

Chapter 14_ View Down a Stairwell ...

In this chapter of "Mother Night," the protagonist, identified as Campbell, reflects on an unsettling turn of events following the emergence of troubling mail and a mounting public interest in his past. A week after receiving distressing correspondence, he attempts to visit Jones, the publisher of a controversial newspaper, seeking a retraction of a story about him. However, Jones is absent when he arrives.

Upon returning home, Campbell finds his mailbox overflowing with letters from supporters of the newspaper, some praising him as a hero while others suggest he flee New York to live in "God's country." Unbeknownst to him, Kraft, a mutual acquaintance, had tipped off Jones about Campbell's survival, sharing details that led Jones to seek out Campbell.

As Campbell is engaged in a portrait session with Kraft, an unusual chant emerges from the stairwell—the panted count of twenty by Jones and his entourage. This group includes Jones's bodyguard, August Krapptauer, a former Vice-Bundesführer of the German-American Bund, and Patrick Keeley, an unfrocked Paulist Father with a troubling past involving anti-Semitic sentiments. The chant is a reflection of their poor health, especially as Krapptauer struggles to catch his breath.

Jones, adorned with extravagant jewelry, eventually ascends the stairs to face Campbell, presenting him with an unexpected revelation. As Krapptauer and Keeley arrive, Jones prepares to unveil a surprise. This surprise turns out to be the unexpected presence of Helga, Campbell's wife, who had requested that Jones not inform Campbell of her arrival. She asserts that she wishes to silently see if there is still a place for her in his life; if not, she intends to depart once more without causing him any trouble.

This chapter delves into themes of identity, the complexity of past relationships, and the conflicts between personal history and public persona, setting the stage for deeper explorations into Campbell's character as the narrative unfolds.