, the reader of Greek tragedies, would know the answer to that. Leo Alexander has become a loose cannon, disconnected, capable of anything. And with that last judgement on his mind, he finally sleeps.