

## Chapter 20\_“Hang Women for the Hangman of Berlin ...”

In this chapter from "Mother Night," the narrator reveals his recent discovery of the circumstances surrounding his father-in-law Werner Noth's death. It is 1958 or 1959, and he learns of Noth's demise in a Greenwich Village barber shop while perusing a girly magazine featuring an article titled "Hang-women for the Hangman of Berlin." He does not expect the article to reference his father-in-law and is initially lured in by the sensationalism of the magazine cover.

The narrator is confronted by a dark photograph of Noth being hanged from an apple tree. Despite the disturbing content, he finds himself analyzing the discrepancies between the cover image and the article itself, noting that the women depicted are not the actual hangers, who are instead described as scrawny men. Furthermore, the women in the photograph are far from the glamorous portrayals promised on the cover. As he continues to look at the photograph, he recognizes the broken building in the background as Noth's former home, which brings a rush of memories of his wife Helga and her childhood.

The article, written by Ian Westlake, a liberated POW, offers a detailed account of Noth's execution by slave laborers after the war. Westlake portrays Noth not as a monster, but as a city police chief trying to maintain order amid chaos. He describes how Noth's main flaw was his involvement in a corrupt judicial system that subjected prisoners to unspeakable horrors. The execution served as a means for the executioners to assert power over someone deemed significant, despite their lack of understanding of his true role.

The narration further describes the brutalities of Noth's death, highlighting the repeated hangings that stripped him of his dignity. The chapter concludes with the narrator's discomfort upon returning to the superficiality of the magazine, which ultimately betrays the seriousness of the account it just presented. This juxtaposition underscores the harsh realities of human experience set against the trivialities often found in media.