

## Chapter 2\_Special Detail ...

In this chapter of "Mother Night," the narrative introduces Andor Gutman, a guard who relieves Arnold Marx at noon, both being around the same age of forty-eight. Gutman, an Estonian Jew, has a haunting history tied to the Auschwitz extermination camp, where he narrowly avoided death after being assigned to the Sonderkommando, a group responsible for leading condemned prisoners to gas chambers and removing their bodies afterward. However, when the order came from Himmler to shut down the ovens, his fate changed.

The term "Sonderkommando," which translates to "special detail," evokes the grim reality of camp life. Participants in this unit faced an inescapable fate—their execution following their service. Despite the horror, Gutman reveals that some men volunteered for this role, prompting reflection on the motivations behind such a decision. When asked about the reasoning behind these volunteers, Gutman admits that understanding that 'why' would require a great book, one he would willingly pay for to read. Despite having been one of those who volunteered, he finds himself unable to guess the reason.

Gutman shares unsettling memories of life in Auschwitz, characterized by an overwhelming presence of loudspeakers that disseminated both music and announcements throughout the camp. He recalls that, although the music was reputed to be of good quality, there was a notable absence of Jewish compositions, as they were prohibited. The juxtaposition of melody and announcements creates a chilling atmosphere, particularly as the announcements included a recurring call for the Sonderkommando: "Leichenträger zu Wache" (Corpse-carriers to the guardhouse), underscoring the grim reality of their existence.

Despite initially perceiving the corpse-carrier position as desirable amid the systematic horrors, Gutman ultimately reflects on this choice with shame and discomfort, suggesting a deep internal conflict regarding survival at the expense of others. His acknowledgment of shame surrounding his past actions emphasizes the complex moral landscape faced by individuals in the camp, leading him to express a desire to never discuss the subject again. The chapter captures the haunting recollections of Gutman, exposing the psychological scars left by his experiences during this dark time.