

AFTER THE TRUTH

by

Christopher & Kathleen Riley

Now you'll know.

IN BLACKNESS

A WAGNERIAN ARIA plays, a crystalline TENOR SOLO haunting in its beauty.

FAUCETS SQUEAK OPEN and WATER RUNS.

FADE IN:

A GLEAMING PORCELAIN SINK

Bloody hands plunge beneath the water. They wash vigorously, with the thoroughness of a surgeon. Blood swirls down the drain, a great deal of blood.

SERIES OF CLOSEUPS

Now spotless, these hands -- soft, smooth and young -- adjust the cuffs of a black uniform tunic. Every move is quick, precise, efficient.

Manicured fingers fasten a gleaming button.

The hands rub out an invisible blemish on dazzling black boots.

A stiff uniform collar is aligned. What little is seen of the face is boyishly fresh, clean-shaven and benign.

The hands groom impeccable brown hair, position a uniform cap and pull away to reveal the grim death's head insignia of the Nazi SS.

The TENOR SOLO SOARS HEROICALLY, but is silenced by a sudden COUGH. The COUGH BRIDGES a --

TIME CUT TO:

AN OLD MAN'S FIST

Five punishing decades have passed, and the hand that was once smooth and young has become a wizened fist. It covers the mouth of a man who hacks painfully. What can be seen of his face suggests advanced age. The skin is loose, deeply lined and alarmingly grey. The hand descends to a gleaming button. The top one, just below the stiff black collar. The hand grasps the button and slowly unfastens it.

The tunic is folded and placed atop a pair of black pants. The SS cap drops onto the neat stack. Hear a BABY CRYING -- and a hushed DEBATE IN GERMAN.

EXT. GUNZBURG, GERMANY - LATE AFTERNOON

Rain falls heavily on this prosperous Bavarian municipality. At town center stands Gunzburg's modest courthouse. The BABY'S CRIES and the HUSHED ARGUMENT CONTINUE.

INT. COURTROOM - SAME TIME

The CRYING and ARGUING are LOUDER here. At the defense table Vashistha, a frightened young Pakistani, sits beside a fresh-faced assistant defense attorney named HILLMANN. Hillmann glances anxiously into the gallery where Vashistha's wife waits, tormented by the CRIES of her BABY -- whom she does not hold.

Across the aisle, a social worker tries to quiet the WAILING INFANT who's sheathed from the waist down in a body cast.

But the real action is taking place at the bench where lead defense attorney PETER ROHM, 40s, too-long blond hair curling over his collar, battles JUDGE and PROSECUTOR. Their German segues into slightly accented English:

PETER

You have no evidence. None. What's the point of dragging this out?

The Prosecutor is a bitter old war horse.

PROSECUTOR

The point, Counselor, is to protect the child from further brutality at the hand of her father.

PETER

Brutality?! She fell from his arms. Three witnesses agree it was a simple accident --

PROSECUTOR

Of course they agree, they're all --

He breaks off. Peter turns to the gallery; the witnesses gaze back -- three dark-faced Pakistanis.

PETER

(quietly)

They're all what, Herr Prosecutor? Intelligent adults? Trustworthy observers?... The shining future of the Fatherland?

The Judge raises a hand in warning.

JUDGE

Counselor --

PETER

(unrelenting)

At least we can trust the doctor. As I recall...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER (CONT'D)
 (a smile for the
 Judge)
 ... he's blond like us.

JUDGE
Herr Rohm.

PETER
 (thunders)
Defense moves for dismissal.

EXT. GUNZBURG COURTHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The rain has intensified. The courthouse doors swing open and the angry Prosecutor emerges, raises his umbrella and marches down the steps. The doors open again and the Vashisthas appear -- the baby asleep in her tearful mother's arms. They descend the steps. Once more the doors open and Peter and Hillmann emerge. They pause as Hillmann raises his umbrella. Peter watches his departing clients with satisfaction.

PETER
 (an axiom)
 Always tell the truth, Felix. It's
 the greatest freedom we have.
 (and)
 Bet they didn't teach you that in law
 school.

Peter tucks his own umbrella beneath his arm and strides into the rain, face skyward, getting happily drenched.

CLOSE ON DESKTOP

Cigarette smoke and shadows. A bulging manila folder lies open on the desk, full of handwritten pages. Bony fingers dial a rotary telephone, number after number. Not a local call. The voice of the caller is heard, an aged man:

MUELLER (O.S.)
 Ja. It's me... How are you feeling?

There's something slightly mocking in this voice. Something unwholesome. The fingers pick up a German passport.

MUELLER (O.S.)
 Ja, of course I have it.

The passport is thumbed open to the photograph of its owner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER (O.S.)

No, no, you shouldn't worry... He's perfect.

Catch a glimpse of the photo: a smiling Peter Rohm.

EXT. ROHM HOUSE (GUNZBURG) - EVENING

Daylight is waning as an old Volvo pulls into the driveway of this handsome two-story. The corner of a curtain flicks aside, as if someone inside is watching.

ELDERLY WOMAN (V.O.)

Here he comes... Are you ready?

ELDERLY MAN (V.O.)

Ja, ja, ready.

Peter and Hillmann climb from the car and approach the house, Peter contentedly soaking up more rain. He pauses at the front door, the porch light dark, something amiss. He tries the door and finds it unlocked, throws Hillmann a wary look, then pushes the door wide.

INT. ROHM HOUSE

Lights flash on and a clamoring mob surrounds Peter, led by three figures: HILDE, a slight woman of 70, beating on a cast-iron skillet. This is Peter's mother. MAX, his father, a big, convivial man somewhere past 70, oompahing on an old tuba. And CORY, Peter's wife, a what-you-see-is-what-you-get beauty fiery enough to hold her own with Peter, snapping a flash picture.

The crowd -- aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins -- shouts "Happy birthday!!!" Peter is delighted. These people clearly think a great deal of Peter, and he of them.

Cory notes Peter's soaked condition with affectionate dismay.

CORY

Oh, Peter...

MAX

(knowingly)

Must have won another one.

The PHONE begins to RING. Cory heads upstairs to answer it, calling over her shoulder:

CORY

Get out of those clothes -- you're dripping on my floor.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

PARTY NOISE filters up from below. Cory's on the phone. Peter approaches, towel draped around his neck.

CORY
 (to phone)
 What's wrong with the quote? This morning you loved it.

Peter leans in for a kiss. Cory playfully evades.

CORY
 Of course he denies he said it. It makes him look like the money-grubber he is.

Peter loops his towel around her neck. She ducks coyly out of the towel and stays with her call.

CORY
 Paul -- Paul -- you know me better than that. He said it. If he didn't it wouldn't be in my article.

Peter snakes his soggy arms around her.

CORY
 I have him on tape -- want me to play it for you?

Backed against the wall, Cory changes tactics, planting a quick but serious kiss on Peter. Then, with a crooked smile, she pushes him on his way down the hall.

CORY
 No, no, you've questioned my journalistic integrity, I insist.

EXT. ROHM HOUSE - BACK YARD - EVENING

The nieces and nephews play soccer in the rain. Sheltered by a veranda, Peter and the adults surround a table covered with gift boxes. Peter has changed into dry clothes and is modeling a ridiculous red plastic hat in the shape of a charging boar. Cory snaps his picture. At the far end of the table Max holds forth, Hillmann his captive audience.

MAX
 ... We had some neighborhood hoodlums who were always picking on this little Jew boy.
 (to Hilde)
 What was his name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HILDE
(no hesitation)
Herschel.

MAX
Herschel... I believe you're right.

HILDE
You know I'm right.

The youngest of Peter's nieces, KAT, about 5 and completely overrun by the older children, appeals for aid.

KAT
Uncle Peter. Uncle Peter, fly me.

Cory leans close and whispers to Peter. He grins and whispers back. Sharing lovers' secrets.

PETER
(removes hat; to
Hillmann)
A distinguished gift. I'll wear it
tomorrow in court.

Hillmann chuckles uncertainly.

CORY
Don't laugh, Felix. He'll do it.

KAT
Uncle Peter --

With a war whoop, Peter leaps off the veranda into the rain.

CORY
Peter!

He scoops Kat into his arms and charges after the ball, using her dangling legs to drive the ball past protesting defenders into the makeshift goal.

PETER
Sooooooooooooooooore!!!

Kat squeals with glee.

ON VERANDA - LATER

Peter rejoins the party from the house, toweling his hair, changed into another set of dry clothes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

(still rolling)

He was walking home one day in a terrible rain, he must have been 10 or 12 years old --

HILDE

He was seven.

MAX

Seven... really? A fight like that?

HILDE

It was before we moved up on the hill.

As Max thinks about that, Hilde hands Peter a card.

MAX

(conceding the point)

Seven years old. He came upon those hoodlums bullying his little friend -- and went after them with his umbrella.

Max makes wild swashbuckling gestures, cackling at the memory.

MAX

That afternoon when he walked in the house his umbrella was bent, his lip was bleeding, his clothes were soaked -- and he was laughing like crazy.

(a proud nod toward
his son)

Because he'd won.

Peter finishes reading the card and looks up at Hilde, moved by its content. He gives her hand a quick squeeze.

PETER

Thank you, Mama.

Only one unopened gift remains. Cory hands it to Peter.

CORY

Last one.

It's wrapped as if for a child.

PETER

Cute. Who's it from?

CORY

You brought it from the office, didn't you, Felix?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FELIX

This is the first time I've seen it.

Peter senses a joke.

PETER

Papa...

MAX

Not me.

PETER

(the crowd)

Anyone?

His gaze settles on Cory.

CORY

I really don't know, Peter. It was in the house with the rest of the gifts.

PETER

Cowards.

He digs in, tearing away the paper. As he lifts off the top, everyone leans forward with anticipation.

PETER

(playing the moment)

Looks like... another hat.

With a flourish, he whips it from the box. Hilde draws a quick gasp. Max's jaw tightens.

MAX

What in hell --

Peter sits transfixed. Holding the cap of a Nazi SS uniform. After a frozen moment, he reaches back into the box and pulls out a black uniform tunic.

HILDE

Dear God in heaven...

Peter turns urgently to Cory.

PETER

You must have some idea --

CORY

No, it was just... here.

No one knows more.

INT. ROHM DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nearly everyone has gone. The uniform is spread across the table and Peter examines it under the light of a desk lamp, Max and Hillmann watching over his shoulder. Cory cleans up from the party, wanting nothing to do with this investigation.

MAX

Most of these uniforms disappeared in the last days of the war. The SS dumped them and tried to pass as Wehrmacht regulars.

PETER

(holding the tunic to
the light)

Look at the stitching here. See where the insignia should be? It's all been removed.

HILLMANN

Why would a person do this, Peter?
What does it mean?

CORY

Who cares what it means? Get rid of it.

MAX

(a hooded look to
Peter)

Maybe something to do with Viktor Kohl.

HILLMANN

... Viktor Kohl?

No answer for that, except:

MAX

Maybe someone put two and two together.

Another look between Peter and Max.

MAX

They used to stamp the serial number inside the collar... so they wouldn't get mixed up in the laundry.

(to Hilde)

Wasn't it the collar?

HILDE

(flat)

The lining. Inside the left cuff.

Hillmann raises an eyebrow at that as Max folds back the cuff and holds it to the light.

INSERT - LEFT UNIFORM CUFF

As Max's fingers work the material, rotating it in the light, a set of badly faded numbers comes into view. Only four digits are legible: 4397.

MAX (O.S.)

There it is... what's left of it.

ON SCENE

Peter and Hillmann bend low over the uniform.

PETER

(reading, memorizing)

Four three nine seven... four three
nine seven...

He strides toward the stairs. Cory turns in alarm.

CORY

Peter...?

PETER

I need to check a file.

HORNED VIKING HELMET AND FLOPPY COURT JESTER'S CAP

Perched together in shadow. Only the odd outlines are distinguishable in the room's low light. FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

CORY (O.S.)

Peter -- what file?

A light switch is thrown illuminating the colorless helmet and the dazzling jester's cap. The hats rest atop a file cabinet. Peter enters and bends over the cabinet, inserts a key and unlocks it. Bypassing the top drawer labelled "A-F," he opens the second one, "G-M," flipping through the files at the rear of the drawer. Cory watches uneasily.

CORY

Which file are you looking for?

He looks up.

PETER

It's gone.

The sound of RAIN is prominent. Peter's gaze falls on the open window. He crosses quickly, feeling the wetness of the curtains.

PETER

Did you leave this open?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

No, of course not...

Peter looks out the window into the night.

CORY

Peter -- what have you done?

When he doesn't answer, she urgently shuts and locks the window.

EXT. GUNZBURG RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

The rain has stopped. A party is breaking up and teenagers, Heineken bottles in hand, move toward their cars. Peter's Volvo pulls into the driveway of the house directly across from the party. Max and Hilde emerge. They pause at the driver's window.

MAX

Well... happy birthday, such as it was.

HILDE

Are you sure you and Cory wouldn't feel better staying here?

PETER

We're fine. Really. Don't worry.

HILDE

I'm your mother. I get paid to worry.

She reaches through Peter's open window and depresses his door lock.

PETER

(a smile)

Good night.

Max and Hilde walk to the house. Peter watches until they're inside before he begins backing from the driveway. Spotting a set of taillights approaching rapidly along the curb, he stomps on the brakes. Just short of the driveway the other car, a dark Mercedes, stops as well. Peter waits. There's room for the Mercedes to back safely past. It doesn't.

PETER

Come on. Come on.

(calling out window)

Go.

But the Mercedes' lights go off. Exasperated, Peter resumes backing from the driveway. But just as he comes in line with the Mercedes, it reverses again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

(shouting)

No! -- No! -- Watch where you're going! You're going to --

Laying on his HORN, Peter steps on his accelerator. There's no time. The Mercedes crunches against Peter's front fender.

PETER

(disbelieving)

He hit me.

Peter climbs out as the Mercedes pulls forward. Max appears.

MAX

(calls)

Careful -- kid's probably drunk.

Peter approaches the driver's door. The Mercedes again pulls forward. Peter pursues -- but whenever he gets close, the Mercedes pulls further ahead. Not running. Just playing with him. Cat and mouse.

PETER

Hey! Hey! You hit my car!

Now he breaks into a jog, trotting alongside the car as it rolls forward. He reaches for the door handle.

PETER

You're in no condition --

The car's interior light snaps on and the driver is illuminated. This is no drunk teenager. He's in his late 80s, exceedingly tall and gaunt, clad in black, a skeleton with skin. MUELLER. For an instant he gazes into Peter's eyes, his face lit with perverse delight. Peter's grip on the door handle falters. With a DIESEL GROWL, the Mercedes pulls away. Peter sprints back to his own car.

MAX

Peter -- Don't! --

But Peter jumps inside and sets off in pursuit.

INT. VOLVO - NIGHT

Eyes focused on the distant Mercedes, Peter accelerates like a maniac.

EXT. INTERSECTION IN DOWNTOWN GUNZBURG - NIGHT

The Mercedes catches the tail end of a yellow light. Seconds later Peter arrives to find the signal red and the intersection full of cross traffic. As soon as it clears, Peter gives chase.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

The Mercedes flashes past a manufacturing plant on the outskirts of Gunzburg. On one wall of the factory appears the company name in huge lighted letters: M E N G E L E.

EXT. DENSELY WOODED HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Volvo races beneath the towering evergreens as the Mercedes' lights disappear around a bend.

EXT./INT. VOLVO

Peter navigates the curve and looks ahead. The taillights have vanished.

IN AN UNSEEN TURN-OUT

The MERCEDES IDLES, lights off. As Peter's Volvo passes on the main road, the Mercedes' headlights snap back on, illuminating a muddy, rutted path into the forest. The Mercedes starts up the path. Peter veers onto the shoulder, pulls a U and comes racing back to the turn-out, sloshing off-road, tires throwing mud... until his car slews to one side and sinks to a halt, up to its axles in mud.

INT. VOLVO

Peter pounds the wheel in frustration, watching helplessly as the Mercedes disappears over a ridge.

ON PATH

Flashlight in hand, Peter picks his way up the incline. He draws to a halt at the top, his way obstructed by a mass of barbed wire. Switching off his light, he takes in the wide clearing below. On the far side of the clearing a light glows from behind a low building.

IN CLEARING

Peter slogs through the maze of twisted gates and barbed wire pens, moving steadily toward the backlit building.

MERCEDES

stands dark and quiet. Peter peers inside. Turns from the Mercedes to the dark building. A wooden chute slopes up into its dismal maw. Light comes from within. Grasping the side rails of the rotting chute, Peter hoists himself upward.

INT. DARK BUILDING

Huge freezer doors stand ajar. Meat hooks dangle. And on the far side of this abandoned slaughterhouse, a gaping freight door opens onto a long platform.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It is from somewhere on this platform that the light comes; in that light, indistinct shadows move. Peter eases toward the doorway. He arrives to the sound of MUTED LAUGHTER, followed by a sudden CRACKING, like the SPLINTERING OF BONES. He freezes, holding his breath. Waits. And waits. And waits. Then, summoning courage, he steps outside.

EXT. FREIGHT PLATFORM - NIGHT

Peter stares into the light, unsure what to make of what he's seeing, his held breath slowly expelled. Before him, regally attired and seated at a small table spread with a linen cloth and set with silver service for two, is Mueller. A single parlor lamp shines over his shoulder. He's eating crab, CRACKING the SHELLS with gusto, bent over a thick stack of papers which he reads as he eats. Peter searches the shadows for danger before stepping cautiously into the light. Mueller cackles at something he's read.

MUELLER

Oh yes, well put.

And finally he looks up, off-handedly, as if welcoming an old friend.

MUELLER

Peter. Good of you to come.
(gestures to the
empty seat)

Hungry?

Peter stands his ground.

PETER

Who are you?

MUELLER

(with relish)
I, Peter, am a cheat. And a liar. A highly-paid perverter of law in the service of outlaws.

PETER

(flat)
You're an attorney.

MUELLER

(his smile)
Like you.
(then, as if it's
a significant
concession)
You may call me Schmidt. Will that be acceptable? Or maybe Mueller.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER (CONT'D)

It's a good German name and less common than Schmidt. Would you like to call me Mueller?

PETER

Is that your name?

MUELLER

Is that my name? You make it sound so simple.

Mueller smiles as if at a child then turns back to the papers.

MUELLER

'27 October, 1982. Dear Frau Holtz, I have not yet received any reply to my numerous requests for an interview. However, I remain eager to discuss with you your former classmate -- '

Here he breaks off, sets the page aside and reads from another.

MUELLER

'... Eager to discuss with you your former neighbor...'

(and another)

'... Your former student...'

(and another)

'... Your former colleague...'

Etcetera, etcetera.

He looks at Peter who has grown very cool.

MUELLER

I have dozens of letters like these, received by people all across Germany over a span of 15 years, yet always inquiring about the same man. Always seeking information about...

(shrugs noncommittally)

... a certain local celebrity. A hero of the last war.

(lets that lie; then)

They all bear the signature of a man named Viktor Kohl.

Peter remains silent. The old man's gaze drops to Peter's untouched plate.

MUELLER

Are you sure you won't eat something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When Peter makes no response, Mueller takes the plate and dumps its contents onto his own. He eats ravenously.

MUELLER

The letters bore as a return address the number of a post box here in Gunzburg. I came to Gunzburg to find Herr Kohl and ask him the reason for his interest... but the mystery only deepened.

From beyond the circle of light comes an indistinct CREAK. Peter's eyes snap toward the sound.

MUELLER

I found there was no Viktor Kohl. The name was a pseudonym -- a fiction.

(pause)

Who was he, Peter? And why was he hiding behind a falsehood?

Another CREAK, as if someone has stepped on a loose board. Peter's eyes search the shadows.

MUELLER

Was he an enemy... or a secret friend? Or was he neither? Perhaps he was simply... confused... uncertain where his true sympathies lay.

Peter bristles.

MUELLER

Of course all this remained purely speculative until... very recently.

(savors a bite)

Oh, this... this is delicious.

And, when he's good and ready, he slides his stack of letters aside to reveal a fat manilla folder.

MUELLER

Earlier today, in a home in Gunzburg, this file was discovered. And in the file -- copies of every one of Viktor Kohl's letters.

He holds Peter in his unflagging gaze, a shark's smile spreading slowly across his face.

MUELLER

Peter, are you Viktor Kohl?

PETER

(right back)

Are you Josef Mengele?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mueller laughs. And laughs.

MUELLER

You let your imagination run away with you. The good doctor drowned years ago. They have his bones, you know.

The laughter subsides. Mueller's gaze darkens.

MUELLER

Why so many questions, Peter? Why this obsession with things past?

His gaze bores into Peter, as if he is in some way assessing the man's worth. Though Peter makes no answer, Mueller nods.

MUELLER

Oh yes. You'll do.
(extends his right arm
in a sloppy salute)
Heil Hitler.

Mueller reaches casually to the lamp and switches it off, plunging the scene into darkness. The SOUND of SUDDEN MOVEMENT. Peter's flashlight clicks on and finds Mueller's chair, now empty, then redirects, moving toward the lamp. Just as it arrives, there's a SHARP BLOW. A GASP. The flashlight drops to the platform. Then the flashlight is switched off.

BLACK SCREEN

The absolute silence of death. Seconds pass. Then BARELY AUDIBLE SOUNDS in the distance. Perhaps voices. And then, with the suddenness of an onrushing locomotive, the darkness comes alive with sound: VOICES, LAUGHTER, PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS, all on top of one another, all too loud and somehow grating. Among the sounds:

AIRPORT P.A. (V.O.)

Lufthansa announces the immediate departure of flight 964. Final boarding is now underway at Gate 15.

A VOICE (V.O.)

Medical transport this way please.

ANOTHER VOICE (V.O.)

Tickets.

AND ANOTHER (V.O.)

I'll need the patient's passport.

SLOW FADE IN:

SERIES OF DISTORTED IMAGES

Light overtakes darkness. All is shrouded in thick fog, as if viewed through a film of Vaseline. Movement. The interior of an airliner. A stewardess. An IV bag hangs overhead. A glimpse of a white medical uniform. But then DARKNESS RETURNS as:

AIRLINER P.A. (V.O.)

Flight attendants, prepare for
departure.

LIGHT AGAIN. Blue sky overhead -- and the hanging IV bag. The rear door of an ambulance swings open. A youthful FACE appears.

THE FACE

Comfortable?

A nice smile. The Face turns his attention to the IV apparatus, injecting something from a syringe.

THE FACE

Rest now.

The world descends again INTO BLACKNESS.

INT. ROHM KITCHEN - CORY

sits in a straight-backed chair, red-rimmed eyes gazing vaguely ahead.

OFFICIOUS VOICE (O.S.)

Frau Rohm?

At length her eyes focus.

CORY

Have you talked to everyone at that party? Did you get a list?

OFFICIOUS VOICE (O.S.)

We're working on it.

She's battling an almost irresistible urge to wild panic.

CORY

Are they all accounted for? Did any of them own a dark-colored Mercedes?

OFFICIOUS VOICE (O.S.)

We're checking.

(then)

Tell me about the missing file. What was the purpose of your husband's research?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY
(a distinctly unhappy
memory)

He was going to write a book.

At a DISTURBANCE outside, Cory looks off sharply.

EXT. ROHM HOUSE - NIGHT

Cory rushes out. Two police officers are excitedly raising the garage door. They shine flashlights inside, illuminating Peter's Volvo -- the same car he abandoned stuck up to its axles in mud. It now rests in the garage, spotless, parked right where it belongs. Cory runs toward the car.

CORY

Peter?!!!

But one of the officers turns from the car, shaking his head negatively.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INSIDE A CRAMPED, BEIGE CUBICLE

A peculiar little room, not much bigger than a closet, viewed from an odd, CANTED ANGLE. MUSIC is vaguely audible in the distance, possibly an opera. Above, a bare bulb protrudes from an undecorated wall. To the side, a sink and bathtub.

REVERSE TO:

INT. BATHROOM - PETER

Slumped like dirty laundry atop the commode, his head resting cock-eyed on the toilet paper dispenser. There's a nasty scrape above one eye. He squints groggily, lifts his head and winces. Finding a cotton ball taped to the back of his hand, he rips it away, examining a pinprick on the skin beneath. Then, staggered by a wave of nausea, he turns, groping to raise the toilet lid, and hangs there panting... homicide on his mind.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - SOME TIME LATER

Peter rises unsteadily to gaze into a mirror. He steadies himself on rubber legs, gingerly touching the scrape above his eye. Moans.

INT. NARROW HALLWAY

The MUSIC is LOUDER here. Definitely opera. Something by Wagner. Peter sways down the passage into the main room of a simple house, where he turns an ungraceful full circle, taking in the austere furnishings. The only concession to luxury is a modest STEREO SYSTEM against one wall, the source of the opera. The room is in perfect order.

PETER

Hello?

His gaze fixes on the front door.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

A postcard-perfect scene. Rich green pasture land rises to meet a soaring range of glaciated mountains. A gravel road passes before the house and stretches away, empty as far as the eye can see.

PETER

Hello?

INT. FARMHOUSE

Peter moves shakily to a stack of journals on a table, grabs the top one: "JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF ONCOLOGISTS." Beneath it is another journal, titled in Spanish. Another in German. He moves into an austere kitchen. He throws open cabinets and drawers, rifling them, looking for some clue to his whereabouts. He finds nothing. He pauses, OPERA BUILDING, his eyes wandering...

He fills a glass at the kitchen sink. It slips from his unsteady grip and SHATTERS, soaking a countertop telephone and the directory beside it. The cover of the phone book catches his eye. He grabs the book. A cowboy is pictured atop a bucking bronc. Emblazoned across the photo: CALGARY, ALBERTA.

ON PETER

Stunned.

PETER

Canada?

He sags against the counter, overwhelmed with nausea, pain and confusion.

The OPERA has become UNBEARABLY LOUD. Peter lurches toward the stereo. He punches buttons. The MUSIC CONTINUES. He punches more buttons but the music won't stop. With a burst of anger he overturns the stereo, bringing the OPERA to an ABRUPT END.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Breathless, he slides to the floor. Sweet silence.

Out of the silence comes a sound. A HORSE'S WHINNY. Then another WHINNY and a MAN'S VOICE.

SUDDEN CLOSE ANGLE ON PETER

His eyes fly open.

EXT. FARMHOUSE

Peter weaves onto the back porch. In a stall built against the outside of a barn a mare paces in agitation. Shadowing her is a wobbly-legged foal. Peter warily approaches. The MARE WHINNIES. From inside the barn comes the voice of an old man, soothing and almost musical.

BAUMGARTEN (O.S.)

Easy, my mare. Easy.

Through a window, movement catches Peter's eye. He moves closer to see:

THROUGH WINDOW

Aged hands fill a syringe.

PETER

moves to get a more complete view, but a water trough blocks his way. The hands disappear from the window. The MARE SNORTS and WHINNIES. Peter eases back toward her.

BAUMGARTEN (O.S.)

(ever calming)

Be still, mare. Be still now.

The voice comes from the stall. Peter tries to get a look, but the mare obscures his view. Only the man's tall boots can be seen.

BAUMGARTEN (O.S.)

Easy, girl... I won't hurt you.

Peter climbs the rail fence surrounding the stall.

BAUMGARTEN (O.S.)

Baby's hungry. We need to get your milk going.

With difficulty, Peter reaches the top of the fence. He teeters, fighting for balance. A losing battle.

INSIDE STALL

Peter lands heavily in the dirt. At the sound, the foal skitters away. And suddenly he's seen:

HEINZ BAUMGARTEN, in his eighties, dressed in simple work clothes and those tall boots, at the mare's flank, in the process of injecting her with the syringe. In stark contrast to the sinister Mueller, Baumgarten appears grandfatherly and utterly benign. He says to his visitor without any hint of mockery:

BAUMGARTEN

Peter. I'm so grateful you've come.

Then, with a peculiar kind of exuberance, the old man turns and disappears into the shadows of the barn. Profoundly unsettled, Peter follows.

INT. BARN

By the light of a grimy window, Baumgarten gathers bottles and syringes. From a distance, still muddled, Peter watches Baumgarten, something about this man rendering him momentarily speechless. And now Baumgarten turns. In his hand is a black leather bag. A medical bag. Peter's eyes lock onto it.

BAUMGARTEN

Surely, Peter, you suspected... even hoped...

Baumgarten's gaze penetrates Peter.

BAUMGARTEN

Tell me it isn't so.

The old man's sincerity is eerily compelling. Peter shakes his head, rejecting the impossible claim. His tongue is thick.

PETER

Josef Mengele is dead. I've seen his bones.

BAUMGARTEN

You've seen bones. Yes you have. But not mine.

And Baumgarten sweeps out of the barn.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - GLEAMING PORCELAIN SINK

SQUEAKY FAUCETS are CRANKED ON. Water runs. A WAGNERIAN ARIA SOARS. Aged hands disassemble syringes and plunge them beneath the water, washing vigorously, with the thoroughness of a surgeon. A DOOR OPENS O.S.

ON SCENE

The STEREO has been righted. Peter enters. Baumgarten cranks off the faucets and replaces the serum bottles and needles in the medical bag.

PETER

(all he can muster)

Why... why are you...?

Baumgarten stops his work and turns his full attention to Peter, exceedingly earnest.

BAUMGARTEN

Peter -- my friend -- I can't tell you how long I've wanted to bring you here. As my guest. All your letters. Your questions. I longed to answer.

(beat)

Please believe this was the only way.

Baumgarten's words carry a peculiar seductive power, and in his befuddled condition, Peter fights their effect with difficulty.

BAUMGARTEN

You searched for years, preparing to write the definitive volume on Josef Mengele. But you were never able to write it. Why? What questions couldn't you answer?...

(then)

Ask them now.

Baumgarten reaches inside his jacket and extracts an airline ticket folder and a passport.

BAUMGARTEN

Or, if you're persuaded I'm a liar... or a madman...

He places the ticket and passport on the counter between them.

BAUMGARTEN

... Of course you're free to go.

Peter stares at the ticket.

PETER

After all you did to get me here... you'll let me go? Just like that?

BAUMGARTEN

Is that what you want?

Peter regards Baumgarten... then the ticket.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DUSK

Peter stands at the side of the road, clutching passport and ticket. Baumgarten watches from his porch, completely unruffled. A taxi pulls to a stop. Peter turns back for one last, bewildered look at Baumgarten then ducks into the cab. Baumgarten placidly watches his departure.

INT. TORONTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Glass doors part to admit Peter who surveys the busy terminal and heads toward a bank of phones.

INT. ROHM HOUSE - MORNING

It's daylight in Gunzburg, and Cory, looking drawn, is setting the breakfast table when, in another room, the PHONE begins to RING. She stiffens as Hilde answers.

HILDE (O.S.)

Rohm house.

A moment, then a GASP.

HILDE (O.S.)

Peter!!!

Cory races from the room.

INT. HALLWAY

Hilde beams at Cory.

HILDE

It's him.

Cory tears the phone from Hilde's hands, 36 hours of suppressed terror exploding in a frenzied blast:

CORY

Peter?! Where are you?! Where have you been?! ARE YOU ALIVE?!!!

INT. TORONTO AIRPORT - NIGHT

At the sound of Cory's voice, all of Peter's weariness, tension and confusion unravel... and he begins to laugh.

PETER

Yes.

And, in spite of himself, all he can do is hold the phone and laugh.

PETER

Yes.

INT. AIR CANADA JETLINER - IN FLIGHT - MORNING

Peter sleeps in the window seat, blanket drawn loosely around him. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT collects an empty coffee cup. Beat. Someone passes on the way to the lavatory. Beat. A male passenger, too close to be seen in full, pauses near the sleeping Peter, then slips into the empty seat. Beat. The man takes hold of Peter's blanket, pulling it up, the better to cover him.

P.A. (V.O.)

In preparation for our landing in Berlin the captain has turned on the no-smoking sign. Please return your seats and tray tables to their full upright position.

The Flight Attendant taps Peter's arm.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sir? We're about to land.

She moves off as Peter comes to consciousness and dutifully raises his seat back and closes the tray table. And finally, still a little bleary, he notices the man seated beside him:

BAUMGARTEN

Dressed in a simple but immaculate suit.

BAUMGARTEN

You missed the sunrise over Iceland...
unspeakably beautiful.

Peter jolts fully awake. For the first time facing this man with his faculties intact.

BAUMGARTEN

Tell me, Peter. The notion that a man should be considered innocent until proven guilty, do you accept it?

PETER

(flabbergasted)

What are you --

BAUMGARTEN

Innocent until proven guilty -- do you accept it?

PETER

Of course I accept it. Why are you here?

BAUMGARTEN

And this man Mengele -- what do you think of him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter looks at Baumgarten as at a crazy man. But his answer is immediate.

PETER

What do I think of a doctor who butchered hundreds of thousands? I think he's burning in hell.

BAUMGARTEN

You condemn him... though no court convicted him.

PETER

No court had the chance. Or ever will.

(pointedly)

Because he's dead. I've studied the remains myself.

Baumgarten is unflappable, his tone mildly condescending.

BAUMGARTEN

You've studied the remains. Are you a forensic scientist, Peter?

PETER

I'm an attorney. I know how to evaluate evidence.

BAUMGARTEN

Then evaluate the evidence before your eyes!

PETER

What evidence? An old man with a doctor's bag?

(then)

When I first heard that Mengele's grave had been found I refused to believe it. It was unthinkable that the Butcher of Auschwitz had escaped justice. I checked every shred of evidence, determined to find the mistake.

(shakes his head)

But there was no mistake. The evidence was absolute. Absolute.

(a burning look)

So stay the hell away from me.

INT. JETWAY - DAY

The first passenger off the plane, Peter strides up the jetway, distancing himself from the madman behind. CAMERA MOVES WITH him as he emerges into:

INT. BERLIN AIR TERMINAL - DAY

He's blinded by the glare of intense lights. A voice cries out:

VOICE (O.S.)

There's the attorney!

A jumble of television lights, cameras and microphones extends toward him. Voices shout questions. There's a fleeting glimpse of the predatory Mueller. Then Hillmann, frantic, emerges from the crowd.

HILLMANN

Peter, I got your fax.

PETER

... What fax? Didn't you talk to Cory?

And then her voice, almost lost in the din:

CORY (O.S.)

Peter!

PETER

(straining to find her)

Cory?!

Separated from him by the phalanx of reporters, she struggles to get through. But the reporters go wild with cries of: "There he is!" "Is that him?" "Will you talk to us?" Peter's up on his toes, trying to keep Cory in sight, when a hand fastens firmly around his elbow. He whips a look to his side to see:

BAUMGARTEN

He holds Peter in a surprisingly strong grip and steps forward with Peter involuntarily at his side. Baumgarten smiles shyly and speaks into the outstretched microphones:

BAUMGARTEN

Thank you. I...

(waits as the crowd
falls silent)

As you know, I am Doctor Josef Mengele.

The press erupts in a torrent of questions. Baumgarten turns to Peter and declares over it all:

BAUMGARTEN

And this good man, Herr Peter Rohm --
has agreed to represent me at trial.

Peter goes white. He shouts to the press:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

No, that's a lie -- I AM NOT THIS
MAN'S ATTORNEY -- I AM NOT --

Men wearing the crisp uniform of the German Federal Police move in fast, led by Federal Prosecutor HORST VOIGT, a big, gruff man in his 50s.

VOIGT

What are you doing in the middle of this, Rohm?

PETER

No, Horst, I had nothing to do --

But the federal officers surround Peter and Baumgarten and sweep them side by side through what has turned into a near-riot. Peter struggles vainly to separate himself from Baumgarten, his eyes searching wildly for Cory.

EXT. BERLIN AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Peter is stuffed into a dark Mercedes sedan. Baumgarten is pushed into another, a heavy armored limo with black-out windows. The cars pull away.

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Peter's sandwiched in back between two officers, furious at his predicament. Up front, Voigt flips briskly through:

VOIGT

Argentine passport dated 1956, in the name of Josef Mengele. Paraguayan passport dated 1959, issued to 'Jose' Mengele. Lab notes from Auschwitz bearing Mengele's signature.

(looks to Peter)

This package didn't come from you?

PETER

I've never seen those documents in my life.

VOIGT

(waves fax)

And I don't suppose it was you who notified the press.

PETER

Horst, I was kidnapped!

EXT. BERLIN STREETS - DAY

The speeding convoy turns into a large university hospital near the city's center.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Men spill from the cars, whisking Baumgarten into the building. Peter pauses at the car door, laying a hand on Voigt's arm.

PETER

Please, Horst -- All the times we've faced off in court... I give you my word: Whatever game that old man's playing, I'm no part of it.

(his plea)

Send me home.

VOIGT

Did you miss that little show at the airport? Whether you know it or not, you are a part of it. And until I prove Baumgarten's a fraud, neither of you is going anywhere.

Two formidable officers move in on either side of Peter. OVER this, the monotone of an interrogator:

INTERROGATOR (V.O.)

State your true name.

INT. HOSPITAL CONFERENCE ROOM

Baumgarten sits before a roomful of investigators as the uninspired INTERROGATOR reads from a list of questions. Peter and Voigt listen from the rear of the room.

BAUMGARTEN

My name is Josef Mengele.

INTERROGATOR

State your father's name.

BAUMGARTEN

Karl Mengele.

INTERROGATOR

Mother's name.

BAUMGARTEN

Walburga Mengele.

Baumgarten answers easily.

INTERROGATOR

The name of your first wife.

BAUMGARTEN

Schoenbein. Irene Schoenbein. My family didn't care for her. Too Protestant. Too... strong-willed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Baumgarten smiles at the memory. Convincingly authentic as an aging gentleman reminiscing about a lost love. Peter applauds, slow and loud, impossible to ignore.

PETER

Congratulations. A-plus. You did your homework.

The attention of the entire room turns to him.

VOIGT

If you have something to say, Rohm, say it.

PETER

Of course he knows the answers. What did you expect? We're not dealing with children.

VOIGT

Oh? Who are we dealing with?

PETER

Who benefits by opening these old wounds, by putting Germany at war with itself? Old Communists from the East? Old fascists? New fascists? Look out the window, Horst. There's someone out there -- using us.

VOIGT

Who? Tell me. Who?

PETER

Any of a hundred groups. I don't know. I only know that's the question we should be asking -- not the name of Josef Mengele's mother.

Voigt is thoughtful.

VOIGT

We must tread carefully here. Serious allegations have been made. This investigation must pursue all avenues until we find irrefutable proof that this man is a fraud.

PETER

We already have proof -- the DNA, the dental records, the bones --

Baumgarten breaks in, his voice clear and commanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAUMGARTEN

The bones, as you call them, belonged to my cousin Gerhard Sladkey. He drowned while swimming in Brazil.

(beat)

He was similar to me in appearance.

PETER

Similar? Same height, same dental records... same DNA?

Baumgarten reaches inside his suit coat and extracts a yellowed envelope.

BAUMGARTEN

Gerhard was, for reasons of his own, living discreetly in Sao Paulo. After he drowned, friends buried him at Embu, then broke into my dentist's office and traded his records for mine. Then, at the right moment, with my pursuers closing in, these friends led police to the grave of Josef Mengele. The chase ended.

(beat)

Gerhard was a close enough relative that his DNA made a convincing match.

He forcefully extends the envelope.

BAUMGARTEN

These are the dental records of Josef Mengele.

(and)

Ask me anything. I'll answer any question you like.

Peter ignores the envelope, unmoved by this tale.

BAUMGARTEN

Don't be an idiot. Ask me. ASK ME.

PETER

Tell me this. Why would a man who spent fifty years running for his life suddenly just... turn himself in?

The question seems to please Baumgarten. His words come laden with emotion.

BAUMGARTEN

The Jews... the Jews say I mutilated their women, they say I cut their children to pieces. The Butcher of Auschwitz they called me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAUMGARTEN (CONT'D)

(roars)

But I am not a butcher. NO!!!

(quietly)

I am a physician... a man of heart...
a man of compassion.

PETER

A man of compassion who mutilated
women and cut children to pieces.

BAUMGARTEN

Is a surgeon a butcher because he cuts
with a knife? Because he finds a
diseased limb and removes it to save
the whole body?

(fiercely)

That isn't butchery, that's medicine.

Peter's eyes narrow infinitesimally.

INT. UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - SERIES OF QUICK SCENES

- A) Baumgarten lies on his back as technicians position an X-ray apparatus above him.
- B) A technician positions calipers alongside Baumgarten's skull, measuring the span between his temples.
- C) A brigade of INVESTIGATORS works a bank of phones.

RED-HAIRED INVESTIGATOR

Baumgarten, right. What date do you
show him entering the country?

ANOTHER INVESTIGATOR

Everything we know. Bring every last
file. I've already spoken to the
ambassador.

- D) A team of photographers positions Baumgarten. A strobe flashes.

INT. A SMALL, MURKILY-LIT ROOM - NIGHT

His cadaverous face in shadow, Mueller gazes at something or someone unseen. He extracts a cigarette and lights it, inhaling deeply.

VOIGT

Well?

Another long drag on the cigarette.

MUELLER

Welcome home, Herr Doctor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mueller bares his yellowed teeth.

FAST CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

A door flies open and Peter emerges, disgusted. He steps across the corridor and throws open a window, allowing the night air to wash over him. Mueller steps through the doorway, flashes Peter his sharkish smile and strolls away. As he goes, Mueller passes a long line of aging men and women seated uncomfortably along the wall. Voigt steps from the shadowy room.

VOIGT

Katarina Meissner.

FRAU MEISSNER, a stalwart old woman devoid of emotion, trundles into the room. A commotion arises at a security checkpoint down the hall.

COMBATIVE FEMALE VOICE

The prosecutor approved it!!! Let me through!!!

Peter turns.

PETER

Cory?

CORY

Peter!!!

She pushes past the security men, rushes to Peter and throws her arms around him. They hold one another in a ferocious embrace. Kiss.

CORY

Oh, Peter --

She leans back, inspecting him, soaking him in. He's here. He's real. He's alive. She sees the scrape above his eye.

CORY

What did they do to you?

PETER

It's a bump. It's nothing. Are you alright?

CORY

I am now.

He ushers her to an unoccupied bench.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Peter -- the fight I had to get in here. What's going on?

PETER

Baumgarten madness. And Voigt is taking it all seriously.

(his frustration)

All they need is one discrepancy -- one tiny detail that doesn't match.

Which gives her pause.

CORY

And what if... what if they can't find anything?

PETER

They will. And then we're going home.

Frau Meissner steps from the room, in her eyes the terror of having seen a ghost.

FRAU MEISSNER

No, no. No, no, no.

VOIGT

(emerging behind her)

Frau Meissner --

FRAU MEISSNER

That man is not our Josef!

She flees down the hall, leaving Cory profoundly unnerved.

EXT. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE - MORNING

A convoy moves with police escort through the historic government district to the Justice Ministry. Baumgarten is moved under heavy guard into the building. Voigt supervises, ignoring the shouting Reporters.

REPORTERS

(overlapping)

Herr Voigt, over here!/It's been a week -- why the delay?/Is it true a decision will be made today?

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Dozens of experts around a long table, at the head of which stands Voigt. Photographs of two handwritten documents are projected on a large screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRITISH ANALYST

... Note the minor differences in loop width, here and here -- noticeable yet consistent with the normal evolution over time of an individual's --

VOIGT

Professor, please. Your conclusion.

BRITISH ANALYST

(a beat)

If this is a forgery, it's the best we've ever seen.

Voigt turns to another of the assembled.

VOIGT

DNA?

GENETICIST

We have no genetic sample from Mengele himself. Period. So we're forced to rely on relatives. All we can say is that the subject is related in some way to the Mengele family -- with a genetic match roughly comparable to that of the Embu remains.

A beat.

VOIGT

Dental records.

ANOTHER EXPERT

We're still checking but so far his story about the cousin holds.

VOIGT

Professor Krill.

The screen behind Voigt lights up with two new photographs, one of Josef Mengele as a fresh young SS captain, the other a current likeness of Heinz Baumgarten.

KRILL

The purpose of this exercise is to compare measurements taken between fixed points on each face, looking of course for any detectable differences.

VOIGT

And what differences did you detect?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRILL

Well, of course I didn't detect any or
we'd all be home now, wouldn't we?

(then)

Watch this.

A ghostly X-ray image of a skull separates from the photo of Baumgarten and glides into the space between the photos.

KRILL

An X-ray of Baumgarten's skull... Now
we overlay it.

The X-ray image floats toward the youthful photo of Mengele, overlapping until it achieves a perfect match. Peter stares at the screen.

VOIGT

We launched this investigation
believing it would last fewer than 24
hours. And yet one week later -- here
we are.

(a beat)

In the face of the evidence we've
seen, can any one of you make a
persuasive case that Heinz Baumgarten
is not in fact Josef Mengele?

Silence.

VOIGT

A decision must be taken. We try this
man as Mengele or we let him go.

ANOTHER VOICE

Herr Prosecutor, please, we're moving
too fast.

AND ANOTHER

What about the Embu remains? The
evidence for Baumgarten is no better
than the evidence for the bones.

VOIGT

No better -- but also no worse?

A reluctant MURMUR of ASSENT.

VOIGT

Then I ask you: what choice do we
have?

Peter sits stock still, unblinking, his imagination ablaze.

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY CORRIDORS - MOMENTS LATER

Voigt leads a troop of officials to a guarded, unmarked door.

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY - SMALL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Baumgarten looks up as the door is thrown open and officials flood in. He rises, eyes dancing with anticipation.

VOIGT
Hauptsturmfuhrer Josef Mengele?

BAUMGARTEN
(crispily)
Yes.

VOIGT
It is my duty to place you under arrest for war crimes, for crimes against minorities, and for crimes against humanity.

Handcuffs are snapped into place. Baumgarten, greatly satisfied, surveys the crowd... looking for someone who isn't there. He's whisked from the room.

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY

Moving under heavy guard.

BAUMGARTEN
Where is Peter Rohm?

The company descends a staircase.

BAUMGARTEN
Peter Rohm -- where is he? Has he been released?

They move through another corridor, stopping before a steel-reinforced door.

BAUMGARTEN
I demand to see my attorney.

The door is unlocked and he's led into:

INT. HOLDING CELL

Where he's uncuffed. Before he realizes what's happening, the officials withdraw and lock the door, leaving Baumgarten disoriented in the shadowed cell. He pounds the door and rages:

BAUMGARTEN
I WANT MY ATTORNEY!!! GET ME PETER ROHM!!!

Baumgarten falls back from the door. For the first time, he looks old and tired and perhaps a little bit frightened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And that's when Peter steps from the shadows.

PETER
I'm not your attorney.
(beat)
I've been released. I'm leaving
Berlin.

Recovering his equilibrium with astounding speed, Baumgarten turns.

BAUMGARTEN
How nice for you. Why are you still
here?

PETER
I'd like an answer before I go. Why
me?

Baumgarten considers.

BAUMGARTEN
I like my question better.

Baumgarten crosses to a simple bed where he removes his suit coat and folds it with precision.

BAUMGARTEN
You're a starved fish, Peter.
Circling the worm. Longing to bite
but terrified that inside you'll find
a hook. Am I Josef Mengele... or am I
not? You don't know.

Peter turns for the door. Calls.

PETER
Guard!

BAUMGARTEN
And if I am Mengele, what then? Will
you swim away, little fish?
(right at Peter)
You're incapable of it or you'd be
gone already.

Peter turns back. Outraged.

PETER
You broke into my home, you kidnapped
me, you slandered me in front of the
world.

Baumgarten steps to an exposed toilet where he tears off a length of toilet paper and folds it into a neat pad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAUMGARTEN

I'm a sick old man. I do nothing.

Baumgarten dampens the pad of toilet paper and begins polishing his shoe. Peter raps loudly on the door.

PETER

Guard!

The door opens.

BAUMGARTEN

Why you, Peter?

Peter waits.

BAUMGARTEN

Because you're Germany's most eminent attorney? Not at all. Did you think I needed you to -- what -- defend me?

(emphatic)

I don't want it. You hear me? I want no defense.

Peter waves the guard off. The door closes.

PETER

Why then?

BAUMGARTEN

You were selected for one reason only. You're known to be that rarest of creatures. An honest man.

Finished with the first shoe, Baumgarten polishes the other, taking an intimate tone.

BAUMGARTEN

I'll tell you a secret. I've come to tell my story. To tell it all. Exactly what I did at Auschwitz and why. A thing that's never been done.

He finishes the second shoe and straightens. He speaks with dazzling intensity.

BAUMGARTEN

Help me, Peter. Help me tell the truth.

PETER

Josef Mengele doesn't return after fifty years to make a confession.

BAUMGARTEN

To tell the truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Baumgarten cranks on the water and vigorously washes his hands.

PETER

What truth? The selections? The gassings? The butchery in the laboratory?

BAUMGARTEN

The truth!

(exuberantly)

I deny nothing! I'm ashamed of nothing!

PETER

You would take responsibility for all those crimes?

BAUMGARTEN

Crimes, Peter? Crimes?

He cranks off the faucets and turns, holding his wet hands high like a surgeon who's just scrubbed.

BAUMGARTEN

We'll have to see about that.

Peter is repulsed by the magnitude of this man's perverse arrogance. He reaches for the door.

BAUMGARTEN

Naturally you have a great deal to consider. So many loved ones. You don't want to bring harm to any of them.

Peter's jaw tightens.

PETER

What are you saying?

BAUMGARTEN

Only that you have a great deal to consider.

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY ELEVATOR

Quitting time. The elevator descends, packed with departing workers. At the rear of the elevator stands Peter, bone tired and shaken to his core.

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY - GROUND FLOOR LOBBY

The elevator doors slide open and passengers exit. Peter is the last to step into the lobby. A woman's arms encircle him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Peter.

He wraps her in a fierce embrace.

CORY

Oh, thank God. They really let you go.

He pulls her toward the door.

PETER

Let's get out of here.

CORY

Peter. We need to call home.

He sees her face. Stops. Something's wrong.

CORY

Your mother called. They can't find your niece Kat.

Peter's blood freezes.

PETER

Little Kat?

He reaches for his cell phone.

CORY

She and the boys were at the soccer field. They all ran home but Kat never got there.

PETER

(dialing)

How long ago was this?

CORY

I don't know, a couple of hours. When I talked to your mother, they were checking with friends.

INT. MAX AND HILDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Max picks up the RINGING PHONE.

MAX

Rohm house.

A police officer crosses the room behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Peter!

(and)

No, no, false alarm. Everything here
is wonderful.

FOLLOW the police officer TO the next room where Peter's
sister clutches 5-year-old Kat.

MAX

She's back... No, it was stupid,
really. She got lost on the way home
and a young man helped her. He drove
her around until she saw a house she
knew. Ja. Brought her right to our
door.

The officer speaks to Hilde. She signs a paper.

INT. JUSTICE MINISTRY LOBBY

Peter hangs up. Tells Cory:

PETER

She's fine. She's home. It was
nothing, completely innocent.

Words he has difficulty believing.

EXT. JUSTICE MINISTRY - DAY

News crews press in around Peter, shouting questions as he
and Cory exit. Ignoring them, he pushes forward. In the
street a car passes, the young men inside shouting, hooting
and waving an Imperial German flag. Peter turns back to gaze
darkly at the upper floors of the old building. Wondering.
He finally allows Cory to pull him away.

INT. BERLIN AIR TERMINAL - AFTERNOON

Peter and Cory move in a line of passengers through the
airport security check. Peter's quiet, his mood dark. Cory
watches him uncertainly.

CORY

I was afraid you would decide to stay.

PETER

(beat)

Why would I do that?

CORY

To do what you've always talked about.
Find out what turned our neighbor into
a butcher.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter says nothing.

CORY

Peter -- if that man is Mengele, he was our neighbor by accident. He has no connection to us.

PETER

I keep trying to believe that.

CORY

And now you're going home.

She kisses him on the cheek. A quick, sweet kiss full of gratitude and relief.

INT. AIRPORT MEN'S ROOM

Peter stands at a urinal. When he finishes, he turns and crosses to a row of sinks where a knot of men is gathering around something taped to the mirror.

INSERT - A PHOTO BLOW-UP

Peter's niece Kat. She's surrounded by a half-dozen young men, their faces cropped from the photo but their arms raised in obvious Nazi salutes.

PETER

shoves through the group, rips the photo from the mirror and studies it in fury.

INT. AIR TERMINAL

Cory looks up from a newspaper as Peter returns. One look tells her something is desperately wrong.

CORY

What?

EXT. FOG-BOUND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FORTRESS - LATE AFTERNOON

Fog shrouds the ancient stone towers and soaring ramparts. Across the road, Peter climbs from a taxi.

INT. FORTRESS GATEWAY

Official notices and warnings adorn the walls at the entrance to this federal facility. Armed police guards swing open the giant door to admit Peter.

INT. FORTRESS - OPULENT BANQUET HALL - LATE AFTERNOON

The stone walls are hung with medieval tapestries.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Down the center of the room extends a long wooden table. Peter sits stiffly on one side, waiting, until a door opens and guards shepherd prisoner Baumgarten in. He sits opposite Peter. Smiles.

BAUMGARTEN

Miss your plane?

Peter slaps a legal pad on the table, trembling with rage.

PETER

Josef Mengele on multiple occasions injected dye into the eyes of unседated prisoners. Did you inject dye into the eyes of unседated prisoners?

Beat. Then, as if the question had never been asked:

BAUMGARTEN

How familiar are you with the medical habits of the Dutch?

Peter repeats, hard and cold:

PETER

Did you inject dye into the eyes of unседated prisoners?

BAUMGARTEN

I'll happily catalogue my experiments for you. But it's the Dutch physicians we must --

PETER

(overriding)

Josef Mengele kept the eyes of deceased prisoners pinned to a board like butterflies. Did you keep such a board?

Baumgarten remains genteel.

BAUMGARTEN

Medical studies often require the collection of specimens. Now please listen. Medicine in the Netherlands --

PETER

Josef Mengele personally selected up to 400,000 men, women and children for death by gassing. Did you select these individuals for death?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Baumgarten regards Peter with his own quiet fury.

BAUMGARTEN

I thought you wanted to understand.

PETER

Did you select these individuals for death?

(and again)

Answer the question: Did you select these individuals for death?

And finally it comes, an explosion:

BAUMGARTEN

YES, PETER! YES! I DID IT! I DID IT ALL!!! I CONFESS EVERYTHING!!!

The ferocity of the outburst silences Peter. Baumgarten stands.

BAUMGARTEN

Walk with me.

A faint, almost subliminal sound begins, a SLOW, THROBBING HISS.

EXT. FORTRESS PARAPET

Fog hangs thick atop the high wall where Peter walks uneasily with Baumgarten in the fading light, shadowed by a trio of guards. The HISS is louder.

BAUMGARTEN

Do you know, Peter, how many doctors staffed Auschwitz?

PETER

Not the exact figure. Five. Six.

BAUMGARTEN

The exact figure is 22. Myself... and 21 others.

PETER

How many of those others volunteered for duty at Auschwitz? How many met arriving trains to perform selections on their days off? How many others did it sober?

BAUMGARTEN

Medicine is hard work. Not everyone has the stamina.

Baumgarten turns down a narrow stairway.

EXT. INNER WARD

A courtyard within the fortress. The disquieting HISS BUILDS.

BAUMGARTEN

Are you familiar with the work of Karl Bindong and Alfred Hioche?

Peter isn't. And can't fathom its possible relevance.

BAUMGARTEN

Physicians. Years before Hitler, they wrote a book they titled The Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life
(an assignment)
Read it before we meet again.

Before Peter can protest:

BAUMGARTEN

Bindong and Hioche saw incurable patients, suffering patients, patients whose lives had lost all meaning. To these patients, the physician offered nothing but prolonged misery.

They near a compact citadel at the center of the ward, the place of last defense. The RHYTHMIC HISS seems to emanate from within.

BAUMGARTEN

Unless -- and here is the book's genius -- unless the physician abandoned the slavish pursuit of life for life's sake and instead granted these patients release.

(beat)

Sometimes, argued the authors, ruled by mercy and compassion, the physician must kill.

Baumgarten reaches the entrance to the inner citadel. He turns toward Peter.

BAUMGARTEN

In the days before the war, everyone in German medicine understood this.

Peter can't believe it.

PETER

That's your defense? Auschwitz as popular medicine? You're insane. I've known medical people from those years who never accepted --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAUMGARTEN

(overlapping)

Oh, you've known people? Who have you known?

PETER

Individuals of principle. Individuals inalterably opposed --

BAUMGARTEN

Who?

PETER

(combative)

My mother for one.

BAUMGARTEN

Your mother was a doctor?

PETER

A nurse. At the Wuerzbach Children's Clinic in Berlin.

BAUMGARTEN

(astonished)

The Wuerzbach Children's Clinic... really?

(slow, secret smile)

Well ask her. I'm sure she can tell you.

With startling vitality Baumgarten shoves open the heavy door.

INT. CITADEL - CONTINUOUS ACTION

An eerie relic filled with deep shadows. The THROBBING HISS is much louder here. Baumgarten hastens forward.

PETER

(provoked)

My mother worked for 30 years at a school for the mentally handicapped -- contributing to lives your book would have dismissed as meaningless.

BAUMGARTEN

(a look back; caustic)

Do you think I invented Auschwitz? Is that what you think? All the tissue samples I collected -- where do you think they went? Who do you think funded my research?

They've arrived at a narrow stairway. Baumgarten plunges downward. The THROBBING QUICKENS.

ON STAIRWAY

Peter follows Baumgarten down. With every step, the menacing THROBBING INTENSIFIES.

PETER

You maintain that everything Mengele did at Auschwitz was a function of mercy and compassion.

BAUMGARTEN

Without exception.

PETER

The work of a dutiful physician.

BAUMGARTEN

Yes, Peter. Yes.

PETER

(hard)

Explain Greta Holtz.

Baumgarten's eyes narrow. He can't place the name.

PETER

At the railroad siding. She was selected for gassing.

Baumgarten searches his memory.

PETER

She didn't cooperate.

Before them now, all has become utter blackness. The HISS is now a ROAR. Peter must shout.

PETER

She wouldn't stay on the truck. Josef Mengele would remember.

Baumgarten looks up sharply. At that instant, the ROAR CRESCENDOS and an enormous black mass THUNDERS out of the darkness, blowing dust and soot all around them -- a mountainous steam locomotive scarcely an arm's length away. A string of decrepit CATTLE CARS follows. Between the cars, flashes of light are seen.

The last car passes and a grim scene is unveiled across the tracks: halted on a siding, a train disgorges a procession of ragged passengers. Shouting soldiers herd them toward a raised platform. Atop the platform stands a young SS officer, polished cane in white-gloved hands. Josef Mengele.

Peter and Baumgarten remain visible in f.g. as passengers are made to pass before Mengele, who divides them into two groups.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The group on his left is crowded onto open-bed trucks.

Mengele is distracted by a disturbance that has erupted around a young woman who resists as soldiers force her onto a truck. Once aboard, she climbs over the side and drops back to the ground. Soldiers surround her.

PETER

Mengele had selected her for death.
She resisted. He was outraged.

Baumgarten watches as young Mengele leaps down from his platform and, with the back of his white-gloved hand, strikes the woman. He shouts furiously as the soldiers wrestle her back aboard the truck.

BAUMGARTEN

(deeply unsettled)

Throughout my tour at Auschwitz, I
never harmed anyone. I can say this
absolutely and categorically.

The truck begins to drive away. The woman throws herself over the side, clambers to her feet and runs blindly. Within seconds Mengele is upon her, striking her repeatedly with his cane, brutally and without mercy.

At the first blow, Baumgarten turns his back.

BAUMGARTEN

Everything I did was done with the
utmost courtesy and professional
concern.

The woman falls and Mengele kicks her savagely.

BAUMGARTEN

Some duties required great courage.

When at last she lies still before him, Mengele turns and marches back to the platform. Soldiers throw the bloodied body onto the truck.

PETER

This was medicine?

BAUMGARTEN

(with mounting fervor)

Do you know what life was like at
Auschwitz? Hell. A hell in which
children and the old and weak suffered
unspeakably -- with no hope for
survival. A hell from which I offered
the only escape.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAUMGARTEN (CONT'D)

(then)

Don't be naive, Peter. Medicine will never conquer every disease. And there will always come times when caring physicians must kill.

(finally, barely a whisper)

This is the defense of Josef Mengele.

Peter looks at the old man as if at Satan himself.

PETER

Behold the Angel of Death.

INT. FORTRESS - MENGELE'S CELL - NIGHT

An austere, windowless accommodation of cold stone. Toilet, bed, chair and writing table. Separated by a wall of bars, Peter and Mengele sit facing away from one another. Peter's head is down, his eyes fixed on the floor. Mengele appears exhausted. After a lengthy silence:

MENGELE

It's terrifying, Peter, these morons strutting around with shaved heads and baseball bats, playing dress-up like overgrown children. Denying anyone died at Auschwitz. Who do they think is going to believe that? Imbeciles.

(and)

So easy to manipulate. But impossible to control.

Mengele stands and steps to the bars.

MENGELE

The size of your family -- it puts you in an extremely dangerous position. As a father, a son, a husband -- I sympathize.

Peter never speaks.

MENGELE

You can put a police guard on every dear one of them and then by some tragic mix-up at the pharmacy your father receives the wrong medication for his cardiac arrhythmia. Simple as that.

Now Peter, full of thundering contempt, stands and faces Mengele, only the bars between them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

No member of my family must ever be threatened again. Agreed?

Mengele smiles with his eyes.

MENGELE

I think, Peter, you are being dragged kicking and screaming exactly where you've always wanted to go.

HOLD.

EXT. BERLIN AIRPORT - NIGHT

Peter hurries from a taxi into the terminal.

INT. BERLIN AIR TERMINAL - GATE AREA - NIGHT

A flight is about to board. Cory looks like she's just been told the most tasteless joke of her life.

CORY

Peter, be serious.

She chokes out a strangled, disbelieving laugh.

CORY

You agreed to defend Josef Mengele?

PETER

Not to defend him. To help him tell the absolute truth.

Cory doesn't know what to say. This is too outrageous to comprehend.

CORY

I'm waiting for the punch line.

PETER

There is no punch line. This is something I need to do.

CORY

No. NO. What you need to do is get on this plane with me and go home.

Peter wants nothing more than to do exactly that, but all he can say is:

PETER

I can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Of course you can. Peter, you had one foot on the plane this afternoon. What happened?

Peter turns away. Agonizing. Turns back.

PETER

Do you remember that story when I was nine or ten and I went sledding and crashed into my friend Erik's tree?

CORY

Oh, Peter. Not this. Not now.

PETER

And Erik's sweet old uncle carried me inside and held me on his lap until my parents came? And sang Christmas carols in that awful voice, "Silent night, holy night," and I told my mother I thought he was the kindest, most wonderful man I'd ever met?

CORY

Peter -- I remember.

PETER

Do you remember what she told me?

CORY

That during the war he'd been an officer at Treblinka.

PETER

She told me that that kind, wonderful man was a killer.

(beat)

She told me that my home town was full of killers. And that the cruelest and most monstrous of them all was a doctor. He was a doctor. How does a thing like that happen?

Cory studies him. No sale.

CORY

Peter, what happened here this afternoon?

He doesn't answer. Cory's flight is called. A line of passengers forms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

This doesn't make sense. You're
risking your practice. Risking your
reputation. Risking us. What aren't
you telling me?

Peter is silent. Cory's fury boils over.

CORY

Peter, these people beat you and
drugged you and shipped you halfway
around the world -- and you could have
died. And now you want to go back for
more?!

(stands)

You'd better figure out what you're
doing before you destroy everything
that matters to you.

She heads for the line of passengers.

ON CORY

In line with angry tears. Peter watches her for a long
moment before crossing to her. When at length he speaks, it
is with a new and far more vulnerable tone.

PETER

Last summer, when your editor tried to
kill herself -- Do you remember what
you told me then, about needing to
understand why?

CORY

I remember that I talked to her. I
wrote about it. And I got past it.

PETER

But what if -- what if that same
summer both your sisters had walked
out on their families and checked
themselves into psychiatric hospitals?
And then you got a call that your
mother had slit her wrists?

CORY

(appalled)

Peter --

PETER

Wouldn't you start to wonder?
(ground zero)
If it could happen to you?

She catches the brokenness in his voice and turns to really
look at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

This is no idle curiosity at work, but something far more visceral, issuing from deep within.

CORY

What are you saying? You're afraid
you're going to turn into someone like
Josef Mengele?

He can't answer, but what she sees in his wide eyes softens her.

CORY

But don't you know how crazy that is?
Nothing's like that is ever going to
happen to you.

PETER

How do you know?

CORY

(hand to his cheek)
Because you are a good man.

PETER

Am I?

CORY

The very best.

PETER

Have you ever thought how many
thousands of Germans it took to gas
six million Jews? Don't you think any
of those people started out like us?
How do good people go bad, Cory? I've
thought about it since the day I met
that kind old killer... but never...
ever... have I found an answer.

(again)

How do people go bad?

Peter's soul laid bare before her, Cory looks at him with deep compassion.

PETER

Maybe Josef Mengele can tell me. And
maybe then I can get past it.

For the first time, Cory sees the inevitability of it all. She makes a huge and unwelcome decision, equal parts outrage and devotion. She steps out of line. Steps to Peter.

CORY

Damn you.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The PHONE RINGS unanswered. Peter enters and hurries to the phone.

PETER

Rohm here... Yes, Horst.

INTERCUT:

INT. BERLIN HOSPITAL - ICU - ON VOIGT

He's grim.

VOIGT

How serious are you about taking this case to trial?

PETER

Why -- what's happening?

VOIGT

After you left him tonight, the old man collapsed in his cell. They think it's a stroke.

Behind Voigt, medical personnel attend a prone patient. Federal police nearby.

PETER

(disbelief)

I was just with him -- How bad is he?

VOIGT

Bad. On top of the stroke it looks like he's full of tumors.

PETER

Cancer?

VOIGT

Everywhere but his eyeballs. He had to have known for months.

PETER

Is he... Is he conscious? Can he talk?

Voigt looks across the ICU to Mengele, run through with probes and tubes, lying very still.

VOIGT

Right now, he can't do much of anything. He's drooling a little. I'm calling because the presiding judge was just here. We go to trial Monday morning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Monday?! Three days?! Impossible.

VOIGT

We have no choice. If we don't start Monday, we may not start at all.

Cory has entered behind Peter. He looks to her with unbearable heaviness.

VOIGT

Rohm? Are you there?

PETER

(finally)

I'm here.

IN THE CLOUDS

White wisps in the morning blue. A TELEPHONE is DIALED.

PETER (V.O.)

Yes, I'm trying to locate a Dr. Karl Gross. Is he at this number?

CAMERA DESCENDS, taking in the top of a stately old building.

HILLMANN (V.O.)

Dr. Heinrich Knaupt. I was told you might know his whereabouts.

PETER (V.O.)

No, no, that's Beckmann. Dr. Julius Beckmann. B - E - C - K...

CAMERA CONTINUES its GLIDE DOWN the side of the grand structure.

HILLMANN (V.O.)

We're interested in talking to your grandfather.... I'm very sorry, I didn't know.

STREET NOISE SURGES as CAMERA REACHES ground level, REVEALING a scene crawling with hawkers, gawkers, protesters, press and police. SUPERIMPOSE:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING, BERLIN

CAMERA PUSHES FORWARD, PAST protestors holding signs that declare "NEVER AGAIN," BETWEEN television news crews, THROUGH a knot of tattooed thugs in leather jackets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER (V.O.)

How's the patient?

(frustrated beat)

Call me if there's any change.

CAMERA MOVES INTO the noisy lobby of the courthouse where officers perform body searches on everyone who enters.

INT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - COURTROOM NO. 700 - MORNING

The gallery is packed. Cory sits near the back, ill-at-ease. Behind her sits Mueller. A contingent of armed federal police sweeps in, followed by a medical team tending a gurney on which lies Mengele, plugged into a battery of portable monitors, eyes open but vacant, staring down and to the left. They whisk Mengele into a glass enclosure, a compact, bulletproof intensive care unit. Looking like he hasn't slept in days, Peter turns to Hillmann.

PETER

We have nothing, Felix. The trial's beginning and we have nothing.

He shoves a sheet of legal paper toward Hillmann.

PETER

Check out these names.

HILLMANN

Is it any use? Every doctor who ever studied or worked with him has died or disappeared. We've got to try something else.

PETER

The defendant's in a coma. Unless he wakes up... there is nothing else.

Peter stuffs the list into Hillmann's hand.

PETER

Go.

Hillmann moves off. Five solemn JUDGES sweep in and take seats behind the bench. There is no jury.

PRESIDING JUDGE

On the record in the matter of Germany vs. Mengele, let the record show the defendant is present... Herr Rohm present for the defense... Herr Voigt for Germany.

Voigt sits with a team of assistants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDGE

Herr Voigt, you may proceed.

Voigt rises with assurance, his manner straightforward and untheatrical.

VOIGT

Your Honors, Germany will show that the defendant, Josef Mengele, stood at the railroad sidings of Auschwitz and knowingly selected thousands upon thousands of individuals for death by gassing.

(beat)

That he performed fiendish experiments unparalleled in cruelty.

After each charge Voigt pauses, allowing its full weight to register. A damning cadence.

VOIGT

That he trafficked in the corpses of his victims, dispensing body parts like Christmas gifts.

All attention in the courtroom is focused on the glass enclosure.

VOIGT

That he stood on the abdomens of pregnant women causing their fetuses to be expelled.

Cory recoils. Peter closes his eyes.

VOIGT

Germany will show that nobody made the defendant do these things. He did them because he wanted to, with the enthusiasm of a man who loved his work.

Voigt's hand comes to rest atop an unmarked cardboard box on his table.

VOIGT

Half a century has passed since the defendant committed his crimes, and most witnesses have died. We're left with their sworn testimony --

(pulls a yellowed
file from the box)

-- affidavits describing in horrifying detail the crimes they suffered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Voigt stuffs the file back in the box and carries it to the glass enclosure to gaze in at the accused.

VOIGT

Because of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding this trial, Germany has agreed to call only a limited number of witnesses. However, to do justice to the multitude of witnesses and victims we're unable to hear --

Voigt strides across the courtroom, CAMERA SWEEPING WITH him to reveal a mountain of boxes stacked to the ceiling, a staggering sight. Voigt adds his box to the mound.

VOIGT

-- Germany submits their testimony for the record.

Voigt takes his seat. The Presiding Judge looks to Peter.

PRESIDING JUDGE

For the defense?

Peter looks at the motionless defendant, the tantalizing stare, the head titled down and to the left as if he might simply be lost in thought. Peter turns back. Impotent.

PETER

Nothing at this time.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Germany may call its first witness.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM

Hillmann's bent over a telephone, papers and phone books spread across the bed.

HILLMANN

(into phone)

You have no idea where he went after he retired? He never phoned, never wrote?

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - ON STAND - ESTELLE

A Frenchwoman in her sixties. Voigt stands before her.

ESTELLE

(the memory vivid)

We'd been on the train six days when the doors finally opened and everyone began jumping out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESTELLE (CONT'D)

Soldiers shouted at us and pushed us into line. Up ahead, an officer was separating us into two groups. When we got close enough to see this officer, I was surprised that he was a handsome young man with a kind face. I'd been frightened by the soldiers but this face reassured me...

Peter looks up, stirred by something in this testimony.

ESTELLE

He was whistling... and he pointed my sister and her baby to one side and me to the other. I spoke up and said she's my sister and couldn't we stay together. He said my sister was going to a special family camp, but we'd see one another later... I waved goodbye to Elisse, and the officer started whistling again...

VOIGT

Did you in fact ever see your sister or niece after that?

ESTELLE

Of course not. There's no record they ever came to Auschwitz...

VOIGT

Do you know the officer's name?

ESTELLE

(flat)
Mengele.

VOIGT

No further questions.

Voigt returns to his seat.

JUDGE

Herr Rohm?

Peter gazes at the inert defendant. Makes an excruciating decision. He approaches the witness, respectful... but curious.

PETER

You said the soldiers were cruel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESTELLE

They had whips and were beating people to make them move faster, beating even the children.

PETER

Did you see Dr. Mengele beat anyone?

ESTELLE

No.

PETER

Did you hear him encourage the soldiers who were doing the beating?

ESTELLE

No.

PETER

During your encounter with Dr. Mengele at the train ramp, did he strike you as a madman or a lunatic?

ESTELLE

(a beat)

Not at all.

PETER

He stood out, you said, as a kind man.

She thinks about that. Reluctant.

ESTELLE

He seemed to care about us...

Peter's eyes find Cory in the gallery. This work turns his stomach.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - HILLMANN

On the phone, aggravated beyond words.

HILLMANN

He's your husband. You want me to believe you don't know how to contact him?! Do you understand that this is a criminal proceeding?

INT. COURTROOM - ANOTHER GERMAN MAN ON STAND

Seventies, a wisp of a man. Voigt's before him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERMAN MAN #2

Mengele woke me at about two AM and ordered me to set up lights and a phonograph. I'd barely finished when SS men brought hundreds of female prisoners out under the lights. It was a cold night, some snow on the ground, but all the women were naked. Mengele gave me a record album and told me to play it as loud as I could.

VOIGT

What happened when the music started?

GERMAN MAN #2

He made the women dance... and then he walked among them, pointing out the most pathetic ones. Those he pointed out were taken to die.

NEW ANGLE

Peter with the same witness.

PETER

You said that when Dr. Mengele examined the women, he pointed out 'the most pathetic ones.' Do you mean he was looking for clumsy dancers?

GERMAN MAN #2

I mean he was looking for the weak ones, the sick ones, the ones who couldn't keep moving.

PETER

The weak ones and the sick ones. So his selections were based entirely on the women's physical condition... on medical criteria?

GERMAN MAN #2

More or less.

Peter is unable to mask his own revulsion at his hideous task.

PETER

Thank you.

INSIDE GLASS ENCLOSURE

Court in recess. Mengele lies propped in the bed, unchanged. Opposite him stands Peter, darkly watching the old man breathe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter squats, gets into Mengele's line of sight, gazes intensely into his eyes, watching, wondering.

HILLMANN (O.S.)

Peter --

Hillmann, energized, rushes toward him. Peter meets him outside the enclosure.

HILLMANN

I think we've got a live one --
(hands him a scrap
of paper)

It was left at the hotel desk.

PETER

(reading)

'Midnight tonight. Ravenstrasse 122.
Stand before the lion' -- signed
'Beckmann.'

(mystified)

Beckmann -- the professor?

HILLMANN

He's on your list. Mengele sent him
shipments of 'biological material'
from Auschwitz -- club feet, skeletons
of hunchbacks.

Electrified, Peter gathers his papers. From the back of the courtroom, Mueller watches.

EXT. BERLIN STREET - NIGHT

An ancient section of the city. Old shops stretch along one side of the street; a vast cathedral rises on the other. The headlights of a lone car sweep around a distant corner.

PETER (V.O.)

'Stand before the lion.'

(then)

What time is it?

HILLMANN (V.O.)

Five to midnight.

PETER (V.O.)

Do you see 122?

The car pulls alongside the church. A flashlight searches and comes to rest on three digits above the cathedral entrance: 122.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

A graveyard encircles the church.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter and Hillmann move to an iron gate.

PETER

Hey, Felix -- see any lions?

HILLMANN

No lions.

PETER

Keep your eyes open.

He pushes open the gate. Two steps in, he's stopped by a FERAL HISSING. Hillmann leaps back as Peter probes wildly with the flashlight, catching the red glint of feline eyes before settling on a bloated tomcat. The CAT MOANS with an almost human cry, then waddles languidly out the gate.

Sharing an edgy chuckle, they traverse the graveyard to the church entrance. Peter tries the door. It's locked. He shines his light through a window, sees nothing.

Easing along the side of the church, they round a corner and a lighted sculpture comes into view, stopping them in their tracks: a placid lamb snuggled against a huge stone lion.

PETER

'And the lion shall lie down with the lamb...'

They hurry through the tombstones to the base of the statue. Peter shines his light around.

HILLMANN

(calls)

Dr. Beckmann? Hello? Dr. Beckmann?

(checks watch)

Midnight straight up. Could we have missed him?

Peter's light has come to rest on a grave marker directly before the statue.

PETER

(darkly)

We didn't miss him.

GRAVE MARKER

"JULIUS BECKMANN, Beloved Husband, Father, Physician, 1906-1987."

BACK TO SCENE

Hillmann gives Peter a sick, betrayed look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Let's get some sleep.

They turn to go. DISEMBODIED LAUGHTER RINGS OUT. In the shadow of the stone lion, something moves. Peter and Hillmann take an involuntary step backward as a tall, skeletal wraith emerges.

PETER

Mueller. Of course.

The old attorney takes up a position directly behind Beckmann's gravestone.

MUELLER

(mocking)

"Dr. Beckmann?... Dr. Beckmann?!"

(smiles)

Regrettably, Dr. Beckmann is... indisposed.

Peter is furious.

PETER

Do you know how much of my time you just wasted? We're a week into the trial and I have nothing.

MUELLER

Nothing but a big phone bill. Oh yes, I've heard all about your fruitless search for witnesses. You call them, they call me --

(beat)

It's too bad you can't chat with Beckmann. He was so fond of our friend.

(beat)

Did you know he obtained money from the German Research Council to build the doctor a laboratory at Auschwitz?

PETER

I know something about what he got for his money -- the little packages that came in the mail...

MUELLER

And what should he have done, thrown priceless scientific material in the garbage? For him, it was an opportunity to understand human disease. Perhaps even to ease suffering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

(acidly)

Will he testify to that in court?
Wake up, Mueller. You're an attorney.
I need someone I can put on the stand.

MUELLER

Maybe you should take your client's
advice and recruit some nice Dutch
doctors.

PETER

What the hell can Dutch doctors tell
us? They resisted the Nazi medicine
-- many of them to the death.

MUELLER

No, Peter. Not then. Now.

Then Mueller waves it off, as if he doesn't mean to be taken
seriously. He examines the grave marker.

MUELLER

Did you know that even before the war,
good Dr. Beckmann lobbied Hitler for
permission to extend mercy to a number
of children under his care?

PETER

(to Hillmann; he's
heard enough)

Let's get out of here.

Peter and Hillmann start across the churchyard. Mueller
allows them a few steps before dropping his bombshell.

MUELLER

Of course this was before the
university. While he was still
director at Wuerzbach.

The information has its desired effect: Peter turns back as
if shot. And can't stop himself from asking:

PETER

Beckmann was at Wuerzbach?

MUELLER

Didn't you know?

PETER

(incredulous)

The Wuerzbach Children's Clinic?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER

(offhand)

He had an excellent staff. Very supportive. Very forward-thinking.

(then)

I thought you would have known... you know, because of your mother.

Peter's heart has stopped. Mueller smiles his smile.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DEAD OF NIGHT

Cory's asleep. Peter lies beside her, unable to still his troubled thoughts. He picks up the bedside phone then just as quickly replaces it. Agonized, he stares at the phone before lifting the receiver and dialing a number he knows by heart.

PETER

Hello -- it's me... I'm sorry to call so -- No, everything's fine. We're both --

Wakened by his call, Cory rolls over.

PETER

I was just... I couldn't sleep and --

He falls into silence. Cory watches him until:

PETER

I'm sorry, Mama. I shouldn't have called.

(finally)

I just needed to hear your voice.

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - DAY

Once again Cory sits in the back of the gallery. On the stand is RACHEL, a woman in her sixties, well-dressed, composed. She has no right arm.

RACHEL

All his twins they kept in a place we called the Zoo. Him we called...

(a look toward Mengele)

Him we called Uncle Pepi.

Mengele's arms lie neatly at his sides. His gaze remains fixed as before, down and to the left.

RACHEL

He made sure we got enough to eat. Soft beds. Clothes. Ribbons for our hair. And chocolate.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Always there was chocolate when Uncle Pepi visited his children. We were eleven, my sister Sarah and I, and we thought... we thought he was so handsome...

(trails off as she
glances again toward
the enclosure)

One day he came for Sarah and me. He made it a game. Follow the leader. He made us laugh... We followed to the hospital where they measured us, it was so strange, our noses and ears and around our heads. And they said... They said take off your dresses so Uncle Pepi can look at you.

(shivers)

He looked... at everything. Comparing every possible detail, looking, looking, looking.

Mengele's nurse glances at a monitor, makes a notation. No change.

RACHEL

When he finished looking, he strapped us to examination tables and made little marks with his pen, one on my arm and one on Sarah's. He said be brave, it's going to hurt a little, and he cut with a knife along the marks. Then he smeared something in the cuts. We didn't cry and he said it made him happy that we were so brave.

(her composure falters)

That we were such good girls.

She blinks at Voigt, who waits patiently. The courtroom is silent.

RACHEL

I woke up that night back in the Zoo, soaked in sweat. My arm was burning, all red and swollen around the cut. Sarah's was worse. We begged to see Uncle Pepi, to get medicine, but they said he was busy. We waited for three days before he sent for us. Three days. Forever. Sarah's fingers were black, and when he saw that my fingers hadn't turned, he was fascinated. We begged him, please help us, do something, we had so much pain.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL (CONT'D)

He told us that we mustn't cry.

(and so she doesn't)

Three days later the camp was
liberated and I never saw him again.

Until today.

(pause)

Sarah died. A Russian doctor took my
arm.

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - LATER

A POLISH WOMAN, 75, testifies. In the glass enclosure, the nurse is not yet aware of a new sound -- her patient's odd WHEEZING.

POLISH WOMAN

(vehemently)

He was an animal. I came to Auschwitz
with two sets of twins, two sons and
two daughters, and he wanted to know
how I got so many twins.

A STRANGLED COUGH from Mengele finally turns the nurse's head. He's moved, arms askew, an IV line torn free.

POLISH WOMAN

'At what age did you first make love?'

'How many lovers did you have beside
your husband?' 'How often are you
with a lover?'

(stands to address

Mengele directly)

I have a question for you, Butcher!

If you love twins so much, why did you
kill mine?!

But her rage turns to horror when the nurse moves aside to reveal that Mengele's head has turned so that he now looks straight back at his accuser. He coughs.

INSIDE GLASS ENCLOSURE - MOMENTS LATER

Nurse and doctor work on Mengele who labors for each breath. His eyes fall on Peter. The old man tries to speak. No words come.

EXT. SUNNY BERLIN STREET - DAY

Peter gazes darkly across the street at a two-story brick building distinguished by the words above the entrance: "THE WUERZBACH CLINIC FOR CHILDREN'S MEDICINE." He teeters between an urge to flee and an inescapable need to know.

TIGHT ON THE FACE OF A CLOWN

Bulbous nose, red lips, a single blue tear. LAUGHTER.

INT. WUERZBACH CHILDREN'S CLINIC - DAY

Children surround the clown, many in wheelchairs, others leaning on walkers or crutches. One slouches in her seat, head hanging to the side, drooling into her lap. Another rocks back and forth, moaning grotesquely. The clown sifts through a boy's hair and produces a tiny white mouse. The boy's eyes grow huge. Gasps of delight. A door opens and Peter steps in.

A hulking teen wearing knee pads and a protective helmet lurches toward Peter with a huge welcoming grin. Peter flinches reflexively. A staff member redirects the patient.

INT. CLINIC CORRIDOR

Peter strides past treatment rooms, patient rooms, an X-ray lab, catching sight everywhere of disabled young patients. He reaches a stairway and ascends.

INT. CLINIC - DIRECTOR'S OUTER OFFICE

The SECRETARY's a brusque, efficient woman of about 60. She's on the phone when Peter enters.

SECRETARY

You'll have to wait until Thursday.
The director will be out of the office
tomorrow.

She hangs up and looks to Peter.

SECRETARY

Yes, how can I help you?

PETER

My name's Peter Rohm. I called.

A half beat, then the Secretary dials a two-digit code and turns away from Peter, speaking with hushed intensity. The door to the inner office opens and DOCTOR FRANK emerges, an energetic, baby-faced man in his thirties.

PETER

Doctor Frank? I'm Peter Rohm --

DOCTOR FRANK

Yes, I know. And as I told you on the
phone, I don't have time to deal with
you now.

Frank continues past Peter and out of the office.

INT. CORRIDOR/STAIRWAY

Peter overtakes the fast-moving Frank on the stairs.

PETER

Doctor, if you could give me even a few minutes --

Frank reaches steps into the X-ray lab. Peter waits impatiently as Frank huddles with another doctor. When the consultation concludes Frank exits the lab and continues down the corridor, Peter at his side.

PETER

I'd like to look at your records for the years Julius Beckmann was here.

DOCTOR FRANK

Where's your court order?

PETER

Am I going to need one?

Frank enters a patient room, peruses a chart, makes a notation, then exits and continues his forced march.

DOCTOR FRANK

We're very busy today. Come back tomorrow.

PETER

Tomorrow? Fine. And when I come back and you're not here -- I'll just start interviewing your employees.

DOCTOR FRANK

You stay away from my employees.

PETER

Why? What are you hiding? What happened here?!

Frank turns on Peter.

DOCTOR FRANK

Nothing happened here! This clinic was founded as a haven for children no one else wanted. We don't kill our patients -- and we never have. Ever. So don't drag us into your defense of that butcher.

The depth of Frank's conviction gives Peter pause. He softens slightly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

I don't intend to drag you into anything, Doctor. My interest here isn't professional. It's personal.

Frank's eyebrows go up. A moment as each man evaluates the other anew.

PETER

How much do you really know about what was done here during the war? Have you been through the records?

DOCTOR FRANK

(just a tad off the point)

Nothing in those records bears on your case.

PETER

Meaning you haven't been through them?

DOCTOR FRANK

(exasperated)

I've only been here eight weeks. I'm a pediatric surgeon, not a historian.

PETER

Then you don't really know anything, do you.

A moment.

DOCTOR FRANK

After you called, I talked to my secretary. She's been here forever. If there'd been killing, she would know.

(and)

She's absolutely reliable.

PETER

Then you wouldn't object if I talked to her myself.

INT. FRANK'S OUTER OFFICE

The PHONE IS RINGING. After three or four rings, the door opens and Frank leads Peter in. He looks around.

DOCTOR FRANK

Karin?

But the Secretary is nowhere to be found. Frank looks inside his inner office. Emerges. Giving Peter an odd look. This isn't right. The PHONE continues to RING.

INT. CLINIC - BASEMENT STAIRWAY

A little-used access to the clinic's basement. Peter and Frank descend to a locked door. Frank awkwardly inserts a key. The old lock resists and he must struggle before it turns and the door swings open. He switches on a light, revealing row upon row of ancient medical files bathed in dust.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Cory's on the phone when Peter blasts in, face grim.

CORY

(to phone)

-- Then let's move that paragraph up... No it doesn't, not if you cut the reference to Munich.

Peter throws things into a suitcase.

CORY

(covers mouthpiece)

What are you doing?

PETER

I have to catch a train.

CORY

(into phone)

I'll call you back.

(quickly hangs up)

What do you mean -- where are you going?

PETER

Home.

He snaps his suitcase and looks at her, sick with unwelcome knowledge. A DIESEL GROWL BUILDS.

EXT. GERMAN COUNTRYSIDE - LATE NIGHT

The ROAR CRESCENDOS. Out of the darkness THUNDERS a DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE trailing a string of passenger cars.

INT. TRAIN - LATE NIGHT

Nearly everyone is asleep. Peter sits awake, staring out as the lights of the countryside flash past. Cory sits beside him, also awake, silent and dismayed.

CLOSE ON DOOR - PRE-DAWN

A fist pounds. The door opens to reveal a sleepy Max.

MAX

Peter --

WIDER

Peter stands on his parents' front porch with Cory.

MAX

What's wrong?

Without a word, Peter enters the house.

INT. MAX AND HILDE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter takes the stairs two at a time.

HILDE (O.S.)

Max?

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter steps into the room. He's trembling.

HILDE

Peter! Are you all right?

Max and Cory arrive in time to hear:

PETER

I've been at Wuerzbach, Mama. Going through old records.

Hilde's mouth opens. No sound comes out.

PETER

In the last half of 1939 -- your first year there -- over 50 children died of 'an adverse reaction to medication.'

(then)

What happened, Mama?... Tell me you didn't know.

But there's no fight in her eyes, no denial. Only great sadness. And shame. Peter deflates like a ruptured balloon, sinking back against the door frame.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER NIGHT

Peter and Hilde face one another across the kitchen table.

HILDE

I was 21 years old when I started at Wuerzbach, straight out of nursing school. In those days the place was full of babies with the most heart-breaking deformities. I'd change their diapers and give them bottles, but at the end of my shift I'd go home and cry because I wanted to do so much more. We all did.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HILDE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Some of the parents had heard rumors of children at other hospitals, severely impaired children, receiving certain medication... certain doses of medication... And they asked us why we couldn't do the same for their children... They were very insistent. And it seemed... at the time it seemed... so wise and... so good.

Peter sags beneath the weight of his mother's words. Finally:

PETER

How were they killed?

HILDE

A sedative was added to the child's water, and after two or three days, after he'd had enough, he just fell asleep...

Peter looks directly at his mother and asks the most horrible question.

PETER

What was your role, Mama?

HILDE

My role...? I was never asked to administer the sedative, if that's what you mean.

(a beat; naked)

But I would have.

Peter's eyes are locked on Hilde. A tear appears. Then he does something unexpected. He moves to his mother, slides his arms around her and holds on.

EXT. ROHM HOUSE - DAWN

Peter and Cory exit the Volvo and walk silently to the house.

INT. ROHM HOUSE

A light is switched on. Peter and Cory stand inside the front door. Laundry is piled on the couch. Dirty dishes and a jug of soured milk are on the table.

CORY

I left in such a hurry.

She begins cleaning up. Peter hasn't moved. Finally:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

While my mother was talking, something came back to me. Something I'd forgotten until now.

(this haunts him)

It was after she told me about Erik's uncle and Treblinka. She said, "You must be careful, Peter. It can happen to anyone."

(beat)

Those were her words.

Cory watches him as he stands thinking about that for a long, long moment. He steps abruptly to a closet, pulls out a cardboard box and heads upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS OFFICE

Peter sweeps a stack of files from his desk into the box. He steps to the file cabinet and jerks open the second drawer, "G-M." It sticks. He yanks furiously, pulling it completely out of the cabinet. It crashes to the floor. Peter picks up files of yellowed pages and dumps them in the box. He digs in the closet for the SS uniform. This also goes in the box.

EXT. ROHM HOUSE - BACK YARD

Peter throws open the back door and crosses the yard to a trash bin. He dumps the box. The SS uniform spills onto the ground. Peter stands over it, head bent low, shoulders heaving.

Cory watches from the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS OFFICE - LATER

Peter enters and picks through the debris. Cory appears in the doorway. He glances up, made uncomfortable by her presence, then returns to his work but is unable to escape the sensation of her eyes upon him.

PETER

What?

Cory shakes her head. Nothing. He steps to his desk and discards computer disks. She keeps watching.

PETER

It's over. You should be thrilled.

CORY

(simply)

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

You told me to stay off this case.
You warned me.

She just keeps watching until he can take it no longer and stops his work, still looking away from her.

PETER

Just say it. What?

Cory waits. At last, her tone unaccusing:

CORY

Explain to me what's going to happen when court resumes and you're not there.

PETER

Felix will just have to handle it.

CORY

Six weeks out of law school -- I didn't know he was ready for a case like this.

PETER

(voice near breaking)

Well neither am I.

If Peter were to look at Cory, he'd see tears in her eyes. He doesn't. Instead, he scoops up the papers and diskettes and starts out of the room.

CORY

So you'll leave it like this -- your mother and Josef Mengele lumped together under the heading "Good people of Gunzburg gone bad."

Peter stops in the doorway. Turns back. And for the first time sees Cory's tears.

CORY

That night at the airport, when you told me you were taking this case -- I had to make a decision. Because I knew that when you go after the truth, you go wherever it leads, no matter what it costs, all the way to the end.

(then)

I hate this, Peter. I hate that you took this case. But I love you. So I chose to come along.

Cory crosses to stand directly before her husband.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Don't leave us halfway there.

He draws a long, uneven breath.

INT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - BASEMENT CORRIDOR - 9 AM

An anxiety-ridden Hillmann charges down a dim and little-trafficked passageway.

INT. TOP-SECURITY BASEMENT HOLDING CELL

A great commotion as guards noisily unlock the cell door and slide it open. In his bed at the center of the cell, Josef Mengele, remarkably alert and exceedingly agitated, strains to see who's arrived. His voice is weak and rasping but he can once again speak.

MENGELE

Is he here?

His left arm lies limp at his side, the left side of his face is unresponsive, and every word comes with difficulty. Hillmann steps into his field of view.

MENGELE

I don't want you. I want Peter.

HILLMANN

I'm sorry... we can't seem to locate him.

MENGELE

Can't locate --

Mengele thinks half a beat.

MENGELE

Get me the prosecutor.

HILLMANN

I beg your --

MENGELE

Voigt. Get him, dammit! I want to talk!

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - 10 AM

A hush in the packed courtroom as Mengele is wheeled into the enclosure. His bed is positioned and a microphone is swung into position. Hillmann sits alone at the defense table, his head in his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESIDING JUDGE

Back on the record in the matter of Germany vs. Mengele. Herr Voigt present for Germany, Herr Hillmann for the defense.

(beat)

Does the defendant understand that if he testifies this morning, it will be as a prosecution witness, against the advice and over the objections of counsel?

MENGELE

I do.

Mengele's VOICE, though frail, is AMPLIFIED so that it fills the room. His WHEEZING, too, is eerily MAGNIFIED.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Has the defendant come to this decision voluntarily, without threat or coercion?

MENGELE

I have.

HILLMANN

Your Honor, please --

PRESIDING JUDGE

(overriding)

Then, in view of the defendant's precarious health and the overriding value of his testimony, the court is going to overrule defense objections.

HILLMANN

(standing)

Your Honor --

PRESIDING JUDGE

Herr Hillmann, the court has noted your strenuous objections.

(beat)

Germany may proceed.

Hillmann sinks helplessly into his seat as Voigt rises and approaches the enclosure. Mengele gazes back with death-defying determination.

VOIGT

Doctor Mengele. During the period May 1943 to January 1945, did you in fact serve as a physician at the Auschwitz concentration camp?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MENGELE

Yes.

VOIGT

Is it true that you came to Auschwitz as a volunteer?

MENGELE

Yes.

VOIGT

No one ordered you. You volunteered.

MENGELE

Yes.

He coughs painfully.

VOIGT

While at Auschwitz, were you at times responsible for certifying death at mass gassings?

MENGELE

Yes.

Hillmann glances toward the closed door at the rear of the courtroom. No sign of Peter.

VOIGT

Is it true that you were often present when inmates were unloaded from arriving trains?

MENGELE

Yes.

VOIGT

Who was responsible on those occasions for determining the immediate destination of each of those new arrivals?

MENGELE

I was.

Voigt's astonished by how easy this is.

VOIGT

Germany has given evidence that you were present on well over forty occasions. Would you dispute that number?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There's a tiny glimmer of fire in the dull eyes. An infinitesimal show of strength.

MENGELE

It was a big job.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - LATER

VOIGT

Did you expose prisoners to X-rays in so-called experiments aimed at sterilizing them?

MENGELE

Yes.

Again Hillmann looks for Peter. Nothing.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - LATER

The day is wearing on. Mengele is tiring.

VOIGT

Did you, in order to rid a barracks of typhus, once send all 600 residents of that barracks to be gassed?

MENGELE

Yes.

VOIGT

Did you participate --
(breaks off)

No. I'm going to read this, I want to get it exactly right.

He picks up a legal pad and pages forward, unable to hold in check his indignation.

VOIGT

"Dump trucks carrying 300 children under the age of five were driven to the edge of a burning pit. The children were thrown screaming into the fire. Soldiers circled the pit, pushing any child who crawled out back into the flames."

He looks at Mengele with burning eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOIGT

Did you give orders at such an action?

A long pause.

VOIGT

(forcefully)

Did you give orders at such an action?

MENGELE

(finally)

Yes.

VOIGT

Then damn you, Doctor. God damn you.

He turns away.

VOIGT

No more questions.

Mengele goes slack with exhaustion.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Is the defense prepared to question the witness at this time?

PETER

We are, Your Honor.

Peter, standing just inside the door at the back of the courtroom, steps away from Cory and strides rapidly forward, taking the court by surprise. He works without notes, his tone conversational, almost casual.

PETER

Doctor, you agree that in your fight against typhus you sent hundreds of women to be gassed.

Mengele seems revived by Peter's return.

MENGELE

Yes.

PETER

Were you honestly trying to stop the epidemic -- or just looking for an excuse to kill Jews?

MENGELE

(moral outrage)

I am a doctor. I regarded these women as my patients.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

And the fact is that before your arrival at Auschwitz, no one had been able to stop the epidemics which repeatedly ravaged the camp, is that correct?

MENGELE

That is correct.

PETER

But with your admittedly harsh measures, you brought the epidemics under control.

MENGELE

I did.

PETER

Doctor, have you ever had typhus?

MENGELE

Yes.

PETER

When?

MENGELE

I contracted it at Auschwitz.

Mengele is rising to the battle, with each answer his voice growing incrementally stronger.

PETER

Earlier that same year, also serving at Auschwitz, you contracted malaria.

MENGELE

Yes.

PETER

And before Auschwitz, you were decorated for braving enemy fire on the Russian front to pull wounded soldiers from a burning tank.

MENGELE

Yes.

PETER

Again and again you put your life at risk to save others.

Voigt can take no more of this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOIGT

Objection. Is counsel questioning the witness or nominating him for a Nobel Prize?

PETER

Your Honor, I'm simply introducing the facts of the doctor's life. I didn't expect to make such an impression on the prosecutor.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Overruled. Proceed.

Peter turns back to Mengele, but when he speaks again, his tone is anything but casual. He's come to the very heart of the matter.

PETER

Doctor Mengele, on the battlefield you risked your life to save wounded soldiers. Then again at Auschwitz you risked your life to save dying Jews.

(beat)

How is it possible that you also gave orders to throw children into a burning pit?

It's a question that gives even Josef Mengele pause. For the first time, he doesn't know his next line.

PETER

You've described Auschwitz as hell.

MENGELE

Yes.

PETER

You can't mean for yourself. You were privileged, you had rank and respect, you lacked nothing.

MENGELE

I mean hell.

PETER

Even for yourself, then.

MENGELE

For everyone. It was indescribable. The camp was full, we had no food, but the trains never stopped coming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

And you were the man responsible for meeting those trains.

MENGELE

This was my task.

PETER

You were responsible for deciding who from those trains lived and who died.

MENGELE

They were all dead. When they stepped off the train. Dead already. This was not my decision.

(and)

I saved as many as I could.

PETER

You saved the twins.

MENGELE

Yes, twins who now testify against me. Don't they know they owe me their lives?

PETER

Why didn't you save them all?

The idea is so foreign that Mengele can't immediately grasp it.

MENGELE

Save them all? Everyone?

PETER

Why not?

MENGELE

I would have destroyed the camp! Don't you understand? There were too many.

Peter waits.

MENGELE

Should I have condemned the old grandmothers to that hell of slave labor and disease?

(turns to attendant)

Raise me up a little.

The attendant elevates the back of Mengele's bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MENGELE

Should I have damned the little ones
to a slow death by starvation?
Granting them a quick end was a great
kindness.

PETER

A quick end in a burning pit.

MENGELE

(emphatically)

We had no choice.

(then)

Have you ever seen a child gassed?
They don't die well. We were forced
to find other means.

(to attendant)

Water.

The attendant pours water from a pitcher. Mengele drinks,
invigorated.

PETER

The experiments, Doctor. My God, the
experiments. You've admitted
conducting painful medical
investigations on children without
anesthetic --

MENGELE

Can't you understand? They were dead.
I found them on their way to the
crematorium. I experimented. Yes I
experimented! I drew from their
deaths meaning -- scientific knowledge
that might benefit others more
fortunate.

(and)

Anything less would have been
criminal.

PETER

You inflicted a great deal of
suffering. You induced raging
infections and left them untreated.

(again)

You used no anesthetic.

MENGELE

I had no anesthetic.

(with astonishing vigor)

A surgeon sees gangrene, he has no
anesthetic, but he amputates the limb.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MENGELE (CONT'D)

Do you call witnesses against the doctor to tell how he hacked with his saw, how blood spattered his smock, how the patient screamed? Of course not. Do you know what you do?

(voice booming)

You say, "Thank God. Thank God for the doctor."

CLOSE ON MENGELE

His head has risen off his pillow and he's fixed the Judges with a burning gaze. Then he looks to Peter and his features soften into a look that approximates affection. A ghastly sight.

PETER

recoils from the look.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CRISP WHITE PILLOW

Peter lies back. His eyes remain wide open, tormented. Cory joins him. Without a word, he turns off the light.

DREAM SEQUENCE - UTTER BLACKNESS

A LATCH IS THROWN and a HEAVY CATTLE-CAR DOOR RUMBLES aside, unveiling a blazing square of light. SOLDIERS appear, bathed in light.

SOLDIERS

Raus! Raus!

Bodies tumble from the car into the light.

EXT. RAILROAD SIDING - SUBJECTIVE CAMERA - NIGHT

Floodlights of unearthly brilliance cast harsh shadows. Soldiers strip the arrivals of every possession and herd them into line. Forced INTO this hapless procession, CAMERA LOOKS AHEAD. Rising above those in line, a handsome young SS officer stands on a platform, his eyes locked on the head of the line, his right hand extended over them, flicking right, left, right, left, left, left. CAMERA SLOWLY NEARS the officer, the prisoners ahead streaming into darkness, until the officer's eyes fall directly ON CAMERA. He stops. His face lights up with wonder.

YOUNG MENGELE

Peter.

He hurries down the platform steps.

REVERSE ANGLE

At the head of the endless procession of the damned, Peter is taken into Mengele's embrace.

YOUNG MENGELE

Peter, I'm so grateful you've come.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Peter snaps on the light, breathing hard, drenched in sweat. He looks hard at himself in the mirror. A long, long look full of doubt and loathing.

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - DAY

Court in session. Mengele, in the glass enclosure, is again at the microphone as Voigt redirects.

VOIGT

There's been a lot of talk in this room, and I want to make sure I'm still clear on the facts. You've testified that while at Auschwitz you participated in mass gassings. Yes?

MENGELE

That's correct.

VOIGT

Was that testimony the truth?

MENGELE

My testimony was factual.

VOIGT

Your testimony was factual... And when you testified that you sent all 600 residents of a particular barracks to their deaths, were you telling the truth then?

MENGELE

I acknowledged the facts -- which are not always the same as the truth, Herr Prosecutor.

VOIGT

Ah... then let's just stick to facts. You sent the 600 women to their deaths. Fact?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MENGELE

Is it so hard to understand? Have you
no one in your world whose life has
lost meaning?

VOIGT

(overriding)

Fact or fiction, Doctor? Answer the
question.

MENGELE

Is no one today suffering hopelessly?

VOIGT

Your Honor --

PRESIDING JUDGE

The witness is directed to answer the
question.

Unheeding, Mengele leans into the microphone.

MENGELE

Is there no one, no one unwanted?

Something here strikes a chord in Cory.

PRESIDING JUDGE

The witness will answer the question.

MENGELE

Medicine will always need doctors with
the courage to kill.

PRESIDING JUDGE

(furious)

Cut him off.

MENGELE

If you want the truth, read your
newspaper. You'll see I'm telling
you --

The microphone goes dead, silencing Mengele whose mouth
continues to move inside the enclosure. Voigt's disgusted.

VOIGT

No more questions.

Cory scribbles furiously.

INT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - OUTSIDE COURTROOM NO. 700

Cory's on a public phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Paul, hi, it's me. Didn't you once tell me you had a doctor friend in Amsterdam?

(beat)

Can you put me in touch with her?

(and)

Perfect.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Peter enters alone.

PETER

Cory?

No answer. Her things are gone. Peter finds a folded note on his pillow.

INT. HUGE, CHAOTIC AIR TERMINAL - EARLY MORNING

Cory clears customs. Signs in five languages welcome her to Amsterdam.

EXT. AIR TERMINAL (AMSTERDAM)

Cory ducks into a taxi.

CORY

Rykstadt Main Hospital.

ANOTHER TAXI, SOMEWHERE IN BERLIN

An elderly woman climbs out and tugs her coat tightly around her. Hilde. Peter exits the cab behind her.

PETER

You don't need to do this.

HILDE

I've needed to do this for 50 years.

REVERSE ANGLE

reveals they stand on the steps of the Wuerzbach Clinic for Children's Medicine. Sharing a wordless look, they start for the door.

INT. WUERZBACH CLINIC - MORNING

Dr. Frank, the clinic director, passes, followed by Peter and Hilde. They walk purposefully. Hilde looks at the children. Remembering. Peter, too, studies the children. It's impossible to know what he's seeing.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWAY

The narrow, dim, little-used access to the basement. Frank, Peter and Hilde descend.

INT. RYKSTADT MAIN HOSPITAL (AMSTERDAM) - WAITING ROOM

Cory waits. A young woman with a vibrant smile appears.

DR. VAN KONINGSVELD

Cory Rohm?

(extending her hand)

I'm Dr. van Koningsveld. How can I help you?

INT. WUERZBACH CLINIC - BASEMENT ARCHIVES

Peter, Hilde and Dr. Frank pore over old records. Frank finds something of interest in a file he's studying and lays it aside, atop a short stack of similar folders.

INT. RYKSTADT HOSPITAL - BUSY CORRIDOR

The animated Dr. van Koningsveld leads Cory through the bustle of this gleamingly modern hospital. Cory holds a microcassette recorder.

DR. VAN KONINGSVELD

Economics is always an issue. Do you --

ORDERLY (O.S.)

Excuse us.

They step aside to make way for a passing gurney and Cory comes face to face with the patient, a woman in her nineties. Her head lolls toward Cory, her eyes and mouth gaping wide in an agonized, voiceless wail. The gurney turns a quick corner and she's gone. Van Koningsveld explains with sympathy:

VAN KONINGSVELD

Bone cancer.

She begins again:

VAN KONINGSVELD

Anyway, economics is always a big issue. Do you have any idea how much we spend on patients in their last 30 days of life -- people who tragically are never going to get better? It's staggering.

Cory's still looking back at the spot where the gurney disappeared.

INT. WUERZBACH CLINIC

Peter, Hilde and Dr. Frank continue their search. Frank's stack has grown dramatically.

INT. RYKSTADT HOSPITAL - ADOLESCENT UNIT

Cory and Dr. van Koningsveld are joined by a RESIDENT who indicates a severely-afflicted adolescent.

RESIDENT

She's never had a coherent thought. She'll never speak an intelligible word. She's fed through a tube. Her parents visit the first and fifteenth of each month. The state pays the bill. So you can understand that people begin to ask if there isn't another way.

INT. CLINIC - GROUND-FLOOR CORRIDOR

Hilde leads Peter and Frank through the clinic. She moves as if in a dream.

INT. CLINIC - FIRST FLOOR RECREATION ROOM

Sunlight and cheerful colors. Hilde enters, trailed by Peter and Frank. She stops just inside the room. After a moment, she moves with assurance toward a back corner.

BACK CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Peter, Hilde and Frank watch as workmen peel the carpeting slowly back to expose bare concrete. Hilde flinches, as if she herself is being exposed. Peter bends and runs his hand over the concrete. Clearly visible in the floor: a distinct line of old bolt holes describing a perfect square the size of a small bedroom.

Peter sits dead center in the square. Imagining.

INT. RYKSTADT HOSPITAL - DAY ROOM

A lounge filled with elderly patients. Cory and van Koningsveld talk to a young INTERN.

INTERN

By the time you get to their age you've seen a few people die, and not always well, if you know what I mean. So they're afraid. Afraid of the pain, of course, but more than that, afraid it's going to be drawn out -- and if that happens, terrified of what it's going to do to the people they love.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTERN (CONT'D)

Fortunately, the legal situation in this country permits us to take an active medical role to ensure that doesn't happen.

CORY

An active medical role, meaning...

INTERN

Humane methods have been developed.

Pause.

INT. WUERZBACH CLINIC - RECREATION ROOM

A girl of seven or eight, her body frail and bent and propped in a pediatric wheelchair. With her one good arm she wheels herself in circles, finding in that act a blazing joy that explodes in her twisted, gaping smile.

Close by and rapt, Peter watches.

EXT. DURENBURGER PLUMBING WORKS (BERLIN) - DAY

An open bed truck off-loads pipe beside this large, prosperous old firm. A taxi delivers Peter and he enters the building.

SAME SCENE - HOURS LATER

Daylight is waning as Peter exits and heads for a waiting cab.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF BERLIN - EVENING

Peter steps to the front door of an especially handsome house. He knocks and waits. The door is opened by a friendly WOMAN in her 60s.

PETER

Is this the home of Edvard Nielson?

WOMAN

It is.

PETER

Is he here?

WOMAN

One moment.

The Woman disappears into the house. A jovial, balding MAN in his 70s appears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Edvard Nielson?

NIELSON (MAN)

Yes.

PETER

My name's Peter Rohm. I'm an attorney representing Josef Mengele in his current trial.

Nielson's bewildered.

PETER

May I come in?

NIELSON

But... why would you want to talk to me?

PETER

Herr Nielson... During the winter of 1940, were you employed by the Durenburger Plumbing Works?

And finally Nielson understands -- and slams the door in Peter's face.

INT. RYKSTADT HOSPITAL - PEDIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

A roomful of infants and small children at death's door, surrounded by high-tech medical machinery. A heart-rending sight. A PHYSICIAN in his forties walks with Cory among the sick.

PHYSICIAN

Please understand -- this is what I see every day. It's the only way you can really fathom what I'm telling you.

(indicates a patient)

Look there.

Cory steps to the bedside of a tiny newborn, her eyes taped shut, breathing tube, NG tube, multiple IVs.

PHYSICIAN

You'll notice how quiet our children are. No crying. We must keep them so sedated.

(then)

Can you look at this child and tell me you see life? Not in the ordinary sense of the word, you can't.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHYSICIAN (CONT'D)

We're learning in these cases to do what's right for the patients. It's a medical service that benefits thousands in this country every year.

CORY

(horrified irony)

"Thank God for the doctor."

(then)

This medical service, is it provided with the patient's consent?

PHYSICIAN

(eyes on his patient)

How can she possibly consent?

INT. AMSTERDAM HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Cory enters and pulls off her shoes at the end of one of the longest days of her life.

INT. BERLIN HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Peter sits on the edge of his bed watching television news coverage of the trial. Weary and alone.

EXT. BERLIN STREETS NEAR CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - MORNING

Full-blown riot. An army of anti-Nazi demonstrators hurls rocks and bottles at neo-Nazi zealots. Police drive both sides apart with dogs, truncheons and water cannons.

EXT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - MORNING

Hillmann's rental sedan skirts the violence to deliver Peter, who is muscled by police to the courthouse door. He ignores the shouts of press and protestors.

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - DAY

The stark contrast of judicial silence. Seated upright in a wheelchair, only a single IV in evidence, Mengele is wheeled into the enclosure.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Back on the record in Germany versus Mengele.

(and)

Defense may proceed.

Peter rises.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

The defense calls Dr. Karl Frank,
director of the Wuerzbach Clinic for
Children's Medicine.

VOIGT

Objection. Does this witness possess
firsthand knowledge of the defendant?
Did the defendant ever work in his
clinic?

PRESIDING JUDGE

Germany has had its turn, Herr
Prosecutor. Overruled.

Dr. Frank is ushered to the stand. Mengele watches with
intense interest.

PETER

Dr. Frank, what sort of institution is
the Wuerzbach Clinic?

DOCTOR FRANK

We're an in-patient medical facility
caring for children with chronic
disabilities.

PETER

In addition to directing the clinic,
you yourself are a pediatric surgeon,
correct?

DOCTOR FRANK

Yes I am.

PETER

And as such you're accustomed to
reading patient files.

DOCTOR FRANK

Of course.

Peter takes a stack of files from the defense table and sets
them in front of the witness. Cory slips into the back of
the courtroom, catching Peter's eye, and squeezes into a
seat.

PETER

These files represent 51 patients who
died at your clinic during the last
six months of 1939. Do you recognize
the files?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR FRANK
(flips open top file
and glances inside)

Yes I do.

PETER
You've studied them?

DOCTOR FRANK
Yes.

PETER
Does anything about them strike you as
unusual from a medical standpoint?

DOCTOR FRANK
Absolutely. Fifty-one patients,
suffering a variety of ailments --
severe deformities, mongolism,
microcephaly -- are listed as having
died of the exact same cause.

PETER
What cause was that?

DOCTOR FRANK
According to the records --
(reads from top file)
"An adverse reaction to medication."

Hilde sits motionless.

PETER
Fifty-one deaths in six months from an
adverse reaction to medication.
That's unusual?

DOCTOR FRANK
It's beyond belief.

PETER
Meaning the records are inaccurate?

DOCTOR FRANK
Meaning the records are a lie.

PETER
Can you tell the court what you think
did cause those deaths?

VOIGT
Objection. Speculation.

PRESIDING JUDGE
Sustained.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat. Peter adopts another approach.

PETER

Besides cause of death, did the files contain anything else notable in common?

DOCTOR FRANK

Each file held an identical letter addressed to the parents.

(reads)

"We regret to inform you of the death of your child. This death should not be considered a tragedy. Under the circumstances, the death should be viewed as a merciful release."

PETER

(repeats)

"... Death should be viewed as a merciful release."

Peter looks significantly toward the glass enclosure, then returns to his table and collects a much taller stack of files, which he deposits before Frank.

PETER

These files represent patient deaths for the three months beginning January of 1940. Have you examined these files?

DOCTOR FRANK

Yes I have.

PETER

And what did you find?

DOCTOR FRANK

They show a sharp increase in the rate of patient deaths over the previous period, from 51 deaths in six months up to 452 deaths in just three months.

PETER

So somewhere around the first of January 1940, a death rate you've described as already beyond belief jumped sharply.

DOCTOR FRANK

Yes.

PETER

Did you note any other changes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR FRANK

Deaths during this period occurred among those much less severely ill, including patients with minor facial deformities, cleft palate, undesirable behaviors --

PETER

(interrupts)

Undesirable behaviors? Such as what?

DOCTOR FRANK

(a beat)

Bed-wetters.

PETER

Bed-wetters? And they came to your clinic and died?

DOCTOR FRANK

According to these records.

Pause.

PETER

Any change in the letters?

DOCTOR FRANK

Not one word.

PETER

They still said these deaths were to be viewed as -- what did they say?

DOCTOR FRANK

A merciful release.

PETER

A merciful release.

Mengele listens smugly.

PETER

Doctor, can you tell the court for a fact what happened at the beginning of January 1940 to account for this sudden increase in deaths?

DOCTOR FRANK

For a fact? No.

PETER

Thank you, Doctor. No more questions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESIDING JUDGE

Prosecution?

Voigt makes a show of throwing up his hands in disgust.

VOIGT

No questions.

PRESIDING JUDGE

The witness is excused.

Frank stands and exits.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Herr Rohm?

PETER

Your Honor, the defense calls Edvard Nielson.

An exceedingly reluctant Nielson is escorted to the stand.

PETER

Herr Nielson, what is your occupation?

NIELSON

I'm a retired plumbing contractor.

PETER

And in January 1940?

NIELSON

I was a plumber.

VOIGT

Objection! A plumber? What does any of this have to do with the defendant's crimes?

(then)

Your Honor, Germany moves to bar further testimony in this matter as immaterial and requests a verdict on the evidence presented.

Peter is caught off guard by Voigt's surprise motion.

PETER

(quickly)

Your Honor, may we approach?

The Presiding Judge nods and both Peter and Voigt move to the bench.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Surely the court won't deny the defendant his defense.

VOIGT

What defense is possible? He's confessed to every charge.

PETER

No, Your Honor, no. The doctor has admitted no guilt. He's simply stipulated to the facts of his actions -- actions he contends were a logical extension of the medicine practiced at that time throughout Germany. The testimony of this witness will corroborate that view.

VOIGT

(outraged)

What view?! That there's some connection between what took place in a medical clinic and the wholesale butchery of Auschwitz?! That's obscene!

PETER

Your Honor, if we can hear the witness, I believe the connection will become clear.

The Presiding Judge considers at length.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Let no one say this court denied any defendant a fair trial. Motion denied; we'll hear the witness.

Voigt reacts in exasperation as he and Peter return to their places.

PETER

Herr Nielson, are you familiar with an institution known as the Wuerzbach Clinic for Children's Medicine?

No answer is forthcoming.

PETER

Herr Nielson?

NIELSON

I'm familiar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

In January 1940, were you sent to that institution to do some plumbing work?

NIELSON

Yes.

PETER

Right after the New Year's holiday.

NIELSON

That's right.

PETER

It wasn't an ordinary plumbing job, was it? Tell the court what you remember about the project.

Nielson stares at the floor. Peter crosses back to his table and a final sheaf of aged paper.

PETER

You do remember the project, don't you? Because we can introduce a number of documents to refresh your memory.

NIELSON

I remember.

(pause)

They were building a room --

PETER

What sort of room?

NIELSON

A little room. Sealed all the way around, top and bottom -- like a big shower, with one set of pipes going in, another set coming out.

PETER

So you, what, hooked up the pipes?

NIELSON

Hooked up the pipes. Checked for leaks. They were very concerned about that. Didn't want any leaks.

PETER

They who? Who was in charge?

NIELSON

The doctors. I did exactly what the doctors told me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Did you know what you were building?

NIELSON

I asked; no one seemed to know.
Finally one of the doctors told me it
was for an experimental new treatment.

PETER

An experimental new treatment. Did
you ever discover the nature of that
treatment?

NIELSON

Not the first time. But later, when
they sent me back.

PETER

They sent you back? Why?

NIELSON

They wanted me to take it down.

PETER

Really. When was this?

NIELSON

About a year and a half later.

PETER

So... sometime in the last half of
1941. And you say this time you
discovered the nature of the
treatment.

NIELSON

They had the exhaust from a diesel
engine hooked up to the intake pipes.
Pumping the exhaust into the room.
So, I mean, I'm not stupid.

Cory, sitting beside Hilde near the front of the gallery,
listens with horrified fascination.

PETER

Were you given any explanation as to
why the device was dismantled?

NIELSON

Well... so that it could be...
relocated.

PETER

And do you know where it was
"relocated"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nielson shifts uncomfortably.

NIELSON

... Yes.

PETER

Of course you do. They sent you along with it, didn't they, to put it back together on the other end.

NIELSON

(pause)

I was only a plumber. I only did what they told me.

PETER

Herr Nielson, would you please tell the court where the device was moved?

Nielson shakes his head, mute.

PRESIDING JUDGE

The witness is instructed to answer the question.

PETER

Where was the device moved?

NIELSON

(finally)

East.

PETER

East. Where in the East?

NIELSON

Poland.

PETER

Southern Poland?

NIELSON

Southern Poland, correct.

PETER

Where, exactly, in southern Poland?

Nielson doesn't want to answer.

PETER

Auschwitz?

Nielson's hand covers his face. Peter almost shouts:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Was the device moved to Auschwitz?

NIELSON

(barely audible)

Yes.

A charge goes through the room.

MENGELE

(a whisper)

Yes.

PETER

When this device was reinstalled at Auschwitz, what modifications did you make?

NIELSON

None.

PETER

(powerfully)

Your testimony is that you dismantled this device in a German medical facility -- and then reassembled it without modification at the Auschwitz extermination camp in Poland?!

NIELSON

(a cry)

I DID WHAT THE DOCTORS TOLD ME!

On Mengele's face a crooked smile appears. Peter turns to the bench.

PETER

Nothing further.

His eyes meet Cory's. What in God's name has he done?

EXT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - MAIN ENTRANCE - END OF DAY

MOVE WITH Peter as he pushes out the front door and into a chaos of protest. Police fight to contain enraged demonstrators as Peter makes his dash toward Hillmann's waiting car. An OLD MAN strains through the police line.

OLD MAN

HE KILLED MY MOTHER, HE KILLED MY FATHER, HE KILLED MY BROTHERS --

The Old Man is pushed back. A group of rainbow-haired punks breaks through and surrounds Peter, one of them dousing Peter with red paint.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Police surge in. Peter is knocked to the ground, his briefcase torn from his grasp. He scrambles after it, paint dripping into his eyes. Strong arms reach through the melee, pull Peter to his feet. Pressing the briefcase into his hands, they hustle him toward Hillmann's car. Once at the car, Peter wipes paint out of his eyes, gets a look at his saviors: a trio of buzz-cut young FASCISTS in tattoos and jackboots. One of them shoots him a grinning Nazi salute.

FASCIST THUG

Sieg heil.

Peter jerks free and leaps back as if from a rattlesnake. Fixing them with a look of absolute contempt, he ducks into the car.

INT. CAR

With the back door still hanging open, Hillmann tries desperately to pull into traffic.

CORY

Go, Felix, go!

PETER

I'm okay --

He pulls the door closed and falls back against the seat. The skinheads pace the car like an honor guard from hell. Cory clutches Peter and screams at Hillmann:

CORY

GO!!!

Finding a hole in traffic, he accelerates and the skinheads fall away, hooting their support.

BLOOD-RED WATER

swirls down the drain.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM

Peter showers, scrubbing paint out of his hair, his ears, his eyes, strangely buoyed by this day.

PETER

I don't know which scared Felix more, those animals outside his window or me, dripping paint on his rented upholstery. "But -- but -- but, Peter -- my deposit!"

Peter laughs. But soon realizes he's laughing alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Cory?

He peels back the shower curtain. She sits with head bowed, face averted. Crying. Peter wraps a towel around himself and steps out of the shower.

PETER

What?

She looks up, eyes wet with tears.

CORY

When I saw you coming toward the car
-- I thought it was blood. I thought
they were killing you.

Peter takes her in his arms. She sags against him. They hold onto one another. Finally:

PETER

Why did you leave?

She wipes her tears with his towel. Tries to find the words.

CORY

He kept talking about us. About our
doctors, our time. Like he was
pointing his finger saying you do the
same things, you're as guilty as me.
I wanted to prove him wrong.

PETER

Did you?

Not an easy question for her to answer.

CORY

I didn't find anyone gassing Jews.

(beat)

I met doctors who explained why it's
sometimes necessary to kill. I met
one who calls herself a "helper of
death." I heard a world of good
intentions. And I kept thinking about
your mother. And all those children
at Wuerzbach.

(then)

What does that make those doctors? A
bunch of little Mengeles?

PETER

Of course not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Then what?

They sit in silence, wrestling with the impossible question.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Peter listens as Cory replays a recording.

CORY (V.O.)

An active medical role, meaning...

INTERN (V.O.)

Humane methods have been developed.

CORY (V.O.)

Are you telling me you've taken action to bring about a patient's death?

INTERN (V.O.)

We're talking about patients whose lives are essentially over. Their bodies just don't know it.

CORY (V.O.)

Patients who are really... dead already.

INTERN (V.O.)

That's well put.

She clicks off the recorder. Peter's thinking. Uncertain exactly how to make the pieces fit. He eases back onto the floor.

PETER

When my mother told me to be careful, that what happened to Erik's uncle could happen to anyone, I was terrified. Because I didn't know how to be careful. I didn't know what to watch for.

(beat)

The Jews say "Never again." But if we're only guarding against swastikas and psychotics, I'm afraid we're going to miss it. We're going to miss it. Because I don't think that's the way it happens.

(so quietly)

But how does it happen?

Cory looks at the tapes spread in front of her. A new assurance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

I can't tell you what all this means,
Peter, but there's something here.

(right at him)

And I think I have an idea how our
neighbors became killers.

(so simple)

Just a little bit at a time.

Peter's face. A stone has dropped into a still pond. A
switch has been thrown. A Gestalt moment. Understanding.

STRAIGHT CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM NO. 700 - DAY

The courtroom is packed and silent, all eyes focused on Peter
who stands before the bench, holding in his upraised hand a
book.

PETER

One small step.

(beat)

At the time of the war, German doctors
held a common belief in an idea
introduced by this book -- The
Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of
Life. They believed that not all
lives were worth living, that in some
instances physicians were in fact
obligated to take life rather than
save it. It's a simple idea, easily
understood. It goes like this.

Mengele's in the wheelchair again. His breathing is labored
but he sits ramrod straight, held in place by pride and
defiance.

PETER

Imagine you're a doctor, and imagine
you have a patient, a 95-year-old
woman within a week of death from bone
cancer. Now this is an extremely
painful disease, the bones become so
weak that the simple act of rolling
over in bed can break them. And even
as you prepare an injection of
morphine, you know it won't be enough
to numb her horrible pain. Yet to
increase the dosage will kill her.

Mengele listens intently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

You explain this to your patient, and she looks you right in the eye and begs you: Fill the syringe.

(beat)

Such a simple step, this step from healer to killer. Just fill the syringe.

(holds up book)

This book urged doctors to take that step. And why not? On what grounds could a compassionate physician refuse this woman's request?

(beat)

One small step. If you read the papers, you know it's a step doctors now take every day.

Mengele smiles a small smile of appreciation.

PETER

Now imagine the same patient making the same request a month earlier -- before her pain has become so horrible. You know very well what's coming, and she asks you to fill the syringe. What then? Will you deny the request simply because the patient hasn't suffered sufficiently? On what grounds?... So. Another step.

The Judges listen stoically.

PETER

Now imagine that instead of 95, the patient is only 75. But still suffering and just as surely doomed to die. Imagine this patient begging you to fill the syringe... Having granted the first two requests, on what grounds can you deny this one? One more step.

(pause)

Now what if, instead of 75, the patient is only 55?... Or 45?... What if she's 35? Still suffering, still dying, still begging.

(beat)

What if she's only 5?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER (CONT'D)

(quickly)

But of course that's different. Now she can't make the request herself. So imagine her mother and father with broken hearts begging you, "Please, Doctor. End this nightmare. Fill the syringe."

Peter's delivery holds the courtroom at rapt attention.

PETER

Will you deny them -- and force the suffering to continue -- simply because the patient is too young to make the request herself? On what grounds?... One more step.

(long beat)

And now, finally, imagine your country at war. And imagine a child facing gruesome suffering and inescapable death. Only now, because of the war, no parent is there to make the request. And, again because of the war, it's no longer one child but a hundred children. And they're not in a hospital bed, they're in the back of a dump truck. Not your fault; the war's fault. And you have no morphine... only a burning pit.

(waits)

What now. WHAT NOW?! You're a doctor. On what grounds will you deny these children the same kindness, the same compassion, the same release, granted the others?

(picks up book)

But of course you're not doctors. You're judges. And so I ask you --

(brandishes book;
thunders)

If we grant any doctor that first small step, on what grounds can we deny Doctor Mengele the last? ON WHAT GROUNDS?!!

(barely more than
a whisper)

The road to Auschwitz isn't so hard -- as long as it's taken one step at a time.

Cory's sober as death. Mengele glows. Peter stands his ground in the center of the courtroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BERLIN STREETS - PRE-DAWN

In the dark, quiet hours before morning, Peter walks alone through the streets of this city so visibly haunted by its past.

INT. WUERZBACH CLINIC - PRE-DAWN

Damaged children sleep. Peter walks among them. Soaking them in. Forming a bond.

EXT. BERLIN - DAWN

Moments before the sun breaks the horizon. A light rain falls as a taxi moves through the streets.

EXT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING

The taxi rolls past a handful of anti-Nazi demonstrators who brave the rain to man a strategic location near the main entrance. They pay no attention to the taxi as it rounds the side of the building. Peter steps from the taxi, unfurls an umbrella and moves toward a side entrance.

INT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - STAIRWELL

Peter descends at a leisurely pace, a man finally at peace with himself.

INT. BASEMENT HOLDING AREA - OUTSIDE CELLS

Peter is frisked. His briefcase is searched.

INT. MENGELE'S CELL

It resembles a modern ICU. A male NURSE in hospital blues sits attentively at the foot of the bed, watching a video display of the patient's vital signs and making notes in his chart. Mengele lies beneath a HISSING OXYGEN MASK, eyes closed in restless slumber. Two GUARDS stand watch as Peter steps to the bed.

PETER

Doctor.

The Nurse shakes his patient, flips on lights.

NURSE

Wake up, Doctor. You have a visitor.

Mengele cracks his eyes open, speaks thickly.

MENGELE

Peter?... What time is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Just before six.

Mengele coughs tightly into the mask. His condition appears to have worsened dramatically.

PETER

The court clerk woke me 30 minutes ago. There's going to be a verdict.

Despite his illness, Mengele speaks with a kind of happiness.

MENGELE

The verdict --

(coughs again)

The verdict makes no difference. I said what I came to say.

(then)

That's victory enough.

A spasm of painful, ineffectual coughing ensues. Peter turns to the Nurse.

PETER

Can't you give him something?

The question sounds motivated by something less than sympathy.

NURSE

Tylenol. Aspirin.

PETER

Aspirin?

NURSE

He refuses morphine. It dulls his mind.

PETER

So does the pain. Give it to him.

MENGELE

(between coughs)

I don't want it.

PETER

A partial dose then.

MENGELE

No --

But the Nurse crosses to a medicine locker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE

It may relax your airways, Doctor,
help you to breathe.

The Nurse opens the locker and removes a glass vial. Using a syringe, he withdraws a small quantity of the drug. Peter watches with interest.

PETER

(to Nurse)

How long has he had this pain?

NURSE

It's much worse since yesterday. The tumors have begun obstructing his airways.

PETER

Can anything be done?

NURSE

(holds up syringe)

At this point, the best we can do is manage the pain.

He crosses back to the bedside, sterilizes a port in the IV line and inserts the needle. Mengele swats at the syringe.

MENGELE

I don't need it.

NURSE

I'm only giving you 40 milligrams.
You're written for 100.

The Nurse pushes the morphine into the line.

NURSE

It's in.

The Nurse withdraws the needle and discards the syringe in a waste container. Peter turns to the Guards.

PETER

I'd like to speak with my client
privately. Will you give us a moment?

He answers their reluctance with a reassuring smile.

PETER

I don't think I'll be in any danger.

The Nurse jots a final notation in the chart and heads for the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARD

Don't be long.

The Nurse and Guards exit, leaving Peter alone with Mengele. The morphine has done its work. The old man relaxes. His eyes find Peter.

MENGELE

Do you know you're the only one who's bothered to visit me here?

(beat)

Mueller went to my family. They told him they don't know who I am.

Peter has moved to the cell door and glances through the small window into the corridor. He pulls the oxygen mask away.

MENGELE

You've done well, Peter.

(and)

You saved your family.

Peter crosses away from the door and OUT OF FRAME as Mengele lies back on his pillow.

PETER (O.S.)

It must be a very great burden. In prison, in pain, alone. Without hope of recovery.

Though these words are delivered without any particular feeling, Mengele finds comfort in them.

PETER (O.S.)

You've led a difficult, lonely life.

Mengele relaxes into his pillow.

PETER (O.S.)

And now death is imminent.

As Mengele contemplates these thoughts, his eyes drift closed.

PETER (O.S.)

When it comes, you'll no doubt welcome it as you always have... a merciful release.

Mengele's eyes open. Something troubling about that last remark. He turns to see:

PETER

bent over the medicine locker.

MENGELE

What are you doing?

Peter turns. He's drawing fluid from a glass vial.

PETER

Filling the syringe.

Mengele's stunned.

MENGELE

Are you going to murder me?

PETER

Murder you? No. I'm just going to...
practice medicine without a license.

Mengele's incredulity gives way to a crooked smile. He laughs at Peter's wicked, wicked joke. Peter withdraws the needle from the vial and crosses to locate the port in the IV line. Mengele's laughter dies.

MENGELE

Peter -- put that thing away before
someone sees you and thinks you're
serious.

But Peter's dead serious. He inserts the needle in the line. Mengele claps his hands over Peter's.

MENGELE

You know if you push that dose you'll
spend the rest of your life in
prison --

Peter allows himself the tiniest of smiles.

PETER

But I'm not going to push it.

He grasps Mengele's hands, forces them around the syringe, and then clamps his own hands over Mengele's.

PETER

(ice)
You are.

Peter leans close with uncensored fury.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

You ordered a truckload of living, breathing children thrown into an inferno. You mutilated, you gassed, you starved, you dissected children alive. Then you twisted the words around and around to make murder sound like a kindness. But it was no kindness. The truth is in the piles of emaciated corpses. The truth is in the mass graves. The truth is in the smoke that rose over Auschwitz.

Peter exerts dangerously increased pressure against Mengele's hands. Mengele trembles as he resists.

PETER

FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND HUMAN BEINGS.
Don't you dare deny yourself the same kindness you heaped on so many others.

The Guard calls from outside:

GUARD (O.S.)

Counselor?

Mengele's eyes fly to the door. He rasps:

MENGELE

Guard --

But Peter drowns out the feeble cry with a sharp:

PETER

Privacy, Sergeant -- please!

Peter watches the cell door. When it doesn't open, he turns back to Mengele for:

PETER

Push it, Butcher! Go on!!! PUSH
IT!!!

And just when it seems Mengele's strength is about to fail, Peter releases his wildly shaking hands and takes a quick step back, leaving the defendant holding the syringe alone.

PETER

(quietly)

Push the syringe and complete your victory. Or call for the guard... and live a few more days.

(wait)

Knowing the truth about yourself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mengele gasps for breath, quaking as he stares at the deadly syringe, paralyzed by Peter's challenge. His hands tighten on the syringe. An interminable moment of tortured indecision. And then the terror becomes too great and he jerks the needle free and casts it from him. It skitters across the floor, coming to rest at Peter's feet.

MENGELE

(croaks it out)

Nurse --

Mengele gropes for the oxygen mask. Peter picks up the syringe. He calmly drops it in the medical waste container as Guards appear. Mengele looks from Peter to the returning Guards to the container holding the syringe. Finally:

MENGELE

Get the nurse in here to fix this mask. I can't breathe.

The Nurse goes to work checking the flow of oxygen to the mask. Peter steps to the cell door.

MENGELE

You think I was a bad doctor because I killed.

PETER

You weren't a bad doctor.

(wait)

You were no doctor at all.

And with that Peter goes, leaving Mengele, to sink into his pillow as the Nurse straps the mask firmly over his face.

EXT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - DAY

RAIN POUNDS the pavement. Beneath the downpour, umbrellas converge on the great building.

INT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - COURTROOM NO. 700 - DAY

The room is packed and silent as the judges enter. Mengele is scarcely visible inside the glass enclosure, now stuffed almost beyond capacity with medical machinery. Even in the short time since Peter left him, his condition has deteriorated. But more than that, something has changed in Mengele, as if the corner of a carefully-placed veil has fallen away. From behind it peers a profoundly dark and frigid soul, full of venom.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Back on the record in the matter of Germany versus Mengele.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hillmann shifts nervously. Peter is at ease.

PRESIDING JUDGE

The defense has asked this court how it can condemn killing by one physician while sanctioning killing by others. They have asked how we may, in their words, reject the last step while welcoming the first. These questions puzzle the court. For German law sanctions killing by no one. We acknowledge that the practice of medicine -- particularly modern medicine -- poses thorny ethical dilemmas. But we declare with the laws and constitution of Germany this one simple edict: Don't kill.

(and again)

Don't kill.

Mengele's eyes darken with blistering contempt.

PRESIDING JUDGE

By his own admission, the defendant did kill -- prolifically, energetically and without remorse. In the name of science he undertook barbaric experiments that inflicted unimaginable suffering. And then he congratulated himself with words like kindness, mercy and compassion.

Cory listens from the gallery.

PRESIDING JUDGE

This court instructs the defendant that genuine compassion addresses human suffering by drawing alongside the sufferer to comfort and to serve.

(with great force)

It does not annihilate him.

(beat)

The defendant did successfully establish one fact beyond dispute: The human heart is capable of justifying any evil it craves. And so the judgment of this court is as follows:

MENGELE'S FACE

is set.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESIDING JUDGE (O.S.)

As to the charges of war crimes,
guilty on all counts.

Mengele doesn't blink. PUSH IN.

PRESIDING JUDGE (O.S.)

As to the charges of crimes against
minorities, guilty on all counts.

PUSH CLOSER.

PRESIDING JUDGE (O.S.)

As to the charges of crimes against
humanity, guilty on all counts.

CONTINUE PUSH INTO EXTREME CLOSEUP.

PRESIDING JUDGE (O.S.)

Because of the hideous nature of these
crimes and the enthusiasm with which
they were committed, this court will
mete out the maximum penalty possible
under German law: life in prison.

(gavels)

This matter is concluded.

Mengele breathes a single word, a lifetime of rage distilled
in a whisper:

MENGELE

Idiots.

IN THE COURTROOM

Silence prevails. The Judges rise and sweep from the room.
Cory sits motionless. Slowly and with little sound,
spectators rise and move toward the exit. Peter gazes into
the glass enclosure as a retinue of earnest young doctors
surrounds Mengele and prepares to move him. Hillmann steps
to Peter's side.

HILLMANN

Life in prison.

(bitterly)

He'll laugh all the way to the grave.

PETER

Do you believe in hell, Felix?

HILLMANN

I don't know. Do you?

Peter never takes his eyes off Mengele.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

I'm hoping.

They watch as Mengele is wheeled from the enclosure. The attendants pause to reposition the oxygen tank and Mengele's eyes meet Peter's. His voice is a hoarse whisper.

MENGELE

We'd have done better with a medical tribunal.

(agonizing cough)

These imbeciles...

(another cough)

These imbeciles have no idea what's happening in medicine today.

The attendants roll Mengele slowly away. Peter watches until he's gone.

INT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - GROUND FLOOR

In the crush of courtgoers exiting the building, Cory searches for Peter. She spots him near the doors, standing still. Like someone going into shock following a trauma. Cory crosses to him. He turns to her. Their eyes meet.

PETER

This morning... I had the chance to kill him. I almost did it.

Cory looks through the doors to the waiting mob of reporters and beyond them the crowds of protestors.

CORY

Tell them that. Make them understand why you did all this. Even if it means never arguing another case. Tell them.

PETER

No. I have to do something harder.

He takes her hand.

EXT. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUILDING - DAY

Peter and Cory emerge together, raising an umbrella against the rain that falls in sheets. Reporters thunder questions. Peter steps forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

What can I tell you? That Josef Mengele was a savage butcher? Of course he was. But you already know that. What can I tell you? That no connection exists between Germany's first well-intentioned killing and the bloodbath that followed? But it does exist. We proved that. Josef Mengele thinks this fact excuses him. He's wrong.

(wait)

I fear it indicts us all.

(wait again)

What can I tell you to help you sleep tonight? Only this. Cherish life.

Peter's eyes turn to Cory and he pulls her to him.

PETER

Cherish. Every. Life.

Peter steps away from the microphones. A WAGNERIAN ARIA BEGINS. Cory takes the umbrella from him. Lowers it. Taking his hand, she walks with him, pushing through the reporters, solemnly and unprotected, into the drenching rain.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

A HEAVILY-SHADOWED, UNIDENTIFIABLE, OTHER-WORLDFLY PLACE

The ARIA is joined by a stark HISS. Something dark glides INTO FRAME. Gleaming black boots. Prone. Followed by the crisp trousers of an SS officer's uniform. Then the dark uniform tunic, arms folded precisely across the chest after the manner of the SS. And then the face. Hauptsturmfuhrer Josef Mengele. Aged and grey. Eyes wide open. They blink once. Twice. The body trolleys past, before it the open mouth of a wildly HISSING GAS OVEN. As the body slides into the inferno, the trousers begin to burn. The eyes blink again.

The ARIA SOARS.

FADE OUT.

THE END